December 27, 2023

To the Chair and members of the Planning and Zoning Commission,

Regarding the current Methodist System application for a development at 5130 Bellaire Blvd, let me first say that my primary physicians at the Medical Clinic of Houston are associated with Methodist. Nevertheless, a large building on the old Randalls site housing Methodist personnel would not be my choice for that location. However, though it appears that Methodist does not want to be an unpopular neighbor, that hasn't stopped them from pursuing that site.

They are first a business, albeit a non-profit one. They have chosen to expand and compete with other medical groups located in the Bellaire area, and legally it appears they have a right to lease or purchase the site at 5130 Bellaire Blvd and build what they want so long as it is code-compliant and meets the zoning requirements or is approved as a planned development by P&Z and City Council.

A different P&Z and a previous City Council set this in motion almost 10 years ago when they created the UV-D that requires zero setback for the front of a building and allows up to 90% site coverage. Those changes led to the construction of the new H-E-B and to the loss of businesses in that area.

At this point in Bellaire's history, other than food establishments, retail has been in decline. If the site remains available we could end up with mixed-use multifamily - apartments or condos. In most small, affluent cities in our area these would be located on the fringe or not allowed at all. (Of the condos at the corner of Mapleridge and Jessamine in Houston, only 33% are homesteaded.) Now we come to the latest application from Methodist, which appears to be close to code compliant.

The idea that 75% or more of a building along Bellaire Blvd could border on the front property line (per code compliance) is appalling. So is allowing 90% of the site to be covered by a structure, with H-E-B as a prime example. If Methodist Hospital System chooses to meet all code-compliant requirements the design could be much less acceptable than the current plan.

The current design includes fewer structures and no garage in exchange for surface parking and trees. To me that offers a more spacious feel to the site, and I would prefer that view to one with a monolith that might legally sprawl from Bellaire Blvd to Bissonnet and cover 90% of the site.

I'm still concerned about traffic on South Rice, but if we are destined to see a Methodist facility on that site I favor the current proposal rather than risking a project that could be much worse but is allowed by right.

Sincerely,

Jane McNeel