



City of Ann Arbor
Formal Minutes - Draft
Planning Commission, City

301 E. Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
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Wednesday, August 6, 2014

7:00 PM

City Hall, 301 E. Huron St., 2nd Fl.

10-a 14-1207

Ann Arbor Housing Commission - Platt Road East Rezoning and Site Plan - A proposal to rezone this 3.1-acre site located at 3451 Platt Road from R1C (Single-Family Dwelling District) and R2A (Two-Family Dwelling District) to R4B (Multiple-Family Dwelling District) to construct 32 dwelling units in 5 buildings. All existing buildings on the site will be demolished. Other improvements proposed as part of this redevelopment include 61 parking spaces, a community building, and storm water management. (Ward 3) Staff Recommendation: Approval
DiLeo presented the staff report.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Chair Woods informed the Commission that she is married to the Chair of the Ann Arbor Housing Commission and that neither her husband or herself have any financial interest in this proposal before the Commission. She said she could recuse herself at the Commission's desire.

Sara McCallum, 3307 Springbrook Avenue, Ann Arbor, said she has been a homeowner for 10 years and lives within 1,000 feet of the project. She said she had concerns about the project. She attended the original Citizen Participation meeting, where the plan that was presented was drastically smaller than the current plan that is being presented. She said she had concerns about the floodplain and that the proposed buildings would not have basements. She asked where all the residents would go in the case of tornados and storms or floods. She said she also had concerns about traffic congestion, given that Platt had been reduced to two lanes, noting that with the congestion it was difficult for parents to get their children to school in the morning and she feared the project would add additional congestion. She said she has seen property values drop and then come back up and she asked why this project is being pushed onto their neighborhood. She said she was not opposed to affordable housing but felt the proposed project was too dense and the project needed to be reviewed further. She said Mitchell and Scarlett schools already have 60% free and reduced lunch plans and asked if the schools could absorb more. She said she hoped the Commission could postpone taking action on the project to allow further public involvement since she felt most of the neighborhood was not informed.

Julie Steiner, 502 Sunset Road, Ann Arbor, said she is in support of the project. She said she thinks 32 units in this space is acceptable and they now have the opportunity to get more affordable housing. She said the Housing Commission doesn't have many pieces of property where they can develop more housing and this is a great neighborhood in terms of transportation and schools and everything people who live in affordable housing could need. She said it is great that the proposed building is being recommended to be built with green standards and energy efficiency, and that they are going to be adding a community center so that services can be provided on site, and that children living on site will have a place to go and things to do. She said that no matter where they propose to put affordable housing, neighbors will oppose it. She said in Ann Arbor there is an extreme dearth of affordable housing, given the limited amount of land available. She urged the Commission to vote on the re-zoning and allow the Ann Arbor Housing Commission to finish the work on the site plan.

Flo Burke, 3324 Springbrook Avenue, Ann Arbor, said this is the third meeting she has attended on the project. She said in looking at the notes from the citizen meeting she attended, they did not reflect a lot of the comments made at the meeting. She said even when the project was smaller, quite a few people at the July meeting said that did not think this was a good idea. She said she is not opposed to public housing or low-income housing, and several of the neighbors actually are low-income themselves, noting that she received funds from Community Development several years ago for major improvements to her own house, which is why she is still in it today. She noted the low-income housing in the area and said there are still single-family affordable housing units available in her neighborhood. She encouraged the Housing Commission to continue to work with Habitat for Humanity. She said she knows the proposed housing will be better than the current housing and she has no objection to the number that is there now, but the numbers that they are proposing are far, far too high, for that place and will impact that space. She asked the Commission to take into consideration comments from residents throughout the City and those who live in the area.

Paul Zinyuk, 3304 Platt Road, Ann Arbor, said he has lived at his house for 27 years and paid taxes and invested in his property. He said he has watched the density increase over the years and it is now so bad that he is having difficulty going to his mailbox. He said he is 61 years old and plans to retire next year and he doesn't want to wake up seeing that development across the street. He said the reason he bought his house was because of the peace and quiet of that area and the darkness and he doesn't want that changed. He said he called the City offices and told

them that and this project is not acceptable to him at all.

