

Planning Commission Meeting March 21, 2023  
721 S. Forest Ave, SP22-2013  
Eleanor Linn Comments

My name is Eleanor Linn. I live at 1321 Forest Ct, one block away from the proposed 721 S Forest development. I am adamantly opposed to this project and I urge all of you to vote against it.

According to the developers' plans, this building would be **five times taller than current city zoning allows** and would contain **more than 9 times as many units**. The project's scale is **not at all appropriate for the surroundings**, which are mostly two and three-story buildings on South Forest, with historic districts on the south and east sides. The project **attempts to exploit a specifically forbidden use of PUD zoning**, which should "not be allowed to avoid the imposition of standards and requirements of other zoning classifications." The city **Planning Department staff has twice recommended rejection of this plan**.

Although the developers claim that they will construct a "green building," by their own admission, the proposed **solar panels would only provide 3% of the building's energy**. According to DTE, eighty-percent of the remaining energy would come from the coal-fired power plant in Monroe, one of the largest emitters of pollution in the country, with a replacement not functional until at least 2035 and perhaps not until 2050. This development would be a **coal-fired sky-scraper and not at all green**. The city's **Office of Sustainability and Innovations does not support approval of this project**.

**The developers repeatedly refer to the city's "outdated Master Plan."** This is **presumptuous** of them and **highly offensive** to me. The city government, with input from citizens and elected officials, is charged with writing and revising the Master Plan as WE see fit. **The developers must petition US for approval and not the other way around.**

The developers claim that the project would help provide \$3.5 million to the city's affordable housing fund. Although that sum may look enormous to individuals with limited incomes, it is only a tiny fraction of what is needed and what the developers plan to spend. What's more, the actual construction of affordable housing lags many years behind a developer's small payment. Just think of the former Y lot, which has sat empty for 18 years, pending construction of affordable housing! **If the developers want to support affordable housing, they should build it themselves! Neither would this project reduce the price of rent elsewhere in the city.** In my experience, landlords of 2-story houses raise their rents to exceed those in the high-rise buildings because they consider their properties more desirable. And they get what they ask for.

**The developers also claim that this project would help curtail urban sprawl.** That is a total fiction. The people who want housing in new buildings at the edge of town are a totally **different market** (mostly families with children) than those who would rent apartments in this project (UM undergraduates whose out-of-town parents are willing and able to pay the high rent.)

What's more, the developers claim that there would be no **impact of this project on older people**. That is also not true. The neighborhood south of the UM campus has a considerable number of older adults, many of whom made their housing decisions when it was still possible to live here on the salary one could earn at a nearby job. The rapid destruction of our neighborhood threatens to leave many of us with unsolvable housing problems just when **many older people planned to age in place right here in a walkable location**. The Planning Commission shows little understanding of our plight, commenting during the recent presentation of the Equitable Engagement Report that citizen participation comes from older, whiter and more affluent individuals, who fear that something will be taken away from them. That fear is real and its consequences to our health, safety, and well-being have already been strongly felt. Since the construction of high-rise apartments on South University, Huron, Washington and Main Streets, many of us have lost sunlight and fresh air. Summer temperatures in our homes have risen because of heat reflecting off solid brick and glass walls. Trees, shrubs and wildflowers have failed to thrive. Wind-tunnel effects have brought down heritage trees and on one occasion nearly killed a local resident. Light pollution has driven out wildlife. Wind-born construction debris caused me to have four eye surgeries, degraded my car and furniture, and abraded the window frames of a neighbor's house.

When we talk about this project, **the elephant in the room is GREED**. Developers brag to their investors about the profits that can be made from student high-rises, while ignoring how they degrade the lives of current residents. The **developers' summary of the citizens' participation meeting** about this project **does not reflect the significant opposition that the project faced**. You need to have staff present at such meetings and you need to record them for future reference. **This project is not supported by its neighborhood** and I heartily urge you to **exercise your discretionary power to reject it and the other greedy ones that resemble it**.