

neighborhood? We didn't know about this until way late in the game. Why isn't he helping us? He's supposed to be saving these buildings."

Tags: Downtown Motor Hotel, Compass Affordable Housing, Armory Park, Barrio Viejo, State Historic Preservation Office, Josias Joesler, Image

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The fix is in for this project. The entire City Council seems to have rolled over on it. When I saw Kozachik talking about it on TV, I felt sick inside. I can't imagine how much money changed hands or what favors were called in to move this fiasco along so quickly and quietly.

Oh well, politics in Tucson as usual.

report

13 likes, 3 dislikes like dislike

Posted by Gonzo Sorcrachi on 11/03/2014 at 5:54 PM



Ah, the siren song of the NIMBY, who professes to love affordable housing as long as it's far, far away from him or her.

What is particularly interesting about this feeble attempt at journalism is that there is absolutely no indication of any effort to seek the perspective of the proponents of the project. (Such as, "We tried to reach Compass Affordable Housing but it declined to comment.") Nor does the "article" (perhaps "screed" would be a better description) make any mention of the fact that the historic building fronting the street will be retained and renovated. In other words, the low-slung building will NOT be demolished. But I suppose that actual reporting is expecting too much. Finally, the writer fails to point out that neither of the two neighborhood associations (Armory Park and Barrio Viejo) oppose the project.

For what it's worth, while I know and have worked in the past on other projects with the developers, I have absolutely no involvement or financial interest in this project.

report

6 likes, 9 dislikes like dislike

Posted by DRW on 11/04/2014 at 9:33 AM



I don't always default in favor of historic buildings when there is a development confrontation. Too often "historic" buildings are simply old without much real historical or architectural aesthetic significance. Critics agree that Josias Joesler was a real player in Modern design and to it's credit Tucson has a tangible record of his creative efforts.

While it would be a shame to erase that legacy, the care and dignity of our homeless veterans is a serious issue as well. Knowing a little bit about the intellectual and social make up of Armory Park, I think the NIMBY name calling is misplaced. It could be said that among a bunch of Mission style, Victorian and older homes in the neighborhood, that Modernist motel might have caused a panic back when it was designed and erected. Not sure, I wasn't there. Some type of compromise is really in order, and the city council in my mind is responsible for working that out. Could the property be saved, and even utilized in this case. Is this really the best location?P Would something closer to the VA be more appropriate? Perhaps some VA offices could be adapted into the motel, while living quarters moved elsewhere? What about employing those vets during all this transition, so it isn't simply a housing puzzle, but a more proactive initiative that helps these people in a larger fashion.

What does scare me is that there is a developer involved and they rarely develop from a philanthropic point of view. This is a tough one.

report

5 likes, 2 dislikes like dislike

Posted by ronko on 11/04/2014 at 1:11 PM



Even non-profit developers? With a mission of serving the poorest and most in need? <http://compassaffordablehousing.org/>. And to repeat, the building pictured in the photo WILL be saved. (By the way, I'm not attempting to be anonymous. My Weekly profile uses my initials. David Wohl)

report

2 likes, 4 dislikes like dislike

Posted by DRW on 11/04/2014 at 3:39 PM



Just to be clear, this is not a NIMBY issue.

We have repeatedly pointed out that there are numerous vacant sites in the area that would better suit this development. What we object to is the destruction of a building by the renowned Tucson architect, Josias Joesler, and the architecture of segregation that will replace it. This is a high density tower that will warehouse the poor and not integrate them into the fabric of our neighborhood in any way. This is too much building for the site. It is out of scale with the surrounding historic district, will loom over and look down on neighboring properties.

If a historic property like this were in any progressive city, such as Austin or Portland, those places would be working hard to save and rehab a building like this. Once again, the shortsighted Tucson Office of Historic Preservation has sold out our heritage to the highest bidder, and we all lose.

David Wohl is misinformed. This IS an out of town, for-profit developer [Bethel Development Inc., Ohio] that has coupled with Compass Affordable Housing in an attempt to appear noble – the wolf in sheep's clothing. There are huge tax incentives and federal dollars that will bankroll the developer now and into the future. Also, only the front building and sign will be saved, not the majority of the structure. The developer has also done a good job of misinforming the community as to who will actually live here. They initially touted this as housing for veterans, but when questioned further it is simply low-income housing. They can't guarantee that a single vet will even end up there as it will be open to all low-income residents, and that includes students.