Tracy Williams, CTN Mission and Camp Misfit, said we all know there is a need for affordable housing in Ann Arbor, and affordable housing should stay affordable and not go up. He said he thinks the property looks cool, and at least it's not a 50 foot parking structure or 100 foot apartment complex sitting in your front yard; at least they are looking to create an energy efficient housing project. He said this will be helping those that really need it and we should not just be thinking about ourselves. He said when we were all small we knew Ann Arbor was going to grow.

Peg Ball, 3269 Platt Road, Ann Arbor, said she is really excited about the project. She said she had the opportunity to speak to the architect before the meeting, and noted there are so many new developments with stairs, but this plan includes visitability which means each ground floor unit will be enterable by people with disabilities which is unheard of these days in new construction and yet is something that we really need. She said people with disabilities want to be part of the community and want to visit their neighbors, just like able-bodied people do. She said she feels that the architect has a really good idea of what accessibility is and what the final unit should look like, and she is hoping that will continue to be the spirit in which this development moves forward.

Seth Best, 2949 Cascade Drive, Ann Arbor, said this project is exciting and looks like a community, rather than an apartment complex. He said he understands this in the floodplain, and since there are no basements, he is not concerned and thinks people will be safe. He said given the need for low-incoming housing in Ann Arbor, people are having to chose from sleeping on the street or in a shelter so we need this for Ann Arbor. He said to expect someone, like himself, who is on disability, receiving \$1,000 per month, to pay \$690 for a one-bedroom apartment at Packeard and Platt is astronomical. He said, thank God, he has Section 8, and if it were not for that he would not be able to afford to live in this City, which he loves. He said he will continue to live here because he knows it will continue to be safe for him.

Greg Pratt, 3580 Oakwood Street, Ann Arbor, said he lives across the street from three Ann Arbor Housing Commission units, and wanted to speak in favor of the zoning request. He said as a member of the Mission board, Camp Misfit and Camp Take Notice, he works with hundreds of people who have no place to go at night except for a tent. He said when he and his wife bought their house, they did because they could afford it. He didn't believe that officials are trying to concentrate people in one area but noted that it is the reality of the situation. He liked the design and the attempts to include a more greener design and said

his house is on a slab, and believes having a basement in a floodplain area is not a good idea. He said it is a smart design and he supports the zoning.

Tom Stullman, 3902 Platt, Ann Arbor, said he is in favor of HUD housing and Section 8. He said he bought his house as an investment and chose carefully the neighborhood and simply is not in favor of seeing a big building across the street. He wants the zoning to continue to be zoned for duplex.

Abdul Alsurani, 3451 Platt Road, Ann Arbor, said he and his family will be directly affected by the changes and he doesn't think this is a good idea. He said they have a strong sense of community and there will be a huge building in the field where he and his neighbors like to play soccer. He said there will be parking issues through the holidays, with visitors coming to the complex; where are people going to park their cars. He said it is not going to be peaceful but overcrowded, since Platt Road is already overcrowded. He said they are 6 people living in their house and they have never had an issue with flooding, but a neighbor has had issues. He said maybe they can create something where run-off can flow directly into the river. He said that many people in townhouses is not a good idea and he is opposed to the idea of townhouses because they are too close together and there is no room for privacy.

Judy Shapiro, 3424 Platt Road, Ann Arbor, said she lives across the street from the proposed development. She said she is not opposed to public housing and when they bought their house 13 years ago they knew it was directly across the street from public housing, but they thought the neighborhood would keep its zoning so to her this is a big zoning issue. She said the properties are currently zoned single-family and duplex so she sees this as a major change to multi-family. She read from the Staff Report, Page 5, that the project would have no negative impact on surrounding properties... She said she can't understand how a 32 unit multi-family complex is the same as single-family homes, and that having an official report stating that it is consistent sets a precedent that zoning doesn't matter. She said it makes it hard for people to make decisions on what types of neighborhoods they want to live in, adding that she chose to live in a single-family neighborhood and didn't think that it could simply be changed to multi-family. She said she understands that sometimes zoning has to change but understands there is a process involved and she attended the public feedback meeting held at Mallett's Creek library in February where there were a lot of angry people who opposed the project, yet she said she doesn't see that captured in the staff report, which she felt was not an accurately portrayal.

