

From: R Bissell
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2014 12:21 PM
To: Planning
Cc: Hieftje, John; Briere, Sabra; Kailasapathy, Sumi; Lumm, Jane; Peterson, Scott; Kunselman, Stephen; Taylor, Christopher (Council); Eaton, Jack; MTeal@a2gov.org; Anglin, Mike; Warpehoski, Chuck; DiLeo, Alexis; Rampson, Wendy
Subject: Northbury Condominium Assoc. & Nixon Farm Annexation and Development

Dear City Officials:

The letter of September 23, 2014 (ATTACHED) from the Board of Directors of the Northbury Condominium Association represents a follow up to its previous letter of July 24, 2014 (ALSO ATTACHED), both of which express major concerns of our community regarding the proposed Toll Brothers Nixon Farm development projects.

We ask your most serious consideration of the points raised in those letters, and are prepared to work with any and all City of Ann Arbor officials in achieving the most acceptable outcomes.

Thank you for your time and thoughtfulness.

Board of Directors, Northbury Condominiums

NORTHBURY CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION

2707 Argonne – Ann Arbor, MI 48105

734-222.9379 – Fax 222.9378

Northbury@sbcglobal.net

To: Members of the Ann Arbor Planning Commission

From: Northbury Condominium Association Board of Directors

Date: September 23, 2014

Subject: Nixon Farm Annexation and Development

We are writing to follow-up on our letter of July 24, 2014 (attached) concerning the proposed North and South Nixon Farm Development Projects. We have been working with the other Northeast Ann Arbor Neighborhood groups and wish to support their concerns on the following points:

1) **Neighborhood Compatibility is our major concern, both during the “5 to 7 year construction period” and in the long run. Specifically:**

A. The Character of Nixon Road: As development has occurred along Nixon Road, north of the Huron Parkway Circle, care has been taken to maintain the **green** image of the roadway itself. This has been done in one of two ways:

1. Where housing faces the road, a generous, landscaped setback from the right-of-way or a landscaped berm has been provided.
2. Where housing is built closer to the right-of-way, it has been positioned perpendicular to the roadway to avoid creating a “wall” along the road.

In the site plan shown at the public hearing a series of buildings were placed close to the right-of-way and parallel to the road (south of Dhu Varren) resulting in exactly the “wall” effect that all the other developers along Nixon Road have taken pains to avoid. We wish to maintain the green character of Nixon Road. Such building placements, as proposed in the preliminary site plan may be compatible with denser, central-city

neighborhoods, but it is definitely not consistent with our neighborhood, and we want to see the site plan revised so as to maintain the green image of Nixon Road.

B. Building Heights: The majority of the residences in this part of the City are two stories high. The proposed development contains three story units. We do not object to three story units per se, but feel that they should be kept back from the existing two-story homes so as to maintain compatibility. One option is to include two-story perimeter structures with three-story structures clustered toward the center of the site. Another option could be to move the three-story structures north of Dhu Varren, where they would be placed along M-14 or sited with views of the wetlands preservation areas. Coupled with the two-story perimeter strategy described above, three-story town houses would be separated by wetlands and two-story structures from residential housing on the west and consistent with the two-story perimeter housing and three story town houses inside the Barclay development.

C. Effective Landscape Buffers should be provided along all the perimeters of the site, including Nixon and Dhu Varren Roads, to screen existing residential units from the new development.

D. Rigorous Enforcement of laws relating to such things as construction noise, hours of operation, dust control, sediment and runoff control, etc., should be applied to minimize the negative impact of the construction process on the surrounding area.

- 2) We continue to support the developer's decision to undertake a residential-only development. Our community would be adamantly opposed to including commercial or office uses on this site.
- 3) We share the concerns for protecting the natural character of the site expressed in the A2NE position paper. We note that City and State environmental review agencies have begun to apply requirements to the proposed site plan in order to protect wetlands and other natural features of the site, control storm water runoff, and assure that the development respects the natural character of the site. We trust that the developer will be required to comply with their recommendations.
- 4) Traffic is a major concern, and the City has authorized a traffic study to recommend the best solution for improving the Nixon/DhuVarren/Green intersection and the roads leading to it. We recognize that the traffic problem is due to traffic from outside AA and other developments, and not the Nixon Farm Developer's responsibility. However, we expect the planning commission will revisit this issue after completion of the traffic study, but prior to construction, so that the Nixon Farm Developer can contribute to the implementation of these recommendations by providing the necessary right-of-way

required to mitigate the Nixon Road traffic problem *during* and after the years of construction.

