

April 14, 2014

Ann Arbor Planning Commission:

George Brigham and his colleagues designed homes in many neighborhoods across Ann Arbor. These structures have received significant recognition in the broader public as well as the academic community. High community value has been placed on them by owners, neighbors and now new residents.

Today, I am writing the Commission to encourage you to reject the special exemption for the property at 515.517 Oxford Road presently being reviewed. In its present form, the proposal submitted by the property owner relies on an unnecessary special exemption for rezoning and substantially alters the former home and studio of architect George B. Brigham Jr. Even in its second iteration, it does not make adequate provision that the building and site remain the same.

1. The current structure and use are substantially less than the zoning district allows and, theoretically, could not meet most of the dimensional standards
2. With the present site plan, the rezoning is not acceptable because it relies on a special exception; as property owners, we should all have to live by the same codes regardless of who we are
3. The property provides a reasonable return to the property owner; property owners are not guaranteed a maximum return on property
4. Under Staff Comments, it states that the city is "...in favor of preserving the mid-century modern Brigham home while acknowledging that the house has no historic protection or restrictions such as those found in a local historic district."

If the city wants to recognize that its midcentury architectural legacy has shared importance to the rights of property owners, then the proposal in its present form should be rejected. It would prudent for the Planning Commission to take another look at the project and work toward a real win-win solution that honors the legacy that the George Brigham Home and Studio fostered with a reuse that will have long-term success for multiple users. An Historic Property that if lost is lost forever.

Sincerely,

Tracy Aris, property owner
2650 Heather Way
Ann Arbor, MI 48104