Caleb Poirer, 1327 White Street, Ann Arbor, said his non-profit organization owns a piece of property nearby and he understands why those who live nearby don't want to see change in their neighborhood. He said one way to achieve constant density is to move into a subdivision where the density has been pre-established. He said a trade-off to living in Ann Arbor is to live with the zoning that has been laid over the property. He said under the R4B zoning, 45 units could have been developed, and only 32 units have been proposed. He said he wanted to speak for those whose lives would be greatly improved by living in those units but are not present to speak in support of the project. He said the proposed units will go to low-income and not the ultra-needy such as the group that his non-profit takes care of.

Joan Doughty, 2401 Meadowview Court, said she works for the Community Action Network and they serve Hikone public housing site. She said this is exactly the kind of proposal that would work. She said Hikone has 29 units and Green-Baxter has 23. She said they have problems getting assistance for the Green-Baxter site because it is just a little too small, and 32 units is a perfect size if you are going to offer a community center. She said she likes the variable sizes of the units. Families sometimes get larger or smaller, and it's good for children to not have to move to another location when change happens. She said the Ann Arbor Housing Commission is an excellent steward.

Tim Colenback, 1730 David Court, Ann Arbor, thanked CPC for their service. He said there are a lot of reasons for supporting this project. He said the development will be an improvement, using high quality construction, green standards, and on-site property management. He said we have a crisis in this community, in that we do not provide housing for the lowest income, in addition to 50-60% of area median income. He noted that some of housing in area has gone market rate. He noted that he lives close to the Arrowood cooperative and is grateful they did not go market rate. He urged support of this project.

Jennifer Hall, executive director of the Ann Arbor Housing Commission, said this property has been in their ownership for 40 years as affordable housing. She noted that because the site was purchased on behalf of Housing Commission, it did not go through a zoning change at the time. She noted that two of the units have experienced flooding in the basement, and the buildings are inadequate to current standards. She said when they held the first citizen meeting in February, they proposed 22 units on the east side of Platt and 4 units on the west side of Platt, and a lot of neighbors were against constructing units on west side. She said when the neighbor to the north of this site offered to sell his property, which contains a duplex, they decided to consolidate the proposal on this site. She said the density of the proposed project is

less than Colonial Square, which is no longer affordable housing, and they are adding much, much less than what is needed. She said she understands concerns about change, but the Commission doesn't have the luxury of keeping the current situation.

Scott Betzoldt, Midwestern Consulting, Inc., engineer for the project, reviewed the project with the Commission. He said the site isn't a difficult site and doesn't have any natural features more than the fact that the flood plain runs through the site. He said the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner discussed the site with them and they have agreed to the principles that they showed on the site plan. He said when you are next to a County drain the flood plan will affect you, adding that they gave them one requirement to get a soil boring in the area of the pond, which is still outstanding. He said they are working with the City's flood plain manager and will be moving units around and might even be losing a unit due to the obstacles they are working with. He said he thinks the project will be a neat and clean project when completed.

John Mouat, architect for project, showed the Commission a rendering of the proposed development. He said the community center will have a meeting room, and bathroom. He noted that of 32 units, 22 units will be "visitable", with access at grade. He said ground level bedrooms will allow for adaptability up front or later. He said they are following the Enterprise Green initiative for rebuilding the project, which is similar to LEED, and they will be meeting Energy Star standards. He said they are designing good quality shells of buildings for the future. He said the family units will be able to access the playground without crossing a road or parking lot.

Moved by Clein, seconded by Westphal, that The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Ann Arbor Housing Commission Platt Road East Rezoning from R1C Single-Family Dwelling District and R2A Two-Family Dwelling District to R4B Multiple Family Dwelling District.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION:

Giannola asked why the rezoning was moving ahead given that there were still outstanding issues.

DiLeo said rezoning take 2 readings at City Council, which have to occur one month apart, and further, the Housing Commission is applying for a grant and if they have zoning and site plan approval by mid October, they get points on their grant application. She said they are hoping to work out issues to obtain the necessary approvals by mid October and take advantage of the time between the first and second reading at City

Council.

