

June 17, 2014

TO: Members of the Ann Arbor Planning Commission

FROM: Jennifer Hall, Executive Director, AAHC

RE: North Maple Site Plan

DATE: June 17, 2014

On behalf of the Ann Arbor Housing Commission (AAHC), please accept our appreciation for your careful consideration of our proposed redevelopment plan for North Maple Estates. As previously discussed and as well documented in the City's Master Plan, the lack of quality affordable housing in the community is a serious problem facing the City. We applaud the Planning Commission's work in ensuring that the goal of providing more affordable housing is a top priority outlined in the Plan adopted by the Planning Commission and the City Council.

The proposed North Maple Estates Redevelopment Plan is offered in response to this goal of the Master Plan, the City's Sustainability Plan, the Affordable Housing Needs Assessment and the Housing Commission's 5-year plan. While the design team for the project has worked to incorporate recommendations from the community and City staff, please find additional information offered in response to the most recent questions raised in correspondence from a neighboring property owner with regard to the proposal.

1. Density. The housing units planned will double capacity. Discussions within the neighborhood find this the most concerning and objectionable item.

Right now the site has 19 units, one community center (converted unit), and two duplexes. The proposed plan has 42 units, one community center, and two duplexes. R4B zoning would allow up to 72 units on this site. AAHC has selected to propose a much lower density which is more consistent with the site conditions and adjacent land uses.

2. Safety and security. There have been serious activities in the past, and an increase of density may create more. A 24/7 community staff crew financed now by Federal funds may not be sustainable in the future.

To have full-time property management staff on site, it is necessary to have the proposed number of units to sustain operations. On site full time management is key to improving safety and security. Currently, with only 23 units on the site, the AAHC does not have a property manager on-site, they hold office hours a couple hours/week for tenants and respond to on-site problems as needed. An on-site property manager will be able to monitor activities on the site and respond to them before they escalate. It is also important to note that the City of Ann

Arbor Police Department has reported that the incidence of criminal activity on the site is no more than that in any other neighborhood. The Housing Commission encourages its own residents and neighboring residents to always contact the Ann Arbor Police when they observe any illegal activity.

3. Building construction materials. Building on the cheap (albeit hindered by limited resources) may create the same problems of crumbling infrastructures later.

The Housing Commission has the very same concerns that the materials used will perform over time because the cost of replacing materials adds to the ongoing operating costs. Thankfully, today's building code and site plan standards are much higher than when these buildings were first constructed in 1969 and the Housing Commission and its development team fully intend to build these units to a higher standard. As far as construction on the site there will be upgraded storm water management, barrier-free accessibility, and all new utilities to name a few. In addition, the buildings will be of 2x 6 stud construction and enhanced thermal performance. The buildings will meet the Enterprise Green Standards for best practices in green construction standards.

4. Lighting. Many neighbors have harsh, sodium vapor lights (commercial/industrial models) pointed at their back yards. This seems to be resolved in the master plan, though no documentation exists.

Proposed site lighting will have cut off angles which greatly reduces unwanted glare and improves visibility for security.

5. Landscaping. A privacy buffer between neighbors is always a good thing. The 12 February meeting offered no information of landscaping plans (other than a last minute mention of clear-cutting trees [my interpretation] and adding a berm to control water run-off). Documentation at the 3 June meeting provided suggested landscaping options. However, the architect (Mitchell and Mouat) and civil engineering firm (Midwestern Consulting) were obtuse at best when explaining. "Trust Me - See, it's here in the drawing" does not work. Further details are needed.

The landscaping plan includes more than a hundred shrubs and trees at the west end of the site creating a buffer to buildings D, E, F, G, and H. In addition, the AAHC plans on planting a natural barrier to discourage cut-through traffic such as rose bushes or raspberry bushes. An 8-foot stockade wood fence was mentioned during the previous Planning Commission meeting. An 8-foot fence is impractical to construct and maintain given the slope of the site and the amount of shrubs and trees that will be planted. Based on our maintenance issues at other sites, a fence may look nice for a few years, but trees and shrubs cause damage to fences that will be both unsightly and provide gaps in the fencing over time.

6. Set-backs. Changes were made in the set-backs (an issue). Again, information provided was verbal; documentation/drawings needed.

The changes made pulled Buildings D and H further away from the property line by angling them. Note that the current existing buildings on the site along the west edge of the site are from 14ft to 22ft from the property line. The closest of the proposed buildings is 37 ft from the property line and the furthest averages 57 ft from the west property line.

Again, thank you for your careful consideration of the proposal for North Maple Estates as well as your work to help implement the important goals of the City's Master Plan. We look forward to providing any additional information that may be required.