

Testimony of George Kramer, 386 N Laurel, Ashland
As presented to the Ashland Historic Commission, 4-Nov-2015
"Old Business, PAC Gateway Island Proposal

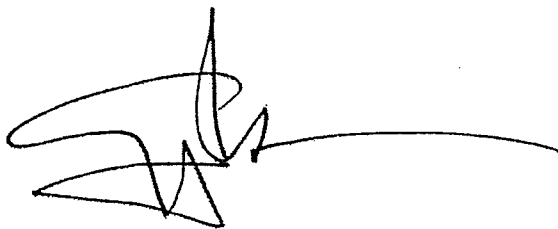
Eliminating the AHC from this process by choice, in my opinion invalidates the ENTIRE process. As a result the Gateway Island Project from the beginning has been mis-guided, ill-conceived and counter to the character of downtown. *Gather* may be a nice piece but it is too big, too tall, and visually incompatible with the character of downtown precisely because that is what the PAC ask for. The right response to the wrong question is still wrong. This process was flawed from the start. *Gather* is the entirely predictable result.

I encourage this Commission to do its job and in protecting downtown. I encourage you to make a clear and strong statement to City Council that a work like *Gather*, while perhaps attractive, is nevertheless wrong and incompatible with the character of downtown that you are bound to protect. The process the PAC has followed did not allow your input in a timely manner and, had it, we might have avoided this controversy.

This is not about "Art." It is not about contemporary or what I like or you like. This is about location and scale. The PAC should either move *Gather* to a spot where its scale is appropriate or they should go back to the drawing board. And this time they should follow the same standards that everyone else does, and have their proposals for Downtown reviewed by the Ashland Historic Commission before they get to the point of recommending a preferred design to City Council. And we should fix this problem before any future project, including the \$75K downtown beautification project that Council has already funded for installation between Starbucks and the old Fortmiller's building.

While *Gather* should be stopped, this isn't about *Gather*. It's about the broken process that allowed it to proceed and that process needs to be fixed. I would encourage the AHC to put that in your recommendation to Council too. If not, I fully expect we'll all be here doing this again in the future.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'George Kramer', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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November 2, 2015

Dear fellow Historic Commission members,

Since I will not be present for the November 4th commission meeting, I wanted to comment in writing a few of my concerns about the PAC gateway sculpture discussion that I will be missing.

Firstly, I want to emphasize that I feel that public art is important in all communities. However..... I believe that the current way that the Historic Commission and Arts Commission constantly run at odds in their respective missions has an ongoing and and frustrating history that needs to be rectified now.

As a member of the Historic Commission I feel that any public artwork that is considered for the installation in any historic district needs to be approved by the Historic Commission. Period!

The Arts Commission needs to submit their intentions to our commission just as anyone that has building projects that would impact the historic character of our designated historic districts would. Especially for an installation that will have such a significant visual effect on our historic downtown corridor as the currently proposed Gateway sculpture. I believe that the currently proposed sculpture is completely inappropriate to represent our community in any way. To me, it is in no way historically compatible with our downtown street scape. It seems to be a sculpture more compatible in a more contemporary large open space park setting.

I think it is all well and good that the Arts Commission noticed meetings over the past year or more for the public for comment, however, they should have been coming to the scheduled Historic Commission meetings for our feedback and approval before making unilateral decisions about such an important piece of artwork that should represent our community.

It is way past time that this situation, where our commissions continually work at cross purpose be rectified by the city council and I support any direction the commission deems appropriate to help rectify this currently flawed process we are regularly struggling with.

Sincerely,


Keith Swink