

## **GUEST COMMENT: How One Park would devalue the community around it**

Nov 8, 2018, 2:43pm EST

Subscriber-Only Article Preview | For full site access: [Subscribe Now](#)

Ignoring the context of the site, as well as accepted planning principles, the proposed One Park project at Lexington and Grinstead by [Kevin Cogan's Jefferson Development Co.](#) devalues the community around it.

For the past 60 years, developers who sought to build buildings that are taller than zoning regulations allow have been required to set aside a portion of the site for the public, in the form of a plaza or park. This balance between tall buildings and the creation of open space in the public realm has existed since the construction of the Seagram's Building and Seagram's Plaza in New York City in 1958, and has become accepted planning practice throughout the country.

Local examples of this simple planning principle can be seen at the National City Tower and Plaza, the PNC Tower and Plaza and the Aegon Tower and Plaza.

In addition, Fredrick Law Olmsted's vision for Cherokee Park extended beyond the park itself, to the surrounding properties. Olmsted viewed the planning of the surrounding property as an extension of the park into the neighborhood, with expansive lawns fronting the houses, apartments and seminary along the park's boundary.

One Park, as it has been named recently by Cogan, violates both accepted planning principles and Olmsted's vision for Cherokee Park. In lieu of public open space at the base of the proposed towers, the developers have proposed filling-up all nontower space with 12-stories of additional construction.

In lieu of extending the park landscape into the site, the developers have proposed a solid wall 12 stories tall fronting the park and Lexington Road, with the exception of a stepped-down seven-story structure at the corner of Grinstead Drive and Etley Avenue.

To visualize what this development will be like, one can walk to National City Plaza and imagine that the tree-filled plaza has been in-filled with a 12-story building. One can gaze across the PNC Plaza and imagine the open gathering space with its memorial to lost firefighters replaced with a 12-story tall building block. One can observe people enjoying their lunch hour alongside the splashing fountains of the generous Aegon Plaza and imagine the entire space filled-in with 12-stories of construction.

Without the plaza space that is created when tall buildings are designed, downtown Louisville would be a much less enjoyable place to visit, live, work, dine and shop.

This overwhelming project is the antithesis of Olmsted's vision. Rather than extending the park landscape into the surrounding property — providing a gradual visual transition between park and neighborhood — the developer proposes an abrupt, vertically-high barrier wall, completely out of character with Cherokee Park.

Olmsted's reaction to this proposal would not be hard to imagine.

The developer plans to capitalize on the quality of the surrounding neighborhoods as well as the vision of former city fathers and our country's most prominent park designer, while giving nothing of civic value in return.

In a few locations, the proposed building is to sit back from the sidewalk a few feet to allow table space for the developer's first-floor tenants. There is also a seventh-floor green roof for the enjoyment of the apartment and condominium dwellers.

However, every other square foot of site is exploited for commercial gain. There is no public realm.

Good planning principals provide a balance for tall buildings and public open space. While the developer proposes multiple towers, no public open space is provided. In fact, the entire site is occupied with high-rise structures.

One Park, as proposed, takes value from the surrounding neighborhoods, takes value from the park, takes value from previous investment, takes value from great individuals with vision, and in return, it degrades the very assets that give the site its inherent value.

*— Daniel Preston, AIA, is a Louisville architect and has served on architectural review committees for the Landmarks Commission in Old Louisville as well as individual landmarks. Reach him at [dpreston@archondc.com](mailto:dpreston@archondc.com).*