

May 16, 2016

Ann Arbor City Planning Commission
301 E. Huron Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I ask you to deny approval of the proposed 615 S. Main Street development, The Residences. The project fails to meet a number of criteria identified in City Code.

Reference: Chapter 55 Zoning, 5:10.20. Downtown character overlay zoning districts.

1. Intent, i. First Street Character District.

Partial quote:..."*The intent for this district is for infill development that preserves historic buildings' assets, supports downtown activities, and provides non-motorized connections through preservation of a system of public and common open spaces. New development along the Allen Creek floodplain should be sited to provide greenspace on site and be located in such a way that it will connect with greenspace of abutting properties."*

-The Residences proposal fails to preserve a historic building's assets. It provides a façadectomy of the 1800's buggy building, with retention of two walls. All other components of the original building will be demolished and replaced with the new construction. Please do not give the developer credit for historic preservation.

-The Residences fails to provide a system of public and common open spaces. The design's interior courtyard is intentionally exclusive of the public, and so does not provide a community benefit of open space. Please do not give the developer credit for public and common open space.

- The Residences provides minimal green space on-site. The proposed project is likely to house over 400 people. The Main Street setback and the area planned for outdoor café seating barely if at all, qualify as green space. Access to the future Allen Creek Greenway is indirect, on Madison Street. The design does little to connect, complement, or enhance a potential link to the greenway.

Beyond the above-outlined Character District issues, in my opinion, the following are not applicable to the project in question, to justify awarding Planned Project premiums:

-Pedestrian activation: Lack of adequate enticements of interest to pedestrians will likely place the stress of limited customer traffic on the small amount of retail space provided,

-Access to public transportation: Bus stops exist; no action was required of the developer to obtain access to the bus stops,

-Green features: Please require more than "solar readiness", or the project will be a greenwash and non-supportive of the city's sustainability program.

Additional Concerns:

-Retail mezzanine space: Please ask the developer to specify the dimension of square footage of retail space at ground floor level and the separate space of the proposed mezzanine. My concern is with the potential difficulty for a business to succeed while supporting the expense of a second floor mezzanine, which I believe would be of limited benefit for retail space. I want the city to encourage development that is least likely to fail. The cost to the business owner to support retail space on a mezzanine will increase the challenge to the business' success.

-Retail: I know that this is not part of the Commission's decision process, but I can say that the project has already affected existing businesses that have benefited the neighborhood for years. All of the neighborhood, including the new residents, will be driving more for the goods & services that will be eliminated from the neighborhood, and adding our pollution to the environment, along with the new residents. The D2 goal of an enhanced pedestrian environment will be lost.

-Brownfield: Pollution exists on-site; removal is a good idea, but we have not heard that identified pollution is spreading. If it is an imminent risk, then the city should have already taken action. We need to understand more.

-Traffic: The report focused on auto traffic and failed to evaluate the complex interaction of pedestrians, bicyclists, buses, and auto drivers. The assessment indicated that auto travel exiting the development from E. Mosely St will be difficult.

1. What about traffic on Main St. that will be either slowed, or crowded by drivers leaving the development? Will the current traffic pattern that allows left turns be continued? Allowing left turns from E. Mosely onto Main Street seems dangerous because of site distances and the higher volume of traffic generated by the development's residents.

2. What about pedestrians leaving the bus stop on the west side of Main Street? There is risk for accidents by virtue of the tendency to jaywalk from a point opposite to one's destination.

3. What about the effect of limited site distance on the West Mosely side of Main Street? It is currently difficult for drivers to see around the existing 618 S Main Street building. There has been no discussion of the interaction of traffic from the two buildings, 615 S. Main, and 618 S. Main.

4. The developer should provide information on delivery services to the building, and the effect of delivery vehicles on traffic in the area.

-Parking: The Head to Tail pattern for parking that is shown on the site plan looks like it will cause conflicts between drivers. Is the developer planning to provide valet service, so that drivers will have easy access to their cars without being blocked in by another?

-Flood risk: The site is next to the Allen Creek floodway and floodplain. The project will be required to support additional footing drain disconnections. I hope that we will have projected data on the result of the added disconnections to know whether they reduce flooding in risk areas.

I ask that the Commission deny the planned project status requested of the project, because the tradeoff of additional height is not worth the benefits provided. I further ask denial of the project based on concerns with traffic in a congested area that will be affected by the additional building of the Madison on Main Street structure that was approved by Planning Commission and City Council in 2015.

Sincerely,

Rita Mitchell
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