We understand that this development project will go forward, but we wish to insure that the development is compatible with the natural character of the land and existing subdivisions and developments along Nixon Road. Decisions being made now have long-term consequences. We feel strongly as neighbors and taxpayers that there should be no negative impact on current or future residents or properties that border this project.

cc: Ann Arbor Mayor John Hieftje
Members of the Ann Arbor City Council
Alexis DiLeo
Wendy Rampson-Gage

NORTHBURY CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION

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July 24, 2014

Mr. Jerold Lax
Pear Sperling Eggen & Daniels, PC
24 Frank Lloyd Wright Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48105-9484

Dear Jerry:

We are writing as residents of Northbury, a 116-unit condominium community, located across Nixon Road from the proposed Toll Brothers development site. We wish to express some thoughts about the proposal at this preliminary stage of the process. To begin with, many of us recognized when we purchased our units that the Nixon property would not remain undeveloped forever, but we want to see it developed in a manner that respects both the natural features of the site and the established character of the surrounding neighborhood. Initially, we were pleased to learn that Toll Brothers would be the developer because they have a reputation for quality development, and we would expect that those high standards will be maintained in the development of this parcel. With that in mind, we would like to make the following recommendations.

1. The decision to pursue a residential-only development is a wise one, and we recommend that you adhere to it. Commercial use would be extremely detrimental to the surrounding neighborhood.
2. Traffic is a major concern, but we recognize that the City will have a lead role in roadway design. We do recommend that the developer cooperate with the City and provide the right of way for the proposed roundabout at Nixon and Dhu Varren Roads.
3. The drawings shown at the July 10th meeting did not demonstrate an understanding of the natural systems impacting the site. We recommend that a qualified landscape architect or environmental consultant be retained to perform such an analysis and that any final site plan be based upon this analysis. The site concept shown on July 10 has a number of unacceptable features from our point of view.

4. Density (or the appearance of excessive density) was also a major concern. In this regard, the decision to locate all of the townhouses south of Dhu Varren seems unwise. We recommend it be reconsidered. If this is not feasible, the area south of Dhu Varren should be redesigned to reduce density.
5. Landscape buffers should be provided on all sides facing existing residential areas. This includes the Nixon Road frontage.
6. The single most objectionable feature of the July 10 concept was the wall of townhouses jammed up tight against Nixon Road, south of Dhu Varren. This element should be redesigned to either eliminate them or move them back significantly and create a landscaped buffer area along the road. This is consistent with the other developments along Nixon Road.
7. Architecturally the design of the carriage houses seems to be consistent with the surrounding neighborhood, but the townhouses, particularly those with the raised porches, seem more related to the most disliked design in the area (Barclay Park) than to the more admired ones. They were described as "Brownstones" but they seem less like the elegant townhouses of Manhattan in the 60's to 80's than the working class districts of Bridgeport Connecticut. We recommend that the exterior appearance of these units be reconsidered

At the July 10th meeting, several speakers commented that the proposed development was "too dense." Presumably they want fewer units. All of the preceding recommendations require only adjustments to the plan; they do not require reducing the number of units. We believe that if these recommendations are implemented, they will demonstrate to the community that the developer is prepared to listen and address the concerns of the neighbors and that the changes will help to reduce the appearance of "excessive density."

We appreciate the fact that we were given to opportunity to meet with the developer in the early stages of the project to provide input in terms of what will make the proposed development compatible with the neighborhood while at the same time achieving the goals of the developer. It is in this light that we offer the foregoing recommendations. We believe that if they are adopted it will go a long way toward reducing citizen opposition to this project. At this point, the neighborhood is open-minded with respect to the project, but we want to see some changes made to the concept identified above. We hope the developer will be willing to do so and gain the support, rather than the opposition of the surrounding community. We think it would be in the best interest of everyone concerned if a mutually acceptable solution can be arrived at. We know you will receive similar input from other

members of the neighborhood with respect to your proposed development. For our part we would be happy to meet directly with Toll Brothers to discuss our concerns and recommendations. Please let us know if you wish to do so.

One final note – it is imperative that the water concerns and environmental impact of this project be addressed, and we are aware of concerns of other neighborhoods abutting the project. If these issues cannot be addressed satisfactorily, we would not be supportive of the annexation of the Nixon parcel by the City of Ann Arbor. In addition, we expect that the landscaping of the project will adhere to the city's goal of a 60% tree canopy.

Sincerely,

Northbury Condominium Association
Board of Directors

R. Ward Bissell
Mary Anne Drew
Ronald Durbin
Donald Scott Kennedy
Fredrick W. Mayer

Copies of this letter are being sent to:
Mayor John Hieftje
Members of City Council
Members of the City Planning Commission
Candidates for Elected Office (Election 8/5/14)