

Planning Commission Feb 23, 2023
711 Church Street PUD Pre-Application Conference
Eleanor Linn Comments

My name is Eleanor Linn. I live at 1321 Forest Court, less than a five-minute walk from the Church Street properties that are in question. The developer's proposal for a 19-story student high-rise is totally out of compliance with the zoning of the neighborhood, the size and scale of the surrounding buildings, and the well-being of the nearby residents.

Back in 2009 when numerous proposals were sprouting up for high-rise buildings along South University, local residents and city officials were shocked at the lack of city guidelines for development. We worked long and hard to write the A2D2 regulations that spelled out D-1 and D-2 zoning districts along South University and adjacent parcels down to Willard Street. The idea was to permit greater density along South University, in accord with the Calthorp proposal, but to provide a meaningful stepdown to preserve the integrity of the surrounding R4C area.

Without the city changing this agreement, developers from all over the country are jumping on a loophole in our zoning, asking for special exception Planned Unit Developments to override maximum height, density, and set-back regulations. There are already two such proposals along South Forest and now this proposal on Church Street. THIS TREND IS WRONG. IT IS HARMFUL TO THE INTEGRITY OF THE CITY-SCAPE, AND IT IS PARTICULARLY VILE TO MY NEIGHBORS AND ME, WHO LIVE PEACEFULLY ON FOREST COURT.

The developers have been particularly untruthful in their pre-petition proposal. They call the existing two-story residences "tenements," that word simply means "apartments," according to the Oxford English Dictionary, which the current buildings certainly are not. After Jacob Riis published his muckraking journalism about early 20th-century slum conditions, it has come to mean unhealthy, overcrowded(!) buildings that should be torn down. I find this derogatory language offensive when it is used to describe my tidy neighborhood.

The pre-petition proposal also lies about the placement of nearby residential buildings and heritage trees. The aerial view photographs they submit do not show our houses because we are nestled under towering oak trees. Their "Land Use" and "Bird's-Eye Perspective" drawings are more devious.

- THEY DO NOT SHOW THE 7 HOUSES ALONG THE SOUTH SIDE OF FOREST COURT, NOT THE 5 HOUSES ALONG THE NORTH SIDE OF THIS STREET.

- THEY DO NOT SHOW THE CENTURY'S OLD OAK GROVE THAT RUNS FROM THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH THROUGH OUR YARDS, AND THE BEAUTIFUL DEEP SET-BACK AT THE FOREST PLAZA APARTMENTS

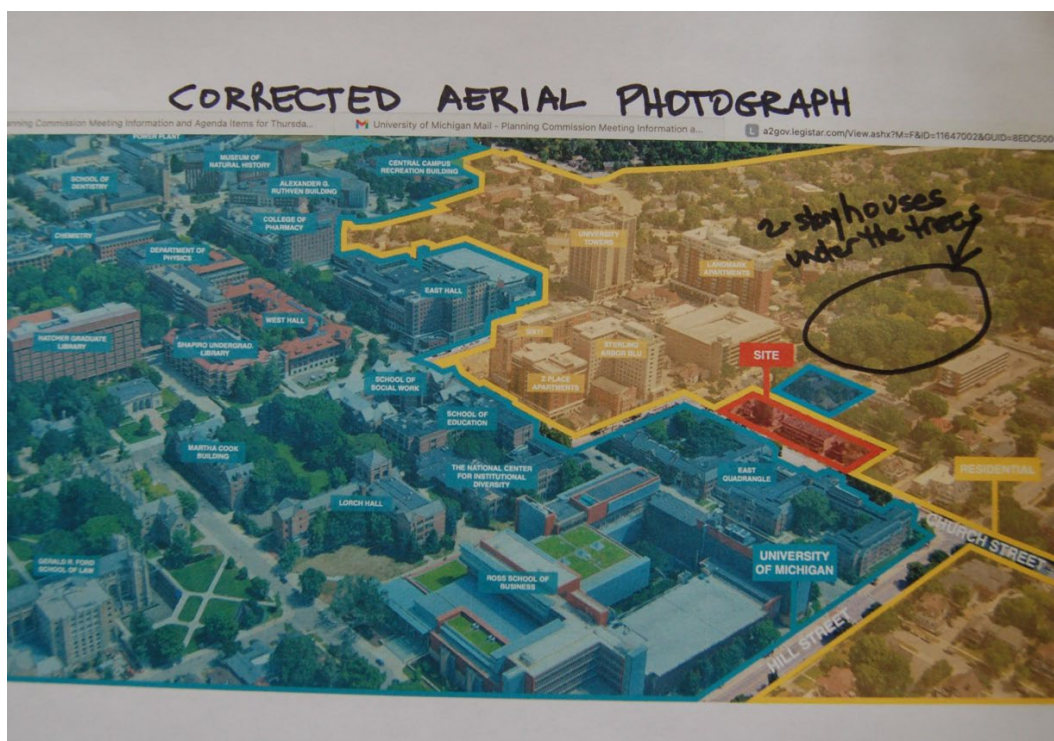
- AND THEY DO NOT SHOW THE FACT THAT THE EAST END OF FOREST COURT IS CLOSED TO VEHICULAR TRAFFIC, PERMITTING ONLY PEDESTRIANS TO WALK FROM THE CAMPUS AREA TO THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AND THE NORTH BURNS PARK AND OXBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOODS.

