

STATEMENT from the Stroudwater Village Association regarding the proposed rezoning of 1945 Congress Street (Elks Club Property), October 2015. stroudwatervillageassociation@gmail.com

This statement should be considered in addition to our prior letters to the Planning Board from January 2015, May 2015, July 2015 and September 2015.

The Stroudwater Village Association remains opposed to any one-off rezoning of the parcel at 1945 Congress Street, or for that matter any other individual parcel in the neighborhood area, until a comprehensive visioning process for the neighborhood is undertaken.

Consider these facts:

- At the September 2015 workshop regarding this zoning request, several members of the planning board and City staff stated their agreement that it makes sense to do a proper visioning exercise for the Jetport and Stroudwater area, including but not limited to the abutting intersection and the Stroudwater Historic District, before a split vote of 4-2 (nowhere near unanimous) to recommend approval of the request.
- The City has just now kicked off the process to review and re-certify its Comprehensive Plan, and is in the middle of the process of updating the Jetport's Sustainability Master Plan.
- The Outer Congress Street Phase II traffic calming improvements (some of which are quite close to this parcel) are scheduled to be implemented in the near future.
- Most alarming, in the short time since this application process began, parcels surrounding several other similar properties (flagged by the SVA in our July letter) have come on the market or changed their market status (for example, gone under contract). Rumor abounds that these are commercial developments. In addition, we know that several individual residential owners have petitioned to be included in any hypothetical commercial zoning. Given the financial incentive that "cashing out" to commercial developers represents, it is likely more will follow.

The SVA and our members remain surprised by and uncomfortable with the City's insistence on rezoning a single parcel ahead of proper planning for the area. We believe that to do so is shortsighted and reckless, especially given the timing relative to planning processes already underway. Inputs from the Comprehensive Plan and Jetport Master Plan updates, as well as from the stakeholders (including but not limited to SVA members and the Elks Club), should be incorporated into a clear and transparent visioning process. This is especially important since, as described in the last bullet above, we are already seeing evidence of the "domino effect" of this potential parcel rezoning. There are at this point no rules of engagement or even a common understanding about the implications of this potential change.

Bottom line: we have not heard a valid reason for tinkering with zoning *before* thinking about the big picture. Indeed, given the potential mess being created, we believe the big picture should be driving zoning, not the other way around.

To restate, **the Stroudwater Village Association remains opposed to any one-off rezoning of the parcel at 1945 Congress Street, or for that matter any other individual parcel in the neighborhood area, until a comprehensive visioning process for the neighborhood is undertaken.**