

From: R Bissell [mailto:bissellw@umich.edu]

Sent: Wednesday, July 30, 2014 11:52 AM

To: Hieftje, John; Briere, Sabra; Kailasapathy, Sumi; Lumm, Jane; Petersen, Sally; Kunselman, Stephen; Taylor, Christopher (Council); Eaton, Jack; Teall, Margie; Anglin, Mike; Warpehoski, Chuck; nancykaplanforcouncil@yahoo.com; bobdrascola@gmail.com; juliebgrand@gmail.com; simcmullen@votemcmullen.com; lbryson10622MI@comcast.nert; Planning

Subject: Northbury Board of Directors re Toll Bros. proposed development on Nixon Rd.

Dear Ann Arbor Officials:

The Board of Directors of Northbury Condominiums respectfully requests your most serious attention to the substance of the letter here attached. Addressed to Mr. Jerold Lax, attorney for Toll Bros., the letter puts forward a number of recommendations and concerns regarding the preliminary proposal of Toll Bros. to annex 109 acres at the northwest and southwest corners of Nixon and Dhu Varren Rds. and to construct on those sites 500 residences, including attached carriage houses and town houses.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding this very important matter. We are certainly prepared to explore all ideas and to answer any questions you might have.

Cordially,

R. Ward Bissell, Secretary, Northbury Board of Directors; bissellw@umich.edu

NORTHBURY CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION

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July 24, 2014

Mr. Jerold Lax
Pear Sperling Eggen & Daniels, PC
24 Frank Lloyd Wright Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48105-9484

Dear Jerry:

We are writing as residents of Northbury, a 116-unit condominium community, located across Nixon Road from the proposed Toll Brothers development site. We wish to express some thoughts about the proposal at this preliminary stage of the process. To begin with, many of us recognized when we purchased our units that the Nixon property would not remain undeveloped forever, but we want to see it developed in a manner that respects both the natural features of the site and the established character of the surrounding neighborhood. Initially, we were pleased to learn that Toll Brothers would be the developer because they have a reputation for quality development, and we would expect that those high standards will be maintained in the development of this parcel. With that in mind, we would like to make the following recommendations.

1. The decision to pursue a residential-only development is a wise one, and we recommend that you adhere to it. Commercial use would be extremely detrimental to the surrounding neighborhood.
2. Traffic is a major concern, but we recognize that the City will have a lead role in roadway design. We do recommend that the developer cooperate with the City and provide the right of way for the proposed roundabout at Nixon and Dhu Varren Roads.
3. The drawings shown at the July 10th meeting did not demonstrate an understanding of the natural systems impacting the site. We recommend that a qualified landscape architect or environmental consultant be retained to perform such an analysis and that any final site plan be based upon this analysis. The site concept shown on July 10 has a number of unacceptable features from our point of view.

4. Density (or the appearance of excessive density) was also a major concern. In this regard, the decision to locate all of the townhouses south of Dhu Varren seems unwise. We recommend it be reconsidered. If this is not feasible, the area south of Dhu Varren should be redesigned to reduce density.
5. Landscape buffers should be provided on all sides facing existing residential areas. This includes the Nixon Road frontage.
6. The single most objectionable feature of the July 10 concept was the wall of townhouses jammed up tight against Nixon Road, south of Dhu Varren. This element should be redesigned to either eliminate them or move them back significantly and create a landscaped buffer area along the road. This is consistent with the other developments along Nixon Road.
7. Architecturally the design of the carriage houses seems to be consistent with the surrounding neighborhood, but the townhouses, particularly those with the raised porches, seem more related to the most disliked design in the area (Barclay Park) than to the more admired ones. They were described as "Brownstones" but they seem less like the elegant townhouses of Manhattan in the 60's to 80's than the working class districts of Bridgeport Connecticut. We recommend that the exterior appearance of these units be reconsidered

At the July 10th meeting, several speakers commented that the proposed development was "too dense." Presumably they want fewer units. All of the preceding recommendations require only adjustments to the plan; they do not require reducing the number of units. We believe that if these recommendations are implemented, they will demonstrate to the community that the developer is prepared to listen and address the concerns of the neighbors and that the changes will help to reduce the appearance of "excessive density."

We appreciate the fact that we were given to opportunity to meet with the developer in the early stages of the project to provide input in terms of what will make the proposed development compatible with the neighborhood while at the same time achieving the goals of the developer. It is in this light that we offer the foregoing recommendations. We believe that if they are adopted it will go a long way toward reducing citizen opposition to this project. At this point, the neighborhood is open-minded with respect to the project, but we want to see some changes made to the concept identified above. We hope the developer will be willing to do so and gain the support, rather than the opposition of the surrounding community. We think it would be in the best interest of everyone concerned if a mutually acceptable solution can be arrived at. We know you will receive similar input from other

members of the neighborhood with respect to your proposed development. For our part we would be happy to meet directly with Toll Brothers to discuss our concerns and recommendations. Please let us know if you wish to do so.

One final note – it is imperative that the water concerns and environmental impact of this project be addressed, and we are aware of concerns of other neighborhoods abutting the project. If these issues cannot be addressed satisfactorily, we would not be supportive of the annexation of the Nixon parcel by the City of Ann Arbor. In addition, we expect that the landscaping of the project will adhere to the city’s goal of a 60% tree canopy.

Sincerely,

Northbury Condominium Association
Board of Directors

R. Ward Bissell
Mary Anne Drew
Ronald Durbin
Donald Scott Kennedy
Fredrick W. Mayer

Copies of this letter are being sent to:
Mayor John Hieftje
Members of City Council
Members of the City Planning Commission
Candidates for Elected Office (Election 8/5/14)