The neighborhood between Hill Street and South University is an attractive and tranquil area with well-maintained houses, ample greenery, and a harmonious mix of long-term residents and short-term student renters. Several guidebooks to Ann Arbor have called it a "hidden gem."

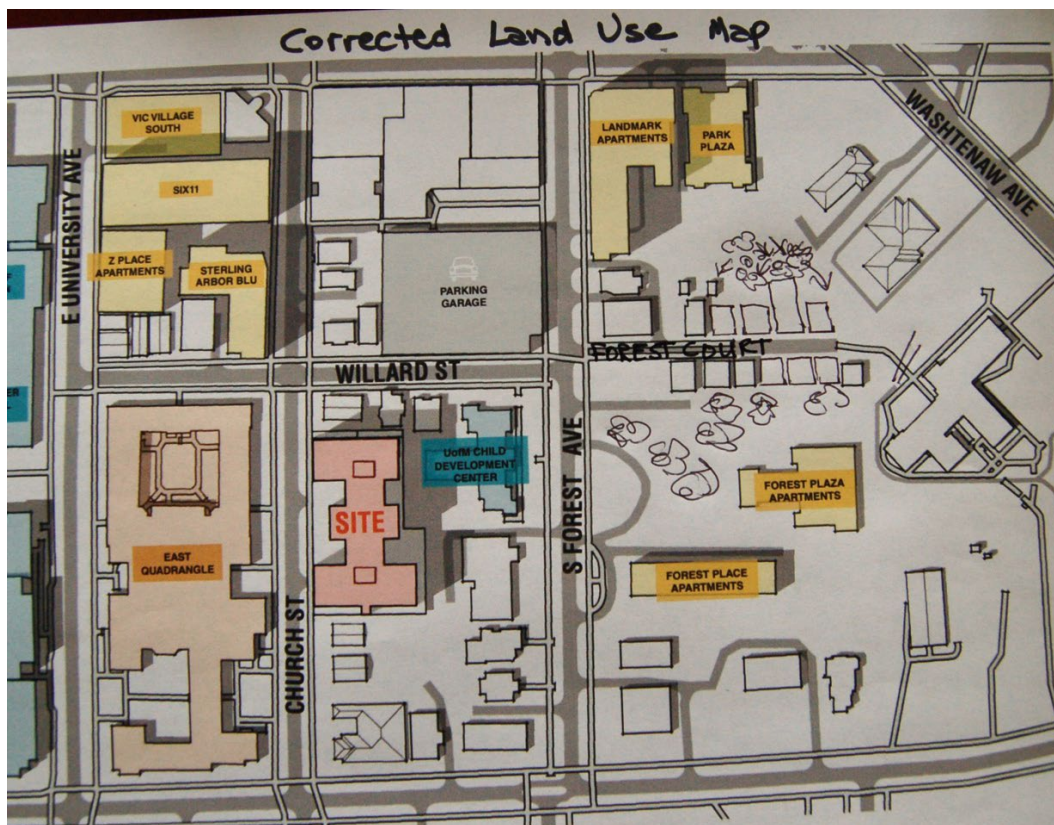
It is the kind of urban landscape that should be protected, celebrated, and replicated in our desire to make Ann Arbor a livable city.

