

Moravian, 4/5 City Council

Wednesday, March 31, 2010

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Subject	Moravian, 4/5 City Council
From	Anne Eisen
To	CityClerk
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NEIGHBORHOOD PARTICIPATION and the MORAVIAN

If you have access to the drawings of the Moravian, look at the view from the west. I have a quote from Rick Williams, who, with his wife, Sharon Potoczak owns the house that is dwarfed by this five story structure just south of it. We have been told for about two years that many property owners in our neighborhood, who do not live here, including Rick, do support the Moravian. I believed it. I saw the list. But then I saw the Planning Commission report and discovered that some of us who have been opposing this project for two years are also described as supporters, (Kathleen Connell, Walt Spiller, etc.). What about those non-resident landlords who signed in support? According to Rick, "About two years ago .. I was under the impression it was gonna be to be a two-story building. They were just gonna buy three houses on Madison across from Fingerle there and that's where they were putting it. I told them I had no problem with that. I did not know it was gonna be a five story building and come all the way down to my house..." The more time we have, the more people we find like Rick and Sharon who were misled into supporting this project that would damage the neighborhood and their investments.

It is clear to those of us who know this neighborhood that this is not the place for a project on the scale of the Moravian. We have described to you that we have a good balance of students, UM professors, professionals of all ages, non-professionals, families, retired people, that make this neighborhood work. We have the diversity that Ann Arbor is known for but which one rarely finds in one place. This balance would be overwhelmed by the Moravian and its residents who have no common space other than the rooftop, and no opportunity (due to the building design) to interact with their neighbors (us). The interaction among neighbors is what makes this neighborhood successful.

We are providing you the facts to counter the claimed benefits of this project. For example, that this structure would remove more affordable housing than it would create. In this process we are also discovering that most of the rentals we are already providing meet the affordability guidelines that PUD's around town are striving to meet with a few units. This is probably why we are also such an economically diverse group. As far as I can tell, there is no guarantee that the affordability of some PUD units would continue. A claimed benefit of the Moravian is the "brown field" clean up, which gives the impression of toxic waste, which we also believed. But it only refers to the quality of the existing housing. In Burns Park and the Old West Side there is new construction that fits well with the existing neighborhood, enhancing rather than harming, and maintaining the scale and character, as the Central Area Plan recommends for our neighborhood. With many unrented rooms in this town, including at the lower prices, I do not see any benefit to this proposed structure. As you know, significant benefit is required to override zoning. The "green" aspects are pure bunk, as nothing is as green as rehabbing what is already in place. More important, there should be long term benefit to override long term planning, or a new long term plan that supports such a project. Blight is the result of failing to plan. Having a plan that is not followed gets us the same result. This project, taking up the entire end of the block, blocking sunlight to the lots above it, with its own "green" space in the form of a pocket park and planters, is particularly damaging and undesirable for habitation. We have been told that this is what young professionals want? They want windows and light, green space and a reasonable view just like the rest of us.

I only mention the lack of benefit and some of the damage that this project would do, without providing details, because I know we are submitting material that makes these points well. I want to bring attention to the process used by this developer, who made a mockery of community involvement

bypassing its intent. If Rick Williams' time sense was correct, he was being told that this structure would be one fifth to one tenth the size of the Moravian. At the same time, the developer was holding neighborhood meetings and refusing to answer questions about the height and number of units proposed. We learned the next day that it was a twelve story building! As meetings with the neighborhood became a requirement, the developer elected to hold them during vacation times when most of us were out of town. The developer has successfully created the impression that there is support for this project. Please notice that none of the "supporters" of the Moravian live here. Many of them do not even seem to know where it would be, as they describe it as being downtown. 20% of the property owners within 100 feet need to oppose the project to require a super-majority of Council to approve it. Fingerle is understandably neutral. 100% of the residential property owners within 100 feet oppose the Moravian (contrary to information provided previously by the developer). Please represent the best long term interests of Ann Arbor when you vote on Monday and oppose this project. Thank you for your attention,
Anne Eisen