

From: Ponderosa Neighborhood and Sequoia Detox Centers, LLC

Written By: Al Merkel

Date:

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

- Uncontrolled development the largest challenge in Spokane Valley
- Residents, Families, and Neighborhoods feel like we are not being represented by current elected officials or city regulations
- Developers often initiate development procedures with little to no consideration for neighborhood integrity, safety, economic consequences of growth, and impact on resident.
- The city government is not acting as the balancer of forces it should be by making developers involve communities very early on in the process to give residents a voice and allow regulators, developers, and citizens sufficient time to think of all the consequences of development.
- Sequoia Detox is an example of a company trying to do right by a neighborhood despite the situation.
- Ponderosa Neighborhood organized under the leadership of Al Merkel and the neighbors directly adjacent to the Detox Facility.
- Realizing strong legislation exists limiting residents' ability to stop such developments, Ponderosa negotiated for the best deal.
- 3 options were presented to the neighborhood:
 - 1. Fight through the legal system despite city leadership that doesn't care much about neighborhood opinions and strong legislation allowing such facilities.
 - 2. A buyout option whereby the neighbors could pool money together to settle some of sequoias investments in return for abandoning the project and selling the property.
 - 3. Working with Sequoia to mitigate the situation, agreeing on safety improvements and resources, and adjusting the business model to make sure community concerns were addressed. This also involved additional monetary investment on Sequoia's part.
- The neighborhood ultimately selected option 3.
- No one is truly happy with the ultimate situation.
 - Sequoia is investing additional funds to satisfy the community and will continue to operate under watch of a community advisory board formed of Ponderosa neighborhood members.
 - The neighborhood will now have a detox facility operating in a historically family only area.
 - If the city was representing our neighborhoods better they would have gathered everyone together months ago before so much time and money had been invested into the project. Had Sequoia known about the opposition before committing many resources, they would not have gone forward and much time could have been saved.
- The situation represents the best compromise, and also indicates how developers should approach situations. Sequoia stood up and asked how they could help in the situation and were incredibly reasonable despite having no legally compelling reason to do so. This final process should be indicative of the community minded relationship developers should have with neighborhoods, and should be a model (of course taking place much earlier in the process) that our city regulations should be based off of.

Quotes:

“It is a pity that neighborhoods and residents of our fine city have to resort to making sure that city planning is functional on their own under the current city leadership.” Al Merkel, Spokane Valley, 509-315-6416

“Sequoia, while still not being the kind of business I would like to see in a neighborhood, has stepped up to become a community partner. That is a courageous thing to do, and it makes them a good neighbor and a welcome addition to the city as a whole.” Al Merkel, Spokane Valley, 509-315-6416

“Although nobody wants the Detox Center in our neighborhood, Sequoia has been very accommodating and agreed to do much more than required by the city. They’ve been open about communication, and I believe sincere about being a good neighbor.” Gary Smith, Mercy Ct., Spokane Valley, 509-953-6502

Al Merkel

CC:

Spokesman Review

The Current

The Inlander

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