We champion good development and encourage Bethel and Compass to look at better designed, more integrated alternatives. It can help make our city more diverse and a better place to live for everyone. Why not rehab the building as-is for low-income? Build another smaller unit nearby? That way everyone would win...the developer would be looked at as someone helping to save our architectural heritage AND helping with low-income housing. People would be better integrated.

There are millions of dollars in play here, spend a few thousand more and make this better.

As is, this is not good, noble development. This is architecture of destruction and despair. It hurts our neighborhoods, engenders poor development, and ultimately, belittles and segregates the lives of those the developer is claiming to help.

Gary Patch

report

9 likes, 0 dislikes like dislike

Posted by GSP on 11/05/2014 at 10:32 AM



I congratulate Gary on taking the Initiative to try and save this historic building. I too live in the neighborhood of Barrio Viejo and if this structure is built it will not only be an eye-sore to the corridor going into downtown, it will not be a visually appealing building for homeless vets. I have attended several of the meetings and the developers are saying the building is for homeless vets but will also be available to the homeless as well. We are not opposed to low-income housing but would like to see this building swapped out for another site that is larger and can provide better parking and design of the building for the people who occupy it. The City is working so hard to renew and revitalize our downtown and with this building it will detract from our historic nature of our surrounding neighborhoods not to mention destroy a Josias Joesler design. Lets all try to work together to accomplish both ends – retain a historic Joesler and provide a much needed low income housing project for our vets and our homeless. Tucson we must compromise and come together to accomplish this.

report

9 likes, 0 dislikes like dislike

Posted by Tirsha Stanley on 11/05/2014 at 11:09 AM



I think no one is opposed to housing for homeless vets but Downtown Tucson has more than it's fair share of low income housing. All these small businesses are opening downtown and we need housing that will be full of people that can support their businesses. There needs to be a balance. Tearing down beautiful architecture in place of generic housing that doesn't benefit our economy (except out of town developers) is bad for Downtown.

report

6 likes, 0 dislikes like dislike

Posted by Kira Dixon-Weinstein on 11/05/2014 at 11:26 AM



Patch's suggestion that the building not be torn down, and restored for low income housing is an excellent compromise. The lot is just too small for the kind of building they are proposing. And the drawings they show the public are completely out of scale.

You have to wonder why the developer would pay close to \$700k for this property, only to

demolish it, when there are many undeveloped lots up and down Stone and South Sixth that would sell for 10% of that. I myself bought a lot on South Sixth for 16k, just last year. The fix was in from the git go. The developers could easily acquire more lots to build on... empty lots.

I completely understand the need for more low income housing downtown. This is not about that. This is about smart urban planning. To play these parties against each other is wrong, and is the fault of Phoenix bureaucrats that should not be puppet mastering our community. Armory Park and Barrio Historico residents are generally supporters of liberal causes like providing homes for the homeless, etc. Creating a fake wedge between these types of causes is how the republicans are taking over our country.

What I'm saying is that there should be a way for the neighborhood to come together on this. Yes Urban Renewal in the sixties was completely fucked when they tore down half the barrio and many people in our community were deeply hurt by that. We lost precious history, and in retrospect, it was a very bad way to take federal monies to improve Tucson. If the Community Center had been a few blocks away across the freeway, the barrio could have been saved. But why does this particular act of tearing down this historic Motor Hotel seem EXACTLY like Urban Renewal of the sixties?

It has all the same elements: complete disregard for Tucson's history, Federal money, developers making a killing, and Phoenix assholes telling Tucson what to do.

While I'm on this subject... who is letting them build those monstrous solar panels that are gutting our kids playgrounds?

And last of all, Robert Frankeberger should be fired immediately. This is not the first time Frankeberger has shown a complete disregard for Tucson historic properties. I tried to get my building (the KY Market Building) declared a historic property. The city declared the KY sign historic and built in 1950, and it is one of the best examples of a Chinese Market that served the community for many years. I wrote Frankeberger as he is the person who helps makes this designation, which would have made me eligible for some serious tax breaks. After one email from another party introducing me to him, and sending him a boatload of information about the architect Terry Atkinson (who designed among other things the original Tucson Airport), he basically just ignored me. He does not serve the people he is supposed to be serving. I would be the first to sign a petition to have him canned.

report

10 likes, 0 dislikes like dislike

Posted by Danny Vinik on 11/05/2014 at 11:38 AM

 Private money, love sweat and tears have brought these neighborhoods back to a place where people want to live again. The property owners of the downtown historic neighborhoods have strived to create a standard of living and style, with respect to the history and architect. Now we get these out of town developers pimping the area to slam up their monster building under obvious false pretenses to gain federal and state money to build it.

