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August 23, 2016

TO: Augusta City Councilors & Planning Board

FROM: Lance and Margaret Tapley

RE: Rezoning of our West Side neighborhood

We are in opposition to any zoning change that would allow a facility such as the Bread of Life soup kitchen or homeless shelter to be located at the St. Mark's Episcopal Church property. We rent an apartment not far from St. Mark's.

We have spent much of our lives working in solidarity with poor, disabled, and otherwise disadvantaged people. We are in favor of a mixed or balanced or diverse neighborhood. Our West Side neighborhood, to which we moved in 1978 and in which we have brought up a family, is a mixed neighborhood in the sense that rich and poor, old and young, able and disabled, and white and black mix there.

Social science studies demonstrate that mixed communities are the most tolerant communities. Personally, we like to think we have seen this truth in operation in the tolerance and concern for others that our children have developed. When one group is cloistered apart from others, tolerance is reduced and friction between groups is increased.

Our neighborhood, for which we have great affection, has long been in a delicate balance. For example, as more and more group homes spring up (two are across the street from where we live), the neighborhood becomes threatened with being transformed into one that drives out, or that doesn't seem attractive to, others. It will no longer be diverse. There will be a tipping point, and we do not want to see it reached.

Lance Tapley   
Peggy Tapley 