



May 30, 2019

Ann Arbor's Historic Center for  
Fine Film & Performing Arts

To: The Mayor  
City Council  
Planning Commission  
The Community of Ann Arbor

Re: Rise/616 East Washington Street Ladies and Gentlemen:

Michigan Theater Foundation (MTF) owns the so-called Cadillac Building on Washington Street, which is part of a larger assemblage of land parcels on which a mixed-use project called "Rise" (616 E. Washington Street) is proposed to be built by CA Ventures and Cerca Trova LLC. The Cadillac Building is subject to an existing purchase agreement between MTF, as seller, and Cerca Trova LLC, as purchaser. This proposed property acquisition does not include any part of the Michigan Theater, located at 603 East Liberty Street, nor does it include Michigan Theater's Screening Room, a 200 seat cinema exhibition theater located immediately adjacent to the Michigan Theater. The Cadillac Building does contain the existing restroom facilities servicing the Michigan Theater and the Screening Room.

We understand the project is designed to further the City of Ann Arbor's goal to promote greater density downtown and contribute to limiting sprawl as delineated in and consistent with the Green Belt plan initiated in 2003.

For most of its life the building owned by MTF served as an automobile repair garage and car dealer showroom. Consequently it acquired the name Cadillac Building. It opened as a Dodge Brothers' car dealership in 1926, served for a time as a Cadillac dealership and currently houses one retail business, CameraMall, as well as offices for MTF. Another business, Name Brand Tattoo, recently vacated (or is in the process of vacating) its space in the building. It was constructed at a time when many car dealerships were located in downtown Ann Arbor, but, for a commercial building, it was quickly and cheaply built. Its structure is a wooden bowstring truss design, which over the years has required structural reinforcement and demands special, retrofitted fire safety systems.

Regarding the proposed project, MTF understands that CA Ventures and Cerca Trova LLC have submitted a building project to the City of Ann Arbor's Design Review Board for consideration and comment, and have submitted an application for site plan approval in accordance with the City's planning and development process. In seeking to acquire the Cadillac Building, we feel CA Ventures and Cerca Trova LLC have worked with us in a fitting manner. That being said, the Michigan Theater Foundation is not a participant in the project and has had no hand in the plans being submitted to the City of Ann Arbor. Our knowledge about this project and this letter of support are based upon the description of the proposed project which the developers have submitted to the City's Design Review Board and the City's Planning Services department (public records), and some additional information we have received directly from the developers.



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We have been told that approximately 25% of the units in this proposed project will have more than two bedrooms, which might attract U of M students; and the remaining 75% of the units will have two or fewer bedrooms, which the developer believes will serve as cost-effective housing for post-graduate students, U of M employees, U of M Hospital staff, people working in the downtown area, as well as middle-age people, and empty nesters, including U of M alumni.

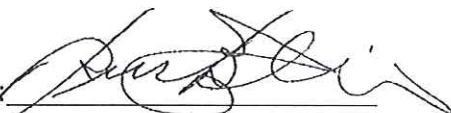
This is an important transaction for the Michigan Theater and this development project will not affect the theater's operations, in fact it will improve daily operations. Besides providing funds for continued preservation and enhancement of the Michigan and State Theaters, it will provide new restroom facilities which will surely delight our members and customers. The new restroom system will be built immediately adjacent to the eastern property line of the Michigan Theater. This superior location will (i) include more fixtures, (ii) benefit handicapped and elderly patrons, and (iii) include an independent gender neutral/family restroom. In addition the developers are proposing a mid-block pedestrian walkway extending from Washington Street (behind U of M's Lane Hall) through to Liberty Street. If the developers secure the cooperation of affected land owners, this walkway will benefit the "walkability" of the Theater district.

The developers are also proposing to construct a six-story residential building (with the Theater's new bathrooms on the first floor) containing 19 efficiency micro-units, designed to attract individuals who work in the downtown area. This structure will also include an enclosed trash room for the purpose of eliminating the current accumulation of garbage in the alley.

In conclusion, the MTF appreciates the thoughtful treatment of the Michigan Theater by the developers. In a practical and poetic sense, the Cadillac Building, which this development will replace, is well past its useful life. Besides its physical deficiencies, it was constructed to promote automobile ownership and a burgeoning 20th Century dependency on cars. It is our hope and expectation that, as the Cadillac Building served the contemporary needs of the early 20th Century, this "Rise" project will serve the needs of Ann Arbor citizens in the 21st century. Citizens who are more interested in urban environments wish to be less dependent on cars, and have easy access to environmentally friendly transportation options like walking, bicycles, scooters, ride sharing and convenient access to mass transportation options. With the guidance of the City of Ann Arbor and its citizens, we hope and expect "Rise" will enhance the vibrancy of downtown, amplifying Ann Arbor's reputation as a wonderful place to live, work and enjoy life.

Sincerely,

MICHIGAN THEATER FOUNDATION

By:   
Russell B. Collins, Executive Director