

September 4, 2009
718 North Fourth Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

CITY OF ANN ARBOR
CITY CLERK
REC'D
2009 SEP -4 PM 12:01

City Clerk
100 North Fifth Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

RE: Proposed Zoning Change

We strongly oppose the proposed zoning change on North Main Street from its current zoning as Office to a PUD.

We have communicated our concerns to the Planning staff and Planning Commission, as well as to the Mayor and the City Council Members (see attached).



Lois F. Brinkman
718 N. 4TH AVE 48104



Michael W Brinkman

718 N. 4th Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
March 17, 2009

Dear Mr. Kowalski and members of the Planning Commission,

With great pleasure, my husband and I recently moved to our new home on North Fourth Avenue from Alpena, where we had lived for almost 40 years. Our new home puts us in a neighborhood that we truly appreciate; we are close to Kerrytown, the Farmer's Market, within walking distance of downtown and the University and all of the wonderful benefits of small city living. While we like our house, it is not the reason we moved here—it is the neighborhood that made us choose this location. And since we have moved here, we have found out that it is not just the proximity to the exciting areas of Ann Arbor that have made us so happy, it is that we have indeed moved into a wonderfully exciting and friendly neighborhood! We have met more of our neighbors in 4 months here, being invited to dinner, to a knitting group, to sharing names of plumbers than we had in the many years with our neighbors in Alpena. This is a wonderful place to live!

And so, it is with great concern that we learned in December of this proposal about the "Near North" project that Three Oaks is planning or hoping to build on Main Street. Frankly, the size of the building proposed appalls me! I have walked around this neighborhood from downtown and see that there are no buildings taller than 3 stories anywhere north of Kingsley, which I believe is the boundary of Downtown. We are not in Downtown, nor do we want to be Downtown. We are happy being near downtown, and any project larger than 3 stories will not be suitable for our neighborhood. Had we known that this project was proposed when we bought our home, it might have caused us to rethink our decision. I truly feel that it will have a deleterious effect on our neighborhood because of its mass, density, and lack of architectural synchronicity with existing homes. In short, it will NOT fit well in to the existing neighborhood. Please do not approve this project as it stands.

I will further mention a few other points:

- The Central Area Plan requires that new development "protect, preserve and enhance" existing neighborhoods.
- The Central Area Plan calls for lower density on this site. The proposed project is a high density project.
- Current zoning does not allow for this level of density.
- This is a residential neighborhood, basically comprised of single and/or duplex homes.
- The proposed project will overpower and overwhelm both the neighboring homes as well as the street.
- A project of this size, density and homogeneity belongs downtown.

I urge you to oppose this project as it is currently proposed.

Sincerely yours,

Lois F Brinkman

Sent: Monday, July 20, 2009 2:28 AM

To: Smith, Sandi; Hieftje, John; Rapundalo, Stephen; Derezinski, Tony; Taylor, Christopher (Council); Greden, Leigh; Higgins, Marcia; Teall, Margie; Hohnke, Carsten; Anglin, Mike
Subject: RE: Germantown

Dear Council Members,

My wife, Lois, and I recently moved from Alpena to AA. Our home is next to Wheeler Park on No. 4th Ave. When we moved here, I certainly expected that the architectural zoning standards applied to the residences within our neighborhood would be upheld. Shortly thereafter, however, I learned that various members of AA's zoning commission and city council have a 'sacred cow': viz., *providing for so-called affordable housing*.

And the recent vote by the members of the zoning commission in regard to the approval/non-approval of the Near North Project quickly taught me that the majority of its members does not act in accordance with the basic tenant of moral and ethical philosophy that *The end never justify the means*.

In this instance, the *end*--that of providing "affordable housing"--is a justifiable good. But the *means* by which the majority of commissioners voted to accomplish this end cannot be rationally justified, for:

1. When the cost of properties was at the higher end of the land development bubble, the newly-established Three Oaks firm--whose organizers had no previous experience in building massive residential projects--bought adjoining properties with the expectation that it would be allowed to build a six or seven storey complex with condominiums for persons with high-incomes. And they bought such properties despite the fact that current zoning did not allow such construction. Needless to say, that project was denied.
2. Years later (and in order to recoup its at least \$2,000,000 investment in these properties) Three Oaks is now asking city council members to grant permission to build its *Near North* project. And to entice council members to vote in the affirmative, representatives of Three Oaks have cleverly portrayed themselves as do-gooders who simply want to help meet the needs of the sacred cow of providing affordable housing.

The residents surrounding the proposed Near North project clearly approve of the building of a project that provides for affordable housing. Our *primary* objection to this project, as proposed, is its monstrous size. If you'll look at our neighborhood and then imagine the presence on Main St. near Summit of a building the size of city structure now being built, you must--unless you have no aesthetic architectural tastes and no refined sense of what it means to live in a genuine neighborhood--conclude that such a project as proposed is clearly inappropriate; and if allowed to be brought to fruition, would not only be a long-term blight on this neighborhood, but also--despite current zoning regulations--would encourage other would-be developers to buy adjoining properties in established neighborhoods with the expectation that the city council would approve of their requested PUD because of this previous precedent.

Granted, numerous elected officials are among the ranks of those who ultimately

simply want to serve themselves. But no genuinely conscientious public servant ought ever underestimate either the power of precedent or the *domino effect*! So such public servants--if they are wise--must think through the likely long-term consequences of their decisions. And according to my conclusions regarding the likely consequences of the city council's approval of the Near North project, I firmly believe that such an approval would ultimately prove to yield a significantly negative impact not only on this particular neighborhood but also on the City of Ann Arbor.

Likewise, I believe that if the council approves of the destruction of the seven Germantown residences to allow for the construction of two massive buildings with condominiums, ultimately the consequences would prove to be most unfortunate, for no neighborhood would be safe from the wrecking ball of vultureistic developers who are willing to prey not only on the dead, but also the living.

Council members need keep in mind that structures are not historic simply because they are formally designated as such. They are what they are. And in instance of these 5th Ave. homes, only an uneducated person who has never developed his/her aesthetic appreciation of significantly historical architecture would ever approve of the destruction of these finely built houses, which clearly have significant external historical architectural features, simply to allow a developer to build condominiums. And especially buildings that--according to the Planning Commission--barely meet the zoning requirements. And given the strong opposition by neighbors, such an approval by council would unquestionably mar the quality of life of such neighbors.

Summarily, I plead that you deny both the PUD requested by Three Oaks as well as the application by the company that wants to wreck havoc on 5th Ave.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Brinkman

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