

Good Morning. Thank you for coming out for this.

I'm Stephen Whitburn, and I'm running for San Diego City Council in District 3.

We're in front of this parking lot at 7th and Market because it represents the impact on our city of the scandals at the Center City Development Corporation – CCDC – and the Southeastern Economic Development Corporation – SEDC.

Three years and many staff hours – paid for by San Diego taxpayers - went into a project that was slated for this site and would have included dozens of affordable-housing units.

But because of the conflict-of-interest charges involving former CCDC president Nancy Graham, the project has been cancelled, and what the taxpayers have left is a parking lot.

This summer has highlighted profound problems at CCDC and SEDC.

Conflicts of interest. Improper bonuses. Illegal secrecy. Unclear lines of accountability. Inadequate oversight.

The people of San Diego deserve better.

Redevelopment of blighted areas is necessary.

However, these agencies were set up to grease the wheels of development by operating outside of the city's normal process for review and oversight.

Blurring the lines of accountability invites corruption, and it's no surprise that we got it.

To paraphrase Murtaza Baxamusa of the Center on Policy Initiatives, for too long, these corporations have operated, "Of developers, by developers, and for developers" instead of for the low income residents of these redevelopment areas.

We should dissolve both of these corporations.

We should bring these redevelopment efforts back under the city's auspices to provide better oversight and more control of taxpayer dollars.

Most of what CCDC was formed to do has been accomplished. Downtown has been redeveloped.

We still need to add affordable housing, supportive housing for at-risk individuals, and work to address the homeless problem downtown.

But this can be done through the City's redevelopment agency instead of the corporate structure of CCDC.

There are clearly many revitalization challenges facing Southeast San Diego.

While SEDC has had some successes, these successes have been limited.

I believe that the work that SEDC does can be better accomplished in-house, and with better oversight, through our City Redevelopment Agency.

Southeast San Diego should be a top priority of that agency.

Surprisingly, just as we are discovering the problems with CCDG and SEDC, there is talk of outsourcing the efforts of the City's 11 other redevelopment areas -- those that are currently managed by our City's Redevelopment Division.

This is certainly no time to reduce the City's direct oversight of redevelopment in other parts of the city. We need more accountability and more oversight in this city, not less.

Hopefully, the City Council will not allow that idea to move forward.

People in San Diego want our city to solve these problems. That starts with taking control and bringing redevelopment under the direct oversight of the city and the taxpayers.

Now is not the time to tinker with a broken structure and hope that it doesn't happen again. Now is the time to change the structure so that it can't happen again.