

## Huron Highlands Committee for Area Planning

2387 Hilldale, Ann Arbor MI 48105

February 28, 2018

To the Ann Arbor Planning Commission:

Thank you for considering public comments on the Cottages at Barton Green site plan from Trinitas Ventures. Please see the following attached documents:

1. Chronology of Trinitas in Ann Arbor
2. The case against Cottages
3. The Huron Highlands proposal
4. The Annex (Oxford, Ohio) site plan
5. Cottages floor plan analysis
6. Trinitas rental rates
7. Online reviews from Trinitas residents

Respectfully,

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Elizabeth Benson-Cox  
Erin Bigelow  
Pat Bigelow  
Mary Bruening  
Rodney Cox  
Ed Dawson  
Ken Garber  
Michael Greenlee  
Linda Harris  
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## **Trinitas in Ann Arbor: chronology**

### **2017**

**February 2.** Citizen participation meeting for Cottages at Barton Green proposed project.

**February 10.** We request a second meeting, once site plan is ready. Trinitas refuses.

**February 24.** We send a letter to property owner Santosh Mehra requesting a meeting. No response.

**March 30.** We send our neighborhood survey results to Brad Bennett of Trinitas and to Santosh Mehra. No response.

**April 24.** Trinitas submits site plan. City rejects plan, mainly because it shows structures in regulated natural features.

**May 22.** We again request a meeting, to discuss upcoming site plan. Trinitas refuses.

**May 24.** Trinitas submits revised site plan. City accepts plan for review.

**June 19.** We again request a meeting. Trinitas, in an email response, does not mention the meeting request.

**September 6.** Trinitas submits revised site plan.

**September 15.** We again request a meeting. Damian VanMatre of Trinitas finally agrees to meet with us on October 5.

**October 5.** Mr. VanMatre meets with a delegation from Huron Highlands neighborhood. We present our proposals. Specifically, we ask for a small block of single family homes and an interior park to be added to the site plan, both of which Trinitas did at its Oxford, Ohio development. To date, we have received no response.

**October 17.** Planning Commission public hearing. We again present our proposals. Mr. VanMatre and his consulting engineer Scott Betzoldt do not acknowledge them. Commission votes to postpone site plan consideration.

**November 15.** Trinitas submits revised site plan. Plan incorporates minor alterations, but no single family homes or interior park.

### **2018**

**February 13:** City planning staff completes its site plan review and schedules Planning Commission public hearing and vote for March 6.

## **The case against Cottages**

- This is student housing sprawl, distant from campus and disconnected from the community. Sited almost three miles from Central Campus, the project is environmentally irresponsible, since most students will drive (or be driven) to class. The two 14-passenger shuttle vans, only one going to Central Campus, will make little impact.
- The project will generate more traffic than a typical residential subdivision, since it will vacate almost completely each morning. The developer plans to build 117 more parking spaces than are required (559 in all), ensuring a car-centric development. The developer, according to its Nov. 20, 2017 memo, will not add covered bicycle parking or Zipcars.
- Apartments will be rented by the bedroom, an arrangement that serves mainly undergraduates. This transient population, in such massive numbers, is incompatible with the stable, mixed nature of the surrounding neighborhoods.
- The floor plans of the larger units (see attached analysis) are only suitable for student housing (individual bathrooms but minimal common space), so if the project is not viable as undergraduate student apartments, these units will be very difficult to rent to graduate students or to non-students.
- Trinitas is not including any family housing, or affordable housing. (See attached list of rental rates at other Trinitas developments.) Both are needed much more in Ann Arbor than high-priced student housing, and are better suited to this site.

## **Huron Highlands proposal for Barton Green site**

1. Our goal: Some diversity of housing stock on this site, instead of exclusively transient (undergraduate dominated) student apartments. We welcome undergraduate students, but ideally as part of a somewhat diverse neighborhood. This would be more consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhoods, and would provide at least the possibility of some stable tenancy on the site, and perhaps the nucleus of an actual neighborhood, rather than an off-campus dorm.
2. We propose converting a small subset of the proposed duplexes to single family homes. We would accept a mix similar to the one Trinitas recently provided in Oxford, Ohio (the Annex, formerly the Fields at Southpointe). There Trinitas constructed 22 single family homes as part of a 202-unit student apartment development. These are rentals in Oxford, and can be rentals here. We only ask that Trinitas make an effort to market these homes to families. (Graduate student families would be great.)
3. Internal park: There should be an interior park or green space, as in Oxford. This will be an amenity for residents and should relieve some pressure on Huron Highland park. We propose eliminating buildings 29, 30 and 31, thus connecting the tot lot with the basketball court to create a continuous open area. But we are open to other ways to achieve the same end.
4. Density: We welcome high density development on this site. The master plan recommends 7-10 units/acre, an appropriate density in terms of making efficient use of city utilities and other services, as well as supporting transit. We recognize that converting 22 duplexes to single family homes will slightly reduce the unit density, from the current 7.22 units/acre to 6.51 units per acre. Eliminating three more duplexes to make way for the internal park would further reduce the unit density to 6.31 units/acre. While this is below the recommended 7 units/acre minimum, we note that City Council approved North Sky at 6.36 units/acre, despite the same master plan recommendation of 7-10 units/acre. Alternatively, we would accept more townhomes in place of duplexes, which would increase unit density. Even a multistory apartment building, if properly sited, would be acceptable.

