

Reaction to Ward Office Consolidation at City Hall Concept

TRRG Board Position Paper

January 15, 2016

The TRRG Board appreciated the inclusion of the Ward Office Consolidation Downtown concept in the Ward 6 January 11, 2016 newsletter. Transparency is one of TRRG's essentials of good government. When an idea could have a major impact on residents, the earlier we are informed the better for elected officials to gauge public reaction.

We are totally aware of the City's dire financial status, and we appreciate staff's exploration of many options to address the problem. Before any decision is made on this option, we would ask that the following be considered:

- Access to Ward Council members at present locations—free, easy parking; flexible hours of meetings; distance and time needed to get to Ward office; psychological comfort in going to present location vs. Downtown
- Projected financial savings in closing offices—short-term gain in selling these sites would not solve the City's long-term financial problem but could have a negative permanent impact on the community; it is unlikely there would ever be an opportunity to get Ward Offices back into the Wards. How much money would be saved in staff consolidation is unknown to us
- Input from all who would be affected—elected officials and their staffs are short-timers; residents often stay in homes for a longer time than a council term; all should agree that consolidation is worthwhile. Any location change should be voluntary for each Ward
- Utilization of meeting rooms at Ward Offices—use of these City-provided spaces by non-profits can be almost 24/7; these impacted groups need to have a say in decision-making too
- Neighborhood services have been gutted in the past few years—losing Ward Offices can be seen as one more sign that neighborhoods do not matter

Ultimately, the TRRG Board cannot support what we know of this current proposal, doubting that even moderately satisfactory alternate arrangements can be created at City Hall. The resulting significant reduction in participatory opportunity is too high a price to pay for what we perceive as limited cost savings.