

From: Pam Johnson  
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Date: Monday - September 17, 2007  
Subject: Letter to Editor

Dear Editor:

A column in the Sept. 16 edition of the Herald-Tribune misstated several facts regarding the recent rezoning petition of Tra Ponti, a condo/hotel development proposed for Venice.

First, the area where the proposed project would be built is east of U.S. 41 Business, not in the historic or height overlay districts designated for four stories or less. In fact, the "rules" for the area allows for building heights of 35 feet by right, and up to 80 feet if approved by city council. This is built into the code so every project that requests additional height in the commercial mixed-use zoning area is not automatically allowed 80 feet. However, the opportunity to request it exists and may be granted where deemed appropriate.

One of the considerations for additional height is the height of buildings adjacent to the proposed project. In this case, three adjacent buildings are nine stories tall. The proposed six- and seven-story buildings provide a transition to the three- and four-story buildings across U.S. 41 Business.

The commercial mixed-use zone was added to the city's code of ordinances last year in an effort to reinstate the John Nolen plan in areas serving as centers for financial, commercial, tourism, professional and cultural activities. Properties designated as historic architectural control district or neighborhood height overlay district are not eligible for the CMU designation. Permitted uses in CMU include government, community meeting rooms, retail and service establishments such as restaurants, bars, spas, salons, athletic clubs, nightclubs, art studios, antique shops, parking lots and garages, banks without drive-through facilities, open air cafes, residential dwellings, hotels, motels, condominium hotels, docks, and business, medical and professional offices. The proposed uses for Tra Ponti fit this category.

To imply the council members voted to extend the height of the proposed project without any legal basis for doing so is quite misleading. In fact, they voted for a motion to approve the project with the height reduced from what was proposed. The motion was supported by Council Members John Moore, Bill Willson, Jim Woods and Mayor Fred Hammett.

Sincerely,  
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