

88.7 KUHF, Houston Public Radio: High-Rise Development Stirs Council Controversy

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High-Rise Development Stirs Council Controversy

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By: Laurie Johnson

West University Community Members are fighting a proposed multi-use development called the Ashby High-Rise -- and Houston City Council Members are taking sides. Houston Public Radio's Laurie Johnson has more.

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The proposed 23-story high-rise would include a restaurant, specialty retail, some office space, a parking garage and as many as 226 apartments. It's a proposal that has residents of the area up in arms, saying the high-rise won't fit in with the look and feel of the West University area. Houston Councilmember Peter Brown calls it a case of inappropriate, incompatible development.

"I am very pleased that our administration and this council are committed to a new program that would -- regulations and ordinances that would better protect our neighborhoods."

Although Brown cites support from the council table, not everyone is 100 percent on his side. Councilmember Addie Wiseman says she questions whether money is what's fueling the opposition to this project.

"Development that's not wanted in a high-income neighborhood will be stopped by this body. But development that's not wanted in our middle-class neighborhoods -- that this body is just going to turn a deaf ear and just give no pause to their concerns. I'm really concerned about that, that we seem to have a double standard here."

Houston Mayor Bill White says it's ridiculous to assert that the city pays more attention to upscale neighborhoods.

"Generally, most of our time has been spent protecting neighborhoods where people rent or have modest incomes."

The mayor says the administration's opposition to the Ashby High-Rise is based on how traffic from the development will impact the neighborhood. The developers have submitted a traffic impact study, which was approved by the city of Houston, showing no mitigation is required by the city. Laurie Johnson, Houston Public Radio News.

Opponents Website: <http://www.stopashbyhighrise.org/>

Developers Website: <http://www.buckfund.com/1717%20Bissonnet/>