We made these proposals at our sole meeting with Trinitas, on October 5, 2017. (This meeting took place after seven months of repeated requests.) And we reiterated these proposals at the October 17 Planning Commission public hearing. **We have not to date received any response.**



**Cottages at Barton Green floor plan notes**

Unit type	Total number (approx.)	Bedrooms	Bathrooms	Total square feet	living room, kitchen/dining room square feet
DP3 (unit C1)	19	3	3 1/2	1550	<b>556 (36%)</b>
DP3 (unit D4)	19	4	4 1/2	1766	<b>427 (24%)</b>
DP5	37	5	5 1/2	2,024	<b>439 (22%)</b>
DP6 (unit F1)	19	6	6 1/2	2,219	<b>439 (20%)</b>
townhome TH1	30	1	1	607	<b>336 (55%)</b>
townhome TH2	60	2	2 1/2	1314	<b>494 (37%)</b>
townhome TH4	30	4	4 1/2	1810	<b>456 (25%)</b>

**Key question: Can a five-bedroom or six-bedroom apartment with only 439 square feet of common space (including fixtures) be successfully marketed to non-student tenants, or be converted to a standard apartment unit rental (as opposed to Trinitas's standard by-the-bedroom leases)?**

## Huron Highlands 7

### **Trinitas apartment rental rates** for 2018-2019 (August to August lease)

All rates, monthly, by the bedroom

#### **The Annex** (Oxford, Ohio) (phone query, December 27, and property website)

1 bedrooms start at \$ 950  
2 bedrooms start at \$ 777 per bedroom  
3 bedrooms start at \$ 720 per bedroom  
4 bedrooms start at \$ 630 per bedroom

#### **Lux on Capital** (Indianapolis, Indiana) (rates posted on property website)

Studio, \$ 1,175  
One bedroom, \$ 1,325  
Two bedroom, \$ 880-1300 per bedroom  
Three bedroom, \$ 1,100 per bedroom  
Four bedroom, \$ 755-810 per bedroom

#### **Collegiate Communities** (West Lafayette, Indiana) (established 1987, older multi-unit houses and semi-furnished apartments in various locations near Purdue University.)

(2017-18 rates from website, partial 2018-19 rates, Dec. 27 phone query) (tenants pay electric & internet)

Efficiency, \$ 472- \$614  
One bedroom, \$ 604- \$742 (2018-19 rate, \$ 706-721 available)  
Two bedroom, \$ 497- \$ 574 per bedroom  
Three bedroom, \$ 399- \$ 569 (2018-19 rate, \$ 591 available) per bedroom  
Four bedroom, \$ 384- \$554 (2018-2019 rate, \$ 434 available) per bedroom

#### **The Village at Colbert Park** (Champaign-Urbana, Illinois) (“Townhouses and garden-style apartments.”) (rates posted on property website)

One bedroom, \$ 979  
Two bedroom, \$ 639 per bedroom  
Three bedroom, \$ 469 per bedroom  
Four bedroom, \$ 449 per bedroom

#### **Atmosphere** (Fayetteville, Arkansas) (rates posted on property website) (Parking is \$50 additional)

Studio, \$ 890  
One bedroom, \$ 990  
Two bedroom, \$ 760-780 per bedroom  
Three bedroom, \$ 740 per bedroom  
Four bedroom, \$ 680-695 per bedroom

#### **8N Lofts** (Lincoln, Nebraska) (rates posted on property website)

One bedroom, \$ 1,139  
Two bedroom, \$ 759-769 per bedroom  
Three bedroom, \$ 649-709 per bedroom  
Four bedroom, \$ 539-599 per bedroom  
Five bedroom, \$ 549-559 per bedroom

## What Trinitas residents and neighbors say....

(From Yelp and apartmentratings.com)

### **The Village at Muller Park, Bloomington, Indiana [Sold by Trinitas in March, 2017]**

★☆☆☆☆

7/20/2012

This place is no good. They exist merely to extort as much funding from mindless college students as is possible. Their customer service is poor at best. They lean toward unethical business practices and bully wherever they can. I have had to call them multiple times for the same issues and the same individuals I speak to 24 hours prior claim they have no recollection of our last conversation or the issue at hand. Here is the complaint I recently filed with the Better Business Bureau as well as the Indiana State Attorney General. PS...on other sites, such as Yahoo, individuals working in the management office for the apartment complex are submitting positive reviews for the company. [Complaint to Better Business Bureau follows.]

★☆☆☆☆

7/29/2014

I lived here for two years, my sophomore and junior years at IU. My experience was completely awful to say the least. This place robs you blind; there is a ridiculous fee for absolutely everything. They will tow your car even if you have a valid pass, and the parking is a disaster there. They have a problem with bugs such as centipedes and spiders. Also, the shuttle is unreliable, and this place is so far from campus that I incurred campus parking fees and spent tons of money on gas. The staff in the office was often rude and sarcastic, and I received conflicting information from different employees. I never write bad reviews for businesses, but I just want to keep people from making the same mistake I did--living at VAMP.

