

**Subject:** Comments on the 416 Longshore Drive proposal

**Communication received after staff started meeting preparations. Email shared with Planning Commission after the meeting.**

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**From:** Barbara Lucas  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 2, 2024 6:07 PM  
**To:** Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>  
**Subject:** Comments on the 416 Longshore Drive proposal

April 2, 2024

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I am a member of the Ann Arbor chapter of the Citizens' Climate Lobby. To be clear, I am not against development in this location, because this is a very climate-friendly spot, being close to bus, train, bike path, and walkable to town. But I have two main concerns:

Along with the City's Office of Sustainability and Innovation, I am discouraged that this "sustainable" development does not definitely rule out gas hook-ups. There seems to be some ambiguity on this matter: Will gas be an option to the condo owners or not? With the exception of gas generators for emergencies, making gas an option is not at all sustainable and doesn't reflect the stellar environmental credentials of the developers.

My second sustainability concern is the size of the units.

As you know, the number of people who live in a building determines the energy efficiency of each square foot per capita. For instance, if 2 people live in one of these condos, that's twice the energy consumption per capita as it would be if 4 people live in the same unit. Even though these are 3-4 bedroom condos, likely most of the units will only house 2 people—a waste of heated/cooled space.

To prioritize sustainability, the developers would build more units on the same footprint at a more reasonable size, but that is unlikely to happen. There is another option:

Make the units easily convertible to including accessory dwelling units. We did this in our own house, by adding a kitchenette and strategically-placed doors to separate the living spaces, if/when so desired. We designed it this way to allow aging-in-place for our parents, and/or ourselves when we get old. We haven't had to use it for aging-in-place yet, but in the dozen years we've lived there, our house has held up to 5 residents—sometimes family, sometimes friends or visiting professors—depending on our family's needs at the time.

I suggest that a high-end development such as this could, and should, incorporate flexibility to an owner-occupied ADU. Some may say, "They can always remodel later," but from my experience with my aging parents—changes in independence don't always come with ample warning. Plus, it's far cheaper and more sustainable to build in flexibility from the ground up vs. to remodel.

This suggestion complements the stated goals of this proposal, which calls for following universal design tenets that incorporate flexibility. It would allow the proposal to live up to this aging-in-place mission, as well as to nearly double its potential energy efficiency.

Thanks for considering my comments,  
Barbara Lucas  
1211 Wright Street

P.S. As an aside: We live around the corner from the proposed site on Wright St.. The train goes by in the night 3 or 4 times, and I've read of plans for even more frequent use of those tracks. I have to wear "industrial-type" ear muffs (the type worn with jack hammers). Even so, every time it goes by I wake up, and very often can't go back to sleep. The whistle seems to have gotten louder lately, and definitely is being sounded for longer—many of the neighbors have been complaining about this.

We all know that fragmented sleep is a health issue, but the New York Times had an article called "[Noise could take years off your life. Here's how.](#)" which states studies show that the jarring sound of train whistle—even if it doesn't wake a person—can cause a stress response that can contribute to cardiovascular problems as well.

Even as far away as we live, I have to keep our windows closed all summer, and even that doesn't shut out the noise, despite our having a very thick-walled, highly insulated home. This problem may actually cause us to move out of our custom-built dream house. Just a note of warning: you could find yourself dealing with very disgruntled buyers if they aren't fully apprised of how loud that train is, and how often it goes by at night.