I've been to the meetings and this building is not going to house homeless vets or homeless anybody. The developer danced around that one, which made it perfectly clear they will not be held accountable to who they rent it out to.

This building is about the developer making a big profit, with federal and state money funding a huge portion of their investment. And also at the expense of property owners of Barrio Viejo and Armory Park, This development as it stands, devalues everything around it.

report

3 likes, 0 dislikes like dislike

Posted by Barrio artist on 11/06/2014 at 12:49 AM

 4 floors is not a tower by anyone's standards. The sign and office building (what you see in the pic) will be saved. The hotel buildings themselves are totally unremarkable and insignificant. This while argument is so heartless it makes me want to puke.

Anyone who says it's not based on NIMBY is just being dishonest. Where is the rendering of the proposed structure? That would be helpful to the debate. Perhaps if Mr Patch had been hired for design services he'd be happier. He's already gotten his share of city money though if you ask me. What was his fee for the tile pictures on the 4th Ave underpass?

report

0 likes, 4 dislikes like dislike

Posted by Karlito on 11/07/2014 at 9:06 AM

 You should read things more carefully Karlito.

I suggested they rehab the building as-is for low-income housing and build more on a nearby lot. That is still In My Back Yard. I reiterate, once again, we are not opposed to low income housing. It is the poor design and cheap quality of the project we are opposing. Segregating the poor and warehousing them in cheap buildings seems much more heartless to me than what we are suggesting...quality housing, Integration, respect for history.

And yes, where are the renderings of the proposed structure? We have repeatedly asked to see scale drawings in relationship to the existing neighborhood and the developer refuses to show us any. All we have seen are elevation line drawings...a 4 story shoebox that does, indeed, tower over the surrounding buildings.

As for the 4th Ave Underpass project, that has nothing to do with this! But since you brought it up, we are so proud of that project. It involved and represents over 7,000 Tucson citizens and was a positive, fun addition to our city. And yes, we did get paid to do that project. We worked for over two years to bring that to fruition and trust me, the pay was more along the lines of a labor of love than a get rich quick scheme.

GP

report

1 like, 0 dislikes like dislike

Posted by GSP on 11/07/2014 at 10:03 AM

 Why do the majority of the "pro" proponents have to take nasty personal jabs, or try to turn the argument into a racial thing, or classism ? It must be awful living with a brain that functions like that.  
The truth on this project is revealed, even the developer & the government employees knew this building was a problem that's why they tried to sneak it through.  
Is it so unreasonable to ask that this project be developed so it can be an asset to the area? Instead of dropping a big turd in an area where other other investors have thoughtfully invested to create the desirable, cool place it is now, a place everyone loves and wants live? Come on Developer, Compass, tap into the wealth of good living design, turn this into a good project we can all be proud of.

report

2 likes, 0 dislikes like dislike

Posted by Barrio artist on 11/07/2014 at 1:20 PM

 This is gonna happen and you guys are gonna hate it hahaha I couldn't be happier! Stop buying houses in the urban core and expecting that infill on a larger scale won't happen. It's just plan stupid. With any luck the home prices in the barrio and armory will drop to affordable levels for normal folks! What kind of argument is "the units are too small and have only one window?" That's just urban density. And 4 floors may "tower" over some houses but the one right next door to the south (which is already multi unit rental) is 2 stories and a high peaked roof not to mention it sits several feet above street level. But still I'd like to see a rendering. NIMBY, NIMBY, NIMBY is still all I hear. Move out of the urban core if you don't want vertical development.

report

0 likes, 3 dislikes like dislike

Posted by Karlito on 11/09/2014 at 1:07 PM

 I seriously cannot believe what I just read - Why can't people just work together on this and not let it become a personal? We are proud of our downtown and the hard work we have done to our barrio houses in keeping their historic nature. Sorry if we want to have something that truly blends in with the historic neighborhood and something that works for the people who will be living in it. Again, instead of flinging ridiculous comments let's try and solve this as a community - a community we all can be proud of.

report

2 likes, 0 dislikes like dislike

Posted by Trisha Stanley on 11/10/2014 at 12:56 PM

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