Giannola asked how it would work if the final site plan was much different than what they have seen.

DiLeo said the R4B Multiple Family Dwelling District would allow for many different housing options, which the Housing Commission could make use of for their needs, and if everything were to go terribly wrong, then City Council might not approve it.

Adenekan asked about the depth of the detention pond.

Betzoldt reviewed the site plan with the Commission and explained that the detention pond is a dry detention pond, and is about 4 feet deep with 1:5 slope and will most of the time be a grassy slope.

Adenekan asked about the lighting on site.

Mouat said the plan is that the rear parking lot will have pole lighting and they are not planning on wall-packs.

Adenekan asked about trees on the site.

Betzoldt said there will be 2 landmark trees removed, with mitigation plantings per the City's landscape ordinance.

Adenekan said she liked the Community Center and asked how many hours it would be manned each day.

Hall said there would be a property manager office that they would be covering during regular office hours with on-site service staff.

Adenekan said she liked the varying unit sizes, the energy efficiency measures proposed, adding that it was a very attractive building and she supported the project.

Peters said the rezoning would enable the redevelopment of a dated community and provide some site improvements that would benefit the neighborhood, including the required land use buffers and updating to a more modern stormwater system. He said the City's Master plan, in the Sustainability Framework and Land Use Goal C, states that affordable housing options should be considered across the City. He said he lives in a townhouse apartment that used to be an affordable housing unit and it is a great community and very peaceful and quiet neighborhood.

Clein asked for clarification on the site plan and if it included the entire

site.

DiLeo reviewed the slide with the Commission.

Clein asked about the public comment that staff had written that the project will not have any negative impact on the neighborhood and how they arrived at that deduction.

DiLeo explained that the response they were referencing was not made by staff but by the petitioner on their application. She further explained that if the rezoning was proposed to change to Fringe Commercial or Manufacturing, she would say that it could have a negative impact on the neighborhood through traffic and land use. She said she did not believe that the proportions of the proposed project and density would have a negative impact on the neighborhood.

Clein asked about other affordable housing sites in the area.

Hall said they own a 5-unit parcel right in front of Colonial Square, but there is not a large volume of affordable housing in the area.

Clein asked for Hall to explain the difference between affordable housing and public housing.

Hall explained that public housing is a specific category of housing with funding from HUD: the vast majority of this housing was built in the 60's and there used to be a lot of funding for public housing up until a shift happened in the late 70's and early 80's. She said these public housing sites are owned by the City, but the Housing Commission is a separate government entity. She said there has been a move by HUD towards having more privatized dispersed housing. She said with Section 8 vouchers, the tenant can find a landlord in the private sector that will accept a payment voucher. She said funding called Low Income Housing Tax Credits is available through applying to the State, which covers about 70-80 percent of project funding and the remainder has to be covered through private sources or loans. She said when residents apply, the income will be capped; right now it is 60 percent of the median income which is high in Ann Arbor. She said the ones who qualify pay 30 percent of the rent with the remainder being subsidized. She said their federal funding sources require them to do screening for criminal backgrounds, illegal immigrants and sexual offenders. She said they work with a service provider to make sure people are in compliance with their leases.

Clein said people shouldn't think of this as poor people housing but affordable housing, and the tenants are screened just as well or better

than in the private sector.

Briere asked how many units could exist under the current zoning.

Betzoldt said under the current zoning he came up with 20 units.

Briere asked how many bedrooms could they have.

Rampson explained that the R2A density is the same density as the R3 density of 10 units per acre, and the R4B is 15 units per acre.

Briere said they are talking about an increase in density. She asked how many entrances and exits onto Platt Road there would be, noting that she counted 2 exits and 2 entrances. She asked how the people would be affected by wanting to cross over Platt Road.

Betzoldt said he would suspect that they would be crossing to the north, adding that the curb cuts for the new development are relatively in the same location as the current ones.

Briere asked about the linkage between the parking lots.

Betzoldt said they have to provide an adequate turn-around for fire apparatus, and the linkage would be through reinforced lawn pavers that would go between the Community Center and the units, with the walkway going to be reinforced turf paver system.

Briere asked if they would be using reinforced turf pavers anywhere else on the site.

Betzoldt said no.

