

RONSTADT TRANSIT CENTER JOINT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
SOME ADDITIONALLY MISSED QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC
Emailed after July 22, 2015, public presentations through April 3, 2015

Please note that City staff received word from some members of the public who submitted questions/comments during the review period that their questions/comments were not included among those posted on the Office of Integrated Planning web page for the Ronstadt Transit Center Joint Development. Staff checked and found that some questions/comments had indeed been missed when the questions/comments were being compiled. Staff apologizes profusely and thanks commenters for pointing out these oversights.

Similar to previous questions/comment postings, the questions/comments are arranged to reflect whether they were directed to one of the two Proposal Teams (i.e., Alexander or Peach) or to both teams. Both the Proposal Teams and the Selection Committee have been provided these additional questions/comments.

E-MAIL: PEACH General / Multiple Topics

I am writing in support of Peach Properties' proposal to build an attractive and realistic mixed-use project at the Ronstadt Center. As a fellow downtown business owner and developer, the person I look up to the most is Mr. Schwabe and the many excellent projects he and his wife Patricia have completed (rather than flipped).

I believe that the density and direction of this project is vastly superior than the other one floated by Mr. Campbell. While I realize that many Tucsonans equate density with something negative, I was formerly a Somerville, MA resident, which is the densest city in the US. Tucson is or was the least dense city in the country. The average economic activity in dense urban areas is far greater than in spreadout sprawl areas, such as Tucson.

This property needs to be exactly the type of dense mixed-use proposed here if the city is ever going to recoup its huge investments in the Streetcar, the Underpass and the various deals they have made with a small group of developers. Without smart infill such as this project, downtown is bound to stall out which is the opposite of what the City is interested in seeing happen.

I have also read that some opponents of this project are painting it as too expensive--- but from my research, this project taps into federal grants which greatly decreases the city of Tucson's financial expense compared to Mr. Campbell's proposal.

Last, I think it is self-evident that when given the opportunity to do something meaningful, architecturally interesting and high quality, Mr. Campbell flipped the land he was given by the city to Capstone, which created Cadence, which is consistently described as literally the cheapest, most flimsy and lowest-quality project in recent memory. On the other hand, Peach has been responsible for One North 5th, the 44 Broadway block, the Toole Street Warehouses, The Herbert and countless other eye-catching, historically responsible projects which have transformed downtown Tucson for the better.

Please support Peach's proposal, or watch another flip job degrade downtown permanently. I am strongly in support of the proposal of the Alexander Company/Oasis Tucson for the Ronstadt Transit Center. I firmly believe that the present shade structure and its tile work and mature oak trees should be preserved.

Too much of our previous (beautiful) downtown area has already been demolished and lost forever.

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Please - let's preserve what beauty remains in our town.

E-MAIL: PEACH General / Multiple Topics

I believe that Peach Properties has, by far, the best proposal and I strongly urge they be selected.

COMMENTS:

The Peach vision and goal statement clearly outlines key elements that illustrate a deep understanding of the role this project will have in expressing Tucson's culture. These elements fall into two categories: Innovation and Preservation.

INNOVATION

1. South and north integrated, open-air, public spaces designed to accommodate diverse retail, event and recreational activities that engage downtown transit users, workers, residents and visitors both day and night
2. Urban agriculture integrated to support on-site marketplace and area restaurants with local produce as well as support residents with gardening as a health and wellness activity. (Growing heritage plants might also support a downtown cooking classroom or commercial kitchen that focuses on regional foods and flavors)
3. A Wellness Center (in conjunction with a pharmacy and, perhaps, a "Minute Clinic") to support hotel guests as well as other tourists and visitors in conjunction with transit users and residents
4. A University of Arizona Arts and Sciences Center (housing the Gem and Mineral Museum that is seeking a new home?) to provide new educational opportunities to residents and visitors as well as specific support and enhancement of Tucson's Winter "gem and mineral" tourist and convention season
- 5a. Connecting compatible uses (grocery and Greyhound) on the historic Corbett Building site along with a bike and pedestrian bridge that erases the unintended boundary the railroad (and future downtown links) imposes on the integration of downtown neighborhoods north and south of the tracks
- 5b. The historic Corbett Building site provides transit users with access to Greyhound use while providing Greyhound with space to grow and limiting their bus route to a single city street with direct connection to I10
6. A hotel that contributes to tourism by being directly connected to an airport shuttle, public transportation and being in the heart of a walkable downtown with multiple small venue culinary, arts, entertainment and education/museum opportunities as well as the TCC
7. 256 transit oriented residential units designed to attract a mix of generations and incomes by providing (20%) 51 affordable units that support meeting City goals of downtown housing for the working class and elderly
8. Respecting the Warehouse Arts Management Master Plan (unanimously adopted by Mayor & Council) by providing for artist live/work/retail space on the NE corner of 6th & Toole Avenues

PRESERVATION

1. Peach's Commitment to respecting and integrating historic site structures guarantees this project using the Ronstadt shade arcade constructed of bricks from the Ronstadt Hardware

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Store and hand-made tiles by local public artist Melody Peters.

