



Old West Side Association

January 19th 2012

Members of the Ann Arbor Planning Commission:

The proposed project at 618 S. Main has met and exceeded the requirements for the project. Neighborhood residents are on the whole very positive about the project.

Members of the Old West Side Board are pleased to have participated in several months of very productive discussions with the developer of 618 S. Main, and are equally pleased that suggestions from us, from Old West Side neighbors, from the Design Guidelines Review Board and from City Staff are incorporated into the plan before you tonight.

The housing proposal makes good sense under A2D2 goals. There is much to recommend this particular project in light of the current zoning, timing, community needs and sensitivity to the context. Concerns about water table, shadows, traffic, context and viability have been answered in more detail than normal and much more positively than expected.

During the A2D2 process it proved impossible to codify a step down appropriate between historical or residential neighborhoods and new construction Downtown. The design for 618 S. Main admirably achieves this goal expediently by orienting the building along Main Street with greened setbacks, with green courtyard along Ashley, and by removing mechanicals from street level to recessed penthouse.

This project will provide an excellent anchor for the edges of the DDA district and the Old West Side Historic District, as well as giving a physical form to an important entrance to Downtown.

We think that the project, as presented, offers a number of benefits to the Old West Side neighborhood and the area as a whole:

- **Streetscape:** the proposed building setback and landscaping plans, as well as the plans for street lighting, provide a clear and pleasant path down the southern part of South Main Street.
- **Brownfield Cleanup:** The project will clean up a polluted site.
- **Rain Gardens:** The project landscape treatment and pervious surfaces are planned to handle all of the runoff from the site, with plants cleaning the water as it percolates down.
- **Density:** The target population (of young professionals and some empty nesters) moving in to 200 rental apartments will add people and life to this part of Main Street. The increased density is likely to encourage a growth in nearby retail and other desirable amenities.
- **Parking:** The project proposes between half again and twice the number of required spaces of off-street, underground parking while thoughtfully addresses means of access.

We are concerned about the project displacing existing businesses on the site. While a retail component would have been a plus for the neighborhood, we understand the reasons that it will not work in this project.

We strongly encourage the Commission and the City to develop a plan for business and residential redevelopment in the area from Ashley Mews down to the proposed site. Streetscape improvements and incentives for increased retail in that area would do much to enhance the potential for increased density that the various recent plans, including the Calthorpe Plan, envisioned for the area.

In summary, if built, this building will be an attractive, lively and responsible addition to our community. The developer has worked to ensure a good project.

The Board of the Old West Side Association

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