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LETTERS: Neighborhood is a unique asset

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The full-length front porch was a popular feature on Victorian-era homes. This Mill Street neighborhood home sports a full-length front porch on a one-story 1900s-era bungalow.

Courtesy of Walt Loevy

Neighborhood is a unique asset

As a resident of the Mill Street neighborhood, I appreciated your Sunday article “Mill Street: historic character southwest of downtown.” It truly is a unique asset, and I could not have chosen a better part of the city to live in.

I moved here from New Orleans during the pandemic and searched hard for a home with historic character that I could afford. I was doubly lucky as social distancing ended, and I learned that our neighborhood was also a vibrant and friendly place where neighbors truly know and support one another.

Your article featured a photo of a home that embodies what our city needs — it is rental-occupied by a teacher who works with students who have disabilities. There is not enough affordable housing to support the diverse needs of residents.

I disagree with Tom Cronin and Bob Loevy on one point: “The major problem with the railroad today is the train horns ...” In my opinion, the major problem with the railroad is a city project called the South Downtown Railroad Underpass Repair that contemplates acquiring and demolishing up to 27 properties, residential and commercial, in our relatively affordable and nurturing community.

In September, the federal government denied the city’s funding application for tens of millions for the project. I see this as an opportunity for the city to formally abandon the demolition plans and adopt a better plan that preserves vital homes and businesses in the Mill Street Neighborhood.

I also want to thank Cronin and Loevy for mentioning our neighborhood’s pursuit of a Community Benefit Agreement for Drake site redevelopment and our need for community assets. Promoting environmental justice for a neighborhood that bore the impacts of coal-fired power generation gives me hope for equitable development in the Springs.

Jennifer Cecil

Colorado Springs

Preserve historic neighborhood Thank you for publishing Loevy & Cronin’s article about the importance of The Mill Street historic neighborhood. We often hear discussions about building more affordable housing. We must also speak to the loss of existing affordable housing stock through redevelopment and gentrification. Community Benefit Agreements, such as the one Mill Street residents are proposing, are a powerful tool to prevent displacement of longtime residents. I encourage the city and developers to partner with the neighborhood in a community development agreement to help preserve this important part of our city.

Susan Bolduc

Colorado Springs

Separate Utilities board and council

During my 10 years on the City Council, a common refrain I often heard from my constituents was that having the same nine individuals serve on the council and the Colorado Springs Utilities Board of Directors was a conflict of interest. No, I would argue, it’s not — having decisions and rates approved by the same elected group served the ratepayers and taxpayers by making

decisions that best served our community and the voters. But the recent decision to allow the “too tall” water tank to remain as is has proven me wrong — its time to separate the Utilities board from the City Council.

Full disclosure: As chair of the City Planning Commission, I voted, along with a majority of my fellow commissioners, to deny Utilities’ application to keep the 60-foot tank as it is built and to keep the “Stop Work” order in place.

Stopping the tank’s completion and forcing it to comply with the maximum height specified in the development plan is something that the Utilities Board could have easily directed. But a confusing mishmash of Utilities governance and quasi-judicial policies put the council in a no-win situation that will inevitably alter the character and nature of the Mountain Shadows neighborhood.

Let me be clear: if this had been a private developer who had built a structure that exceeded the height requirement, there is no chance that the city’s Planning Department and the Council would have allowed it to remain. I can think of several instances where the city forced private developments to make changes to force compliance with height requirements. And in the case of the water tank, Utilities as a publicly owned entity, should have been held to the same, if not higher, standard.

I believe that if the Utilities Board and the City Council were separate groups, the council could have looked at this issue without being burdened by being the same group who, de facto, allowed it to be built in the first place.

Colorado Springs is truly becoming a “big city” — its time we structured our governing boards accordingly. It’s time to have a separate Utilities Board and City Council.

Scott Hente

Colorado Springs

Mental health of our youths

In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the mental well-being of youths. There are many questions whether today’s children and adolescents are more depressed than previous generations. It is essential to approach this issue with sensitivity. There is evidence suggesting that depression among young people is increasing, and this raises a major concern.

Many factors can contribute. With the age we live in, with the prevalence of technology, it has brought advantages and challenges on youth. Social media and other pressures from online can impact self-esteem and mental health.

It is very important that we prioritize the mental health of youths by making this issue more aware, providing accessible mental health resources, and reducing the stigma with seeking help. Anxiety and depression has become more common, increasing 24% from 2016 to 2019, and by 2020 2.4 million kids have been diagnosed with depression.

While comparing generations can be complex, addressing the mental health of our youths is urgent and takes many people to be involved to make a change.

It is important to understand and address the unique challenges the new generations are facing and make sure they grow up in a world where their well-being and mental health is a priority.

Sarah Weber