

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

I am writing to you as a concerned neighbor. Sixteen years ago, we purchased a home on West Main Street shortly after learning we were expecting. In addition to the lovely White River, we choose our house because of its proximity to Tuhey Park and downtown. The park has been significant to my family in a variety of ways. While my children no longer host Halloween parties at the park (an elementary school tradition for my twins) and our overweight pup Spencer who appreciated a break at the park on a long walk has passed on; the memories we cherish from our time at the park are an important part of our family history. The green space at the park was the perfect place to conduct mento/diet coke science experiments, the open space provided an ideal track for sibling races throughout the years, and the plot allowed us a chance to fly kites on windy afternoons. Persuading my teenagers to visit the park these days is more of a challenge than it once was. Nonetheless, when I am successful, we continue to be in awe of the speed of the slides on the Towers! (If you haven't been down one of the slides- it is worth the visit).

While the proposal to partner with the local YMCA will not eliminate the park, it offers little if any benefit for those in the neighborhood. It would eliminate the green spaces where my family was able to spend precious time together outside and replace it with a private building and a parking lot. If the mayor and council are interested in enhancing the neighborhood, designating more funds for park improvement and additional equipment and facilities that are free to community members would be a great start. I understand that the YMCA is crucial to the livelihood of the downtown community and as such, it should be a priority to keep close by. Luckily, several alternative locations have been proposed that will meet the needs outlined by the YMCA and preserve our park.

As council members, I urge you to speak with community members and prioritize our voices as you make your decision about the future of this site. Parks are a material reflection of the quality of life in a community. A vote to trade public green space for the convenience of a private organization would be a disgrace.

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