2. The Peach Property approach to the preservation of historic buildings has given downtown, in particular, a living portfolio of Tucson's architectural, economic and social history. Commercial and residential projects Peach Properties has led or been involved with include (but are not limited to):

A. 1800's---Steinfeld Manor and Manning House

B. Turn of the 20th Century---railroad warehouses now 1 (Sinfonia) and 119 (Borderlands Brewery) E. Toole Avenue

C. 1920's - Mid-Century---Arizona Sash & Door (St. Mary's Road); Market Inn, DeWitt Building, Firestone Building & Santa Theresa Tile Works Building (N. 6th Avenue); 44 E. Broadway; Providence Building (50-64 E. Broadway); Thunder Canyon Brewery Block (210-220)

E. Broadway

D. 1970's---The Herbert and 1 N. 5th Avenue

By no means is this a comprehensive list of the ideas, concepts and practices outlined in the Peach Proposal that make it the best response to the City's RFP. As both a property owner and business owner located on the NE corner of 6th Street and 6th Avenue, I believe the Peach Proposal understands and addresses the potential positive effect this project can have on adjacent businesses and neighborhoods.

The investment Peach is willing to make in this project matches their concept. It is ambitious and forward thinking. It would be a boost to downtown that will have positive effects rippling far beyond the site. This is the kind of thinking that families like the Steinfeld's and Ronstadt's used to develop our community in years past. Those families gave us the bones for a great downtown to serve Tucson and Southern Arizona for decades if not centuries. The men and women, the young and the experienced, on the Peach Team seem to have the same kind of mindset.

This is the kind of personal investment our first families made in the place they worked and lived. It served us well for generations. I believe the Peach Proposal and it's personal investment can serve us well for more generations to come.

E-MAIL: BOTH General / Multiple Topics

Is this a done deal? Is there a "I have no clue why anyone would live above a bus hub" place for comments? How about until there are no vacant retail stores we don't keep building more (TEP building, La Placita, many parts of Broadway, Congress, 6th, etc.), why not use already vacant parking lots (the City owns many). Build on those instead of building in places where things need torn down. Or is more vacant retail spaces the true goal? I'm sure that this is good for the firm that gets the job, the people of Tucson, not so much. It's too bad we only get what the powerful people want, not what would be better for the people that use public transportation.

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1. Peach proposal.

Pros: Open transit area easily accessed and does not require a turnstile or other "us versus them" segregation device. Public spaces. Potential for 24/7 activity. Ryan has done good work elsewhere.

Cons: Trying to be everything to everyone will end up being nothing to anyone. More of the same "neo Stalinist" (as someone said) that is already downtown. Will cost how much?

2. Alexander proposal.

Pros: Keeping the existing arcade. Alexander people seem to have a much better handle on what funding is available, how much, and they seem to have their sh!t together. Roundabout at the north end.

Cons: Tucson is not New York, and Sun Tran is not a closed-loop subway system. "Improving efficiency" by installing turnstiles sounds like a less-controversial way to say "keep out the riffraff", which we have already seen to much of with "no trespassing" signs at the transit center. Visitors and tourists must love that. Solid rectangular box takes "prominent northern views" away from public and gives them to apartment renters only. We have already lost views of the Santa Ritas from 4th Ave because of a student housing dump, basta! (Enough!)

What Ronstadt should be:

Keep existing arcade. Use entrances in arcade as entrances to transit area and public spaces, not to a specific restaurant or store. Transit area open and accessible to all. Access from retail and restaurants from the street and also from the transit area, so convenient for everyone. Stuff above transit on only half of the site so that the public can still see mountains to the north. Transit area designed so that if Congress is shut off to cars buses can still function efficiently and be easy for pedestrians to get to.

Tucson is a poor city, 40% of residents are at or below poverty line. Students with parents credit cards does not change this. Too much of downtown has been taken away from everyone and given to rich kids. Make something for US. All bus riders ask for is more and better restrooms, information and ticket booth with real people, shade, benches, and not to feel like we're in a prison yard. It shouldn't be hard to do this.