Dear Council members:

Tonight you are being asked to close Myrtle Street in Parkridge.

I don't mind closing the street-- but I do mind the reason why it is being closed:

A furtive bid to convert part a public park, three parcels for which the City paid $237,000 in 2010, into permanent supportive housing.

The three City-owned parcels in question sit immediately adjacent to Myrtle Street and are currently zoned "Open Space." Please see the air photo from KGIS below:

On May 1, when ReCode Map Draft 4 was released to the public, Parkridge residents learned the parcels were slated to be re-zoned "RN-3" for medium density residential in an apparent effort to slip in a re-zoning in as part of ReCode.

In my view, this is an abuse of the ReCode initiative and attempt to circumvent the precise scenario City Council tried to forestall by re-zoning all public parks as "Open Space" back in 2010.
Again, I don't mind the street being closed. But I do mind the ambition behind it.

If Community Development wishes to re-zone public park land for development, they should do so through the usual public process with a full and transparent public discussion.

Please do not allow Myrtle Street's closure to slip by without discussion of the purpose and ambition behind the closure.

I am told by long-time residents that a project to build an amphitheater was planned at one point-- but as with so many projects in East Knoxville, the proposal took so long to be funded, most people have forgotten about it.

More recently, my community approached Parks and Rec to propose a fenced dog park be placed at the site, given some Parkridge residents enjoy the site with pets. Other Parkidgers use the park area to ride sleds when it snows. We have seen some families take picnics at the site while taking in a ball game at Caswell Park.

My sense is Parkridge is not opposed to supportive housing within our community's boundaries. But many of us are strongly opposed to Park land being taken away without a full and open public discussion. Please consider tabling this proposed closure so that the needed public discussion may take place.

Sincerely,

Tanner Jessel  
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Park City, Tennessee