

APRIL 21, 2009 PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

(b) Public Hearing and Action on Near North PUD Zoning District and PUD Site Plan, 1.19 acres, 626-724 North Main Street. A request to rezone this site from O (Office District) to PUD (Planned Unit Development District) and a proposal to construct a 39-unit (39 bedrooms total), four-story apartment building with 2,621 square feet of commercial space attached to the building, with a total of 42 parking spaces (37 parking spaces will be below the building), and to demolish five of eight existing single-family homes and to renovate the three remaining homes for commercial uses – Staff Recommendation: Denial

Kowalski made a brief presentation and provided a summary of the proposed project.

Damien Farrell, the project architect, said he believed the location of this project on Main Street was appropriate, and that the project's footprint was comparable to others on Main Street.

Bill Godfrey, of the Three Oaks Group, said significant outreach was conducted to gain the neighborhood's perspective on height and scale. Three meetings were held, and he believed the process worked. He believed the project was similar to Liberty Lofts in the Old West Side. He said some neighbors supported the proposed project, and others opposed it. He said that some view Near North only as an old established neighborhood. He agreed, but also saw the area as part of the Main Street corridor. He believed Near North was a classic interface zone, with a diversity of scale, character and architecture. He listed the public benefits of this project as: Office to Residential down-zoning; a big storm water management system; beautification of the North Main corridor; LEED certification; and the first, new 100% affordable housing in the Central Area in recent history.

Michael Apple, of Avalon Housing, spoke about affordability. He believed the project set very high standards for PUDs in providing affordable housing. First, he said the project was 100% affordable, noting that developers usually aimed for the minimum number of required affordable units. Second, he noted the level of affordability, with an upper level of 50% of area median income. He also noted that 14 units for supportive housing were geared toward the homeless or disabled. Third, he said that a PUD was necessary, because the current requirements for affordable housing made it difficult to do well.

Dale Sanders, the project manager, discussed the scale of the project and showed slides to the Commission and the audience.

Karen Sidney, 100 Longman Lane, spoke in favor of Avalon Housing, but against the project.

Kathleen Baxter, a resident in the North Central Neighborhood, spoke against the project.

Barbara Barden, 538 N. Main, noted that the only blight in the neighborhood was the three houses purchased and boarded up by the Three Oaks Group. She supported affordable housing, but spoke against the project.

John Gildon, 701 N. Fourth Avenue, spoke against the project.

Deanna Relyea, 541 S. Fourth Avenue Kerrytown District Association, read a letter from the Kerrytown District Association, supporting the idea of affordable housing, but respectfully opposing the project.

Steve Glauberman, 711 N. Fifth Avenue, spoke against project.

Mary Browning, from the northwest side of town, spoke in support of the project.

David Burgoyne, 1722 Cambridge, spoke in support of the project.

Yolanda Whiten, Director of the Ann Arbor Community Center, which sits across from the proposed site, spoke in favor of the project, commenting on the opportunities the project could offer the Center in way of new programming.

Paul Shiir, 713 Miner Street, spoke in support of project.

A resident at 601 S. Fourth Avenue spoke in support of Avalon Housing, but against the project.

Peter Pollack, Detroit Street, provided pictures to the Commission, and commented on the project.

Mike Apple, 613 N. Fourth Avenue, spoke in favor of the project.

Michael Brinkman, 718 N. Fourth Avenue, spoke against the project.

Kelly Fitzsimmons, 608 N. Main Street, spoke against the project.

Judy Steiner, 502 Sunset Road, spoke in support of the project.

Karen Park, 620 N. Fourth Avenue, spoke against the project, and encouraged people to visit the neighborhood association's website: www.ncpoa.blogspot.com

Cynthia Pomerleau, 637 N. Fourth Avenue, spoke against the project, noting that 395 residents had signed a petition against the project.

John Beronik, 620 N Fourth Avenue, spoke against project.

Andrea Steves, 805 N. Main Street, spoke against the project.

Margaret Schankler, 711 N. Fourth Avenue, spoke against the project.

Ovide Pomerleau, 637 N. Fourth Avenue, spoke against the project.

Chris Crockett, 506 E. Kingsley Street, spoke against project.

Timothy Furstneau spoke against project.

Rachel Sidler, 717 N. Fifth Avenue, spoke against project.

Rick Struts, 2031 Pine Hollow, spoke in favor of the project.

Gene Eavy, 709 N. Miller, spoke against project.

Susan Gill, 652 N. Fourth Avenue, spoke against the project.

Mike Stearns, 727 Fountain Avenue, spoke against the project.

Ray Detter, 120 N. Division Street, spoke against the project.

Tom Fitzsimmons, representing the North Central Neighborhood Association, spoke against the project.

Teresa Welsh, a member of the developer team, responded to neighbor concerns about the liquor store on site, commenting that it was impossible to remove the liquor store from the project, given the owner's possession of a liquor license. She also said that the housing in the project would remain affordable in perpetuity.

Noting no further speakers, Chair Bona closed the public hearing at 11:15 p.m.