Briere asked about the zoning of the surrounding area and commented that according to the Master plan as well as the zoning language the zoning suggests this particular zoning is good for in-fill development of moderate density which this appears to be to her.

Clein said he understands the concern of neighbors over change in their neighborhoods, but he also believed that as a community they have a responsibility to house people who cannot find other affordable housing. He agreed with other Commissioners that it is part of the Sustainability Goals to support affordable housing and felt that the proposed location seemed appropriate for this, since there were not many other units in the area, and he supported the rezoning.

Peters asked about the stormwater issues and if it showed that they

would end up losing units, would they still require the rezoning for the amount of proposed units.

Hall said yes.

On a roll call, the vote was as follows with the Chair declaring the motion carried.

Yeas: 7 - Wendy Woods, Kirk Westphal, Diane Giannola, Eleanore Adenekan, Kenneth Clein, Sabra Briere, and Jeremy Peters

Nays: 0

Absent: 1 - Bonnie Bona

Moved by Westphal, seconded by Briere, that The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Ann Arbor Housing Commission Platt Road East Site Plan, subject to preliminary approval from the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION:

Giannola asked how they could build in the floodplain.

DiLeo said she believed the final grade of the units would be above the permitted floodplain level by 1 foot.

Giannola asked if they were going to mitigate or not build the 2 units.

DiLeo said the Floodplain Coordinator does not support units in the floodplain and is looking at the development from a one-point perspective; development in the floodplain. She said one way to address this concern is to remove the one unit in the floodplain, but it would be up to the Commission and the City Council to decide if they felt the development was reasonable use of the land or too much.

Giannola asked about the County's rules.

DiLeo said the County does not have guidelines for the protection and mitigation for natural features, only design criteria, which the petitioner has met for a stormwater basin in a floodplain.

Giannola asked how the removal of the unit would affect their financing.

Hall said it does affect their financing, as they are spreading the cost among the units but they will remove the unit if they have to.

Giannola asked about insurance.

Hall said they would have to get flood insurance.

Betzoldt said the part of the cut and fill that they would be doing would be to take the units out of the floodplain and the fill would be 2-4 inches only.

Briere said she was very aware of the added impervious surface that would be added and said there wasn't much human space left on the site. She was concerned for added run-off and felt that there wasn't enough visual differentiation between the units to give people the sense of individuality. She said during the past three months she has spent a lot of time walking through neighborhoods in the City and has come to realize that the best affordable housing areas are where they have afforded the tenants garden space and an area to be creative. She said gardens also help with run-off, and she encouraged the developer to look at ways in making the units more human. She said she also had concern for light scatter onto the adjoining neighborhoods and asked that as they finish the design for the lights that they be mindful of horizontal glare. She suggested that they heed the soccer playing families to allow room for running around.

Clein asked about the parking on site and if it could be reduced to reduce impervious surface.

Hall said this site has more parking than any of their other sites, and there is not enough parking on their other sites. She said they might be able to reduce the number of parking spaces, but noted that there is no on-street parking so they really needed to contain the parking to on-site. She said they would re-visit the number proposed, with the thought that the community center would need parking for guests as well as employees and service providers.

Briere asked about affordable housing in the area, noting that she had heard there is too much in the area, and there are concerns about lower property values. She asked if there are other parts of the City with a similar mix, where there is demolishing and rebuilding.

Hall said anywhere she goes, some feel they have enough affordable housing, but it is scattered all over the City, and they are always looking for places to add.

Briere asked if the Housing Commission will acquire more housing.

Hall said yes, but the immediate five-year plan is to take care of what they have.

Westphal said if there is encroachment into the floodplain, it would be helpful to have the floodplain coordinator attend the meeting, as more information would be helpful.

Woods asked about the age of the current units.

Hall said they were built in late 1960's. She explained that the City has an ordinance that says they have to acquire property for the Ann Arbor Housing Commission. She said when they purchased the land, they intended it to be affordable housing, and she was not sure why they didn't build on a better spot.

Woods asked if tenants have been living with flooding.

Hall said yes.

Moved by Peters, seconded by Adenekan, to postpone and keep the public hearing open to hear more public commentary. On a voice vote, the Chair declared the motion carried.