I am still nauseous after your discussion of that transformative project for the Ocean Center surface parking lots and surrounding area.

To me, it’s another big swing for the fences that completely ignores the victories we can have playing small ball. Small ball victories would have transformed the neighborhood over the past decade. Instead of playing victorious small ball, we played the EZone Plan and struck out.

Please don’t kill our neighborhoods with another big swing and a miss. Please make small ball the primary and immediate game plan. I’m not against the actual transformative development proposed. What nauseates me is the child like joy and certainty that this big swing will actually be the game winning home run. What nauseates me is the fear that all attention will be focused on this big swing, this game winning home run, and there will be no effective attention paid to the truly transformative, mundane plays that could actually save our neighborhoods.

A truly transformative game plan would put code enforcement, increased public safety, relief for the homeless, cleanliness, beautification, a sensible, fully enforced, bike week master plan, and staff accountability ahead of new development. It would be truly transformative if the city actually provided effective leadership on events, redevelopment, and basic services.

Instead our code enforcement department is MIA. They seem willfully ineffective. You have to ask, who benefits, and in what way, when our older neighborhoods crumble?

Leadership of our CRA Board is non-existent. In our CRAs, half the money spent in FY 2017 was on payroll. During that year, the Main Street CRA spent $5,500 in grants, $50,000 on pressure washing in prep/cleanup for events, and $62,000 on fireworks and street decorations. Again, you have to ask, who benefits, and in what way, when our CRAs are poorly supervised and virtually non-functional?

The current state of our older neighborhoods represents years of inaction and failed leadership at city hall. The very existence of this committee is a testament to that failure. When will anyone be held accountable?

How does this transformative development help house our working poor? If this transformative private development is built on land currently owned by the public, then at least 20% of the units developed should be affordable for those making $10 an hour. Does your vision of this transformative project include this consideration?

And in all the joyful talk of this transformative project, where are the Main Street bike events? For the two big property owners, it will take some pretty dancing to cash in on the transformative development while letting the goose that lays the golden eggs continue to thrive before leading it to the slaughter. Very tricky timing.

My fear is that your primary recommendation will be this big swing, this transformative development. My fear is that this big swing will not provide any housing relief for our working poor, will not hold anyone responsible for the current sad state of affairs, and will not result in a better provision of basic services. My fear is there will be no small ball victories for the current residents.

Best wishes,
Anne