### **8N Lofts, Lincoln, Nebraska**

Areccatail

★☆☆☆☆

04/27/2017

Pretty much every other review covers the problems with this place. If whoever developed this property wasn't incompetent, the apartments might justify the price. However, there are no security cameras and due to the fact that a high percentage of residents party on weekends, there are no repercussions for damaged property or the fact that people regularly smoke in the stairwells. They literally had to put wire-cage baskets around the signs in the building because they were constantly being broken by residents. Somehow there is no carpet in the hallways on most floors, despite being over a year since the building was completed. The air vents are tied throughout the building, so if somebody in a nearby room is smoking weed you will most certainly smell it in your entire apartment. If the price was significantly lower, this place might not be so bad, but as it is, I wouldn't recommend that anyone stay here... Out of all the student living centers around Lincoln, this is by far the worst.



**The Collegiate on Anglia, Lexington, Kentucky [Sold on Oct. 1, 2014]**



(Comment from neighbor, dated Nov. 3, 2013.)

We are facing the new Collegiate complex and I swear the other night we heard right outside our window: "STOP! This is the police!" Yeah, this is what I want to hear at 2 o'clock in the morning. If you bring this up to management they will say "I'm so sorry to hear that." You will be awake by fratastic a—holes and stupid, drunk sorority girls from "Thirsty Thursday" until Sunday night/Monday morning. And nothing can be done about it.

**Lux at Central Park, Chapel Hill, North Carolina [Sold in March, 2017]**



10/14/2016

Do not rent here. The apts are shoddily constructed and grossly overpriced. The manager is young, arrogant programmed robot. You will never get a parking spot unless you have it in writing on your initial lease. They change the parking policy to suit themselves over and over... 3 times in a year and a half in my experience. It is important to understand that all rent is negotiable ... Do not pay sticker price! They have a captive audience in the privileged UNC crowd there.

**The Village at Colbert Park, Champaign-Urbana, Illinois**



3/18/2012

[Excerpt from long review] The management gets pretty bad marks on Apartment Ratings. I'd have to say that no one was ever rude to me. They are all pretty nice, actually. I also don't know if I would say they are completely inept. BUT, the complex is shady to NO END (more on that below). They're just following the rules of a money-grubbing company. I will say that it is annoying that they want to turn this complex into animal house, and much of the staff seems like they want to be friends with you as opposed to responsible property managers.

**The Collegiate on Busbee, Kennesaw, Georgia [Sold Oct. 1, 2014]**



6/12/2014

Parents I would not recommend this place for your student. They have horrible maintenace [sic] response times when either the dish washer or washing machine breaks down. The appliances are supposed to be new??? Management is unresponsive. The extra fees add up quickly too. There are better alternatives in this area.

**The Collegiate, Richmond, Virginia [Sold on Oct. 1, 2014]**



7/15/2015

This place is ridiculous. #1 the rent is highly over priced. I pay 795.00. That's 750 rent plus 45 parking everymonth to live in a 2 bedroom. They continue to charge me renters ins. even though I'm privately insured, the roommate matching is a joke and if your roommate refuses to pay their half of the bill you're kinda SOL. They have lost my rent money, and don't even bother to have any kind of initiative. You would think if maybe there was a chance you misplaced someone's 800dollars, you would be a little worried. The walls are thin. I can literally hear someone sneeze in the other apartment next to me. There are parties all the time mon-sun, the trash gets piled up and they lose all of my paperwork. I do NOT recommend this place to anyone. The only good thing is the apartments are furnished, which is great for anyone starting out on their own.

## Shuttle comments

Village at Muller Park, Bloomington, Indiana. (University of Indiana.)

Source: <https://www.yelp.com/biz/the-village-at-muller-park-bloomington-3>.

(Note: Trinitas sold the Village in March, 2017.)

**Rachael V.**, February 22, 2016. “The shuttle is unreliable and is often too full to bring students to class or leaves students stuck on campus, sometimes waiting 45 minutes for the next one. Some of the drivers are incredibly dangerous and reckless.”

**Katie P.** July 29, 2014. “The shuttle is unreliable, and this place is so far from campus that I incurred campus parking fees and spent tons of money on gas.”

**Kat L.**, June 5, 2017. “Do. Not. Live. Here. I wasted three years living at the Village, where the shuttles were always down, residents were turned away and late for class because there was no room on the shuttle.”

**Jamequa H.**, September 15, 2017. “The shuttle service may seem like a great perk but that’s only if you make it on. There never seems to be enough shuttle space to pick up residents and if you miss it because it’s full you’re waiting another 30/45 mins before another one comes and even longer if it’s prime time. With all the money we pay there should be enough shuttles running to get us to and from class in a timely manner. I wouldn’t dare live here again and wouldn’t recommend them to anyone. I feel they try to get over on college students as much as they can.”

**Camille C.**, October 21, 2017. “The shuttle is a joke. It only runs every 45 minutes and it seems like everyday at least one of them is down.”