

December 2nd, 2014

Tulsa City Councilors
City of Tulsa / City Hall
175 E 2nd St
Tulsa, OK 74103

Dear Councilors:

The Smart Growth Tulsa Coalition recommends the City of Tulsa construct a sidewalk on the east side of Riverside Drive connecting downtown Tulsa via Veterans Park to the entrance of A Gathering Place as proposed by the Engineering Services Department. Mayor Bartlett's executive order cancelling the proposed sidewalk is inconsistent with the city's adopted public policies and established priorities for pedestrian access along arterial streets.

As councilors, you are called to make decisions and take actions which serve the broader public's interest. You are strongly encouraged to investigate the options and find an avenue to correct this shortsighted decision based upon seemingly vague and anecdotal information.

It's clear that the most recent city council went to great lengths improve the communications and dialogue with the mayor and create a climate more favorable to collaboration and cooperation. The actions we are proposing you take should not be seen as an attempt to compromise those efforts, but rather a fulfillment of your duties and responsibilities as councilors to provide checks and balances in Tulsa's governance. Tulsans are counting on you to preserve the interests of all of our citizens including those whose physical challenges and limitations demand consideration.

The following reasons are offered in support of this recommendation:

- Building the Riverside Drive sidewalk is consistent with Tulsa's Comprehensive Plan, providing a network of public improvements in the rights-of-way which serve and connect people. It is important to note the City does not allow neighborhoods or residents to opt out of other established networks or systems like water or sewer improvements. Sidewalks should be no different.
- Tulsa's Complete Streets Policy supports the comprehensive plan by mandating that sidewalks be included in major arterial road improvement projects. Exceptions are considered only for the most compelling reasons which have not been sufficiently provided in this case.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides civil rights protection to individuals with disabilities. The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disabilities by calling for the removal of barriers. Reducing safe and convenient access to A Gathering Place could potentially put the City of Tulsa at risk of enforcement actions by the Justice Department.
- The shortest distance between two points is a straight line whether there is a sidewalk or not. Expecting pedestrians to cross Riverside Drive twice and take a longer route to their destination is neither practical nor reasonable. Tulsa's policies should encourage and promote pedestrian access and connectivity as a legitimate mode of transportation.

- Tulsa competes with other cities for tourism, business expansions, and a workforce who are increasingly attracted to livable communities with adequate transit options and a favorable “Walk Score.” Let’s send the right message to those considering Tulsa as a potential destination.
- Encouraging an active, healthier lifestyle to reduce obesity, diabetes, and heart disease are goals of our city. Walking can be encouraged by investments in infrastructure to improve pedestrian connectivity and access.
- Broad public support from all areas of Tulsa and by citizens from all walks of life exists for the Riverside Drive sidewalk. To date, no data from transportation designers, engineers or public safety experts have been presented to provide a logical rationale to defer building the Riverside Drive sidewalk.
- A Gathering Place is projected to attract a million or more visitors a year. The decision whether or not to build the Riverside Drive sidewalk to provide added pedestrian access should serve the best interests of entire community. The concerns of area residents have been heard and can be addressed without eliminating the Riverside Drive sidewalk.

The Smart Growth Tulsa Coalition will be encouraging members of the community including both individuals and organizations to share their concerns with you in their own words and in their own way. We are also pleased to provide you with the attached document including the names of those individuals and organizations that are already on record as supporting the sidewalk by signing a similar letter that was addressed to Mayor Bartlett. Please take a few minutes to read the comments by those supporters, illuminating the reasons for their support.

Respectfully,

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