I STRONGLY URGE YOU TO TURN DOWN THIS PRE-APPLICATION FOR SUCH A LARGE, OUT OF COMPLIANCE, AND OUT OF SCALE BUILDING AND TO CONSIDER TURNING DOWN OTHER SUCH APPLICATIONS IN THE CURRENTLY PROTECTED AREA BETWEEN WILLARD AND HILL STREETS.

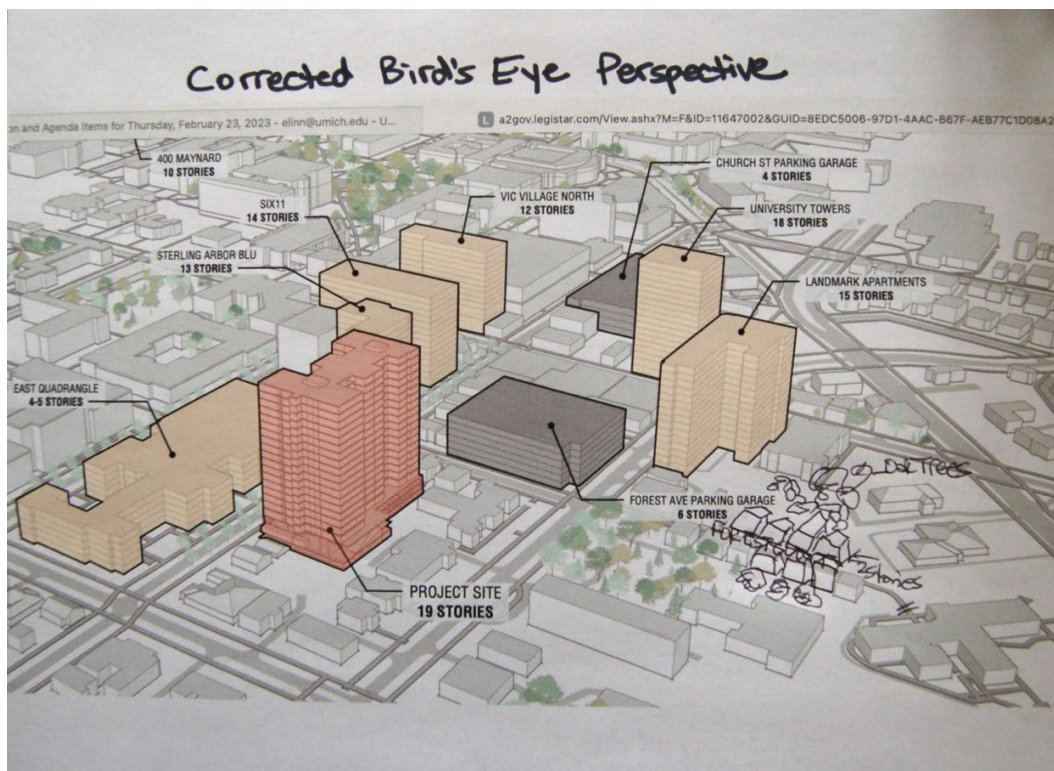
I have attached corrected versions of the petitioner's offending Aerial Photograph, Land Use and Bird's Eye View drawings of the neighborhood.



R4C Houses are under the trees



Nearby R4C Houses and Pedestrian Pass-through were missing



R4C Houses were missing. Project Overwhelms Play Yard at Towsley Child Development Center

From: Eleanor Linn

Sent: Monday, February 20, 2023 3:49 PM

To: Thatcher, Jill <JThacher@a2gov.org>

Subject: Are you the staff person for 711 Church St?

Hi Jill,

I don't know whether you or Matt Kowalski is the staff person for 711 Church St coming up at Thursday's Planning Commission meeting. I'm sending you my comments for the group and hope to be put on the agenda.

Many thanks,

Eleanor Linn

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