

September 20, 2015

Dear Fellow East Siders:

We have been blessed with another beautiful weekend, which I just capped off with a visit to Hope Street Fall Festival. This week's letter discusses a traffic study for River Road, a turning point for the downtown baseball stadium proposal and using the zoning laws to regulate student housing.

The Department of Public Works has completed a [Traffic Impact Study](#) to review the possible consequences of a proposal to convert River Road into a one-way southbound route. In public meetings last year, residents expressed concern that such a reconfiguration could create unsustainable traffic volumes for people who work in the Richmond Square office complex. According to the study, the traffic impacts can be managed by changing the timing of the traffic lights along Butler Avenue, particularly the lights at Butler and Waterman. The proponents of the project have indicated they will be having additional public meetings in the coming months for further discussions.

In an [Article](#) published today, the Providence Journal reported the Pawtucket Red Sox have ended their negotiations regarding the I-195 land, concluding the barriers to the proposal could not be overcome. Most recently Brown University informed the team it would cost \$15 million to purchase Brown's parcel, which currently houses the admissions office. This additional cost was one of several issues the proposal raised (including the loss of a public riverfront park, stormwater drainage, relocation of utilities, etc.) that weighed against its realization. In the meantime, Lifespan announced it had purchased the Victory Square site, which the Planning Department had recommended as an alternative, due to the absence of the negative impacts associated with the I-195 parcel, the greater potential for new development in the immediately surrounding area and the existence of a pending tax stabilization agreement on the property. The team announced it is expanding its search to other sites, including Pawtucket. With that said, I am hopeful the team will continue looking at Victory Square, as Lifespan has not announced its development plans for the site.

Last week, the Mayor signed into law an ordinance to restrict student housing, to address stated concerns about density and misbehavior. I voted against the proposal, because I do not believe it will not be effective in addressing the identified problems. The ordinance prohibits renting single-family homes to more than three college students, while permitting owners to rent out to larger numbers of non-students (including drug dealers, sex offenders, etc.), or for that matter three college students plus an unlimited number of non-students. For this reason, I do not believe the ordinance will effectively address the density issue. It also will not effectively address student tenant (mis)behavior, as student "house parties" are prevalent in unregulated multifamily student housing (three-deckers, etc.), and the misbehaving students often are visitors, not the tenants. Also, there is neither legislation or resources to enforce the new prohibition. The City Plan Commission did not endorse the legislation, instead recommending a task force to study the issues, something numerous speakers proposed at legislative hearings. Had the City Council agreed to such a process, it could have acted in a more comprehensive way, as we did last term in researching, publishing and implementing the [Night Club Safety Report](#). Unfortunately the current process resulting in an imposed "solution" that did not address the concerns of stakeholders, which may result in ineffective legislation, a lawsuit and a repeal through the courts.

Sincerely,

