

March 26, 2013

Dear Lakewood Neighbor,

Hello, my name is Alex Winslow. My wife, Jacque, and our three kids are your neighbors on Avalon one block east. As you may have noticed, the NE corner of Richmond Ave at Abrams has undergone a few changes in the last few months, having been cleared of excess brush and vegetation, fencing up and down, as well as the removal of the unsound garage. Our family owns 100% of the entities that contain the two parcels (one with a home on it, 6407, the other, 6401, vacant).

I came to own the property last summer while still serving as president of the Lakewood Neighborhood Association. Last spring, I embarked on a program to develop stone markers (see attached) like the ones at the Spillway and White Rock Lake at various points of our neighborhood borders to further enhance our sense of place of "Lakewood". While developing our plan, the properties became available for sale. Fellow LNA board member Scott Jackson introduced me to one of our wealthy neighbors, who expressed an interest in providing the resources to purchase and create a "pocket park" similar to that at the NE corner of Hillcrest and Lovers Lane. Acting individually on behalf of the LNA, I put (my) earnest money down at the title company with plans to have our neighbor close on the land so that full development of the park could begin, like we did for the Perot Museum. (By the way, we will put a neighborhood marker/signage on the corner.)

Alas, despite two contract extensions, our neighborhood friend ultimately declined to provide funds to close on the property for a park. At that point, I faced a decision to lose my earnest money deposit, or go ahead and close on the property as a rental property for my family.

I closed on the property and immediately had a crew trim the overgrown vegetation. This property had probably been unoccupied for over 25 years. There is substantial deferred maintenance and renovating the existing structures for residential use will require substantial investment.

While doing my homework on how to renovate the existing home, a friend asked me if I'd considered rezoning the property for commercial use. I told them I had not considered it, as the property is within the Lakewood Conservation District, and the document is quite clear that property within its borders is for single-family use only.

While serving on the Lakewood Neighborhood Board, I attended community meetings for both the Whole Foods redevelopment and for the Wachovia Bank and our new YMCA on Gaston Rd. As a homeowner, it is invigorating to see huge sums being invested in our neighborhood, but at the same time frustrating to see developments sometimes not realize their full potential.

Knowing first hand how difficult it can be to repurpose real estate, particularly in East Dallas, I called Bob Weiss for advice. Bob is a conservation district neighbor (since sold his home, however), a friend and is the current LNA board Planning and Zoning committee chair and former Dallas City Plan Commission Chairman. Bob is very enthusiastic about the prospect for this property being zoned commercial (see attached letter).

After speaking with Bob about it, I called Councilman Kadane, who as a lifelong Lakewooder, also finds a commercial use for this corner to be the best use for it. At the next Lakewood Neighborhood board meeting, I suggested this use for the property. It received unanimous support.

Indeed, it's a very busy corner. After telling a friend in the commercial real estate business about it, I immediately started getting phone calls from those representing commercial tenants. My vision for this development still remains from the first time I looked at it for neighborhood signage: This is THE key property at the juncture of our residents and the shopping district, our "front door" if you will. Even before it was owned by me, as LNA president, I asked for (and was granted) a sidewalk thanks to Councilman Kadane.

Here's the good news: Unlike the planned (Chipotle?) on the NW corner, who absentee landowner required huge rents and upfront capital, thus narrowing the possible tenant uses only to national chains with access to capital, this project and the team I have assembled is "All Lakewood." Given the prominence of this corner, any structure should be a testament to the great heritage our neighborhood enjoys, particularly given the uniqueness of character of our historic homes.

Now allow me to introduce you to the team:

My dear dad, Steve Winslow, is a retired architect formerly with Omniplan Architects. His last major project was the expansion of Northpark Mall. It has been great fun working on this project with him, as he'll draw as many renderings as I ask him to, and bring our kids in the room while doing it. He is enthusiastic to help me, and happens to know a great deal about retail architecture.

Stacy McVey, Developer, Lakewood Blvd homeowner, is assisting me with development. He lives in a beautiful 1932 Clifford D. Hutsell home, which is included in Field Guide to American Houses, by East Dallas' own Virginia and Lee McAlester (pg.427, picture #2). Stacy is Co-GP of The LOT and supervised its redevelopment.

Rob Baldwin, Zoning consultant, Baldwin Planning. I was introduced to Rob as an investor in The LOT, where he has been very helpful of late negotiating with DART and the City of Dallas to make the bridge to the Santa Fe Trail a reality Rob is known to be very thoughtful when working with neighborhood groups to ensure their interests are protected as well as those of a planned development. Although Rob isn't a Lakewooder, he is from the M-Streets.

Builder: I have one in mind, but the selection of a builder will come later in the process. Given that the project will have a residential theme, I am likely to employ a builder who has done a tremendous amount of work on existing Hutsell homes, so that details can be realized as if the structure were built when Mssrs. Hutsell, Dines & Kraft first began work here in the 1920s. Any builder I choose will have a good reputation not only towards construction but also in being considerate to neighbors, i.e., a clean and safe worksite, no crews after hours, etc.

Our specific zoning request is to take it out of the conservation district, and rezone to a commercial zoning district, but with deed restrictions that prohibit inappropriate uses on the site, such as drive thrus, gas stations, etc. A list of proposed uses is attached. The intent here is to have a small neighborhood center acting as our front door where can meet and congregate.

This is an exciting project and I look forward to meeting with you all individually to discuss any concerns you may have.

Alex

About Alex:

I grew up in the Northern Hills neighborhood, which recently became Dallas' newest conservation district. I attended DISD schools, including Spence Middle School and Skyline. I am a graduate of Texas A&M University.

My service to the community, includes:

Lakewood Neighborhood Association President from 2010 to 2012
Board of Directors, Perot Museum of Nature and Science (2003-present)
Secretary, Friends of Lakewood (Lakewood Elementary Dad's Club)
Vice Chair, Finance, Tejas Caddo District (East Dallas) Boy Scouts of America (current)
VP & Treasurer, East Dallas Community Organization (EDCO), non-profit affordable housing builder