

OPINION

KRAUSE: WORDS ABOUT THE MUNROE STREET DEVELOPMENT

BY STEVE KRAUSE | November 15, 2018

Last week, there was a groundbreaking ceremony to start construction on an ambitious mixed-use development on Munroe Street in Lynn.

The project, called a “game-changer” by Mayor Thomas M. McGee, is exactly the type of undertaking that epitomizes the downtown development over which city officials have agonized for so long. It meets all the criteria.

It allows for 259 market-rate apartments, including a top-floor deck with views of the ocean and the Boston skyline. It also calls for 20,000 square feet of commercial space that includes a restaurant and some retail space.

This \$90 million project checks off a lot of boxes on the city’s revitalization plan. In fact, it’s a dream come true for those who have pulled taffy for so long on how to push the city in a different direction.

What could be better? Who could possibly object to such a positive development for the city?

How about the group Lynn United for Change? The group made its displeasure visible during the groundbreaking ceremony, surrounding the site on both Munroe and Oxford streets and doing the usual heckling, sloganeering and bullhorn shrieking.

I have to say something right off the bat: I am, more often than not, sympathetic to the concerns of protesters. Usually, if you’re looking for an empathetic ear, I’m your guy. I might not agree with you, but I’ll listen, and take your concerns seriously.

Not this time. As the song says, “No, nay, never.”

I just don't understand how any Lynnner who owns or rents property couldn't get enthusiastic about this project. Do *they* even understand? Or is this, once again, a case of the usual naysayers who are eager to devour any raw meat they can find?

Isaac Hodes, representing the group, says he's concerned about gentrification, and displacement.

Gentrification, by definition, involves the upgrading of run-down property that can be made acceptable for market-rate housing. It has worked well in East Boston and Somerville.

But it is a dirty word to advocates such as Lynn United for Change, which would rather see this property redeveloped and turned into affordable housing.

As for displacement, displacement of whom? Prior to it being purchased by the Procopio family for this development, this property was a vacant lot that had been turned into a community vegetable garden. Nobody's being thrown out of any apartments, even though the presence of this new development might raise real estate values, and thereby raise rents — but more supply could also stabilize rents.

Hodes' group wants "inclusiveness," but — of course — doesn't define it. Nor does he, or anyone I can see, define "affordable housing." That is a very elastic term that can mean whatever we want it to mean. And that's not the type of terminology we need to put this downtown area on any kind of footing that can end up attracting more businesses, more restaurants, and provide a compelling reason for the state to finally take seriously our pleas to extend rapid transit into the heart of the city.

So, kicking these developers, yelling through bullhorns, and passing out leaflets criticizing this development won't work for *this* bleeding heart. Not this time.

I am, first and last, a Lynn property owner who pays taxes. We were just told, in no uncertain terms, that there is no more money to borrow, no more bonds to float, to compensate for the massive budget deficits that stare us in the face for the next fiscal year. That means only one thing, if you do the math. More taxes. And since the city is bound by Proposition 2½, it will probably have to revalue property upward to raise the money.

I'm not looking forward to that, nor is any other Lynn homeowner I know.

So, this project is exactly what we need to start giving those of us who are habitually called upon to come up with the money for whatever ails the city (such as the trash fee we're now paying) a break. I know I could use one.

To me, standing in the way of this in any fashion is a slap in the face to all the people who do the real heavy lifting in this city — the taxpayers whose money funds schools, law enforcement, fire prevention, and the rest.

This project is, indeed, a game-changer.

How about we get Lynn united for this change?



Steve Krause

Steve Krause is the Item's writer-at-large. He joined paper in 1979 as a copy editor and later created a music column, called Midnight Ramblings, which ran through 1985. After leaving the paper for a year, he returned in 1988 as a reporter and editor in sports. He became sports editor in 1998; and was named writer-at-large in 2018.

Krause won awards for writing in 1985 from United Press International, and again in 2001 from the Associated Press. He is a member of the Harry Agganis Foundation Hall of Fame, a past winner of the Moynihan Lumber Scholar-Athlete Community Service Award, and was the 2012 recipient of the Jack Grinold Media Award for MasterSports, an organization that conducts high school and college coaches' clinics. He lives in Lynn, is active on Facebook, and can be found on Twitter [@itemkrause](#).

Steve Krause can be reached at skrause@itemlive.com
