

Huron Highlands Committee for Area Planning

2387 Hilldale, Ann Arbor MI 48105

October 10, 2017

Planning Commission
City of Ann Arbor

Dear commissioners Ackerman, Briggs, Clein, Gibb-Randall, Mills, Milshteyn, Trudeau, Weatherbee and Woods:

The American Planning Association policy guide on smart growth (2012) states: “A sense of place results when design and development protect and incorporate the distinctive character of a community and its unique context.” The project you are now considering, Cottages at Barton Green, is a prefabricated “product” that not only ignores its urban context but does violence to it. Transient, student-oriented housing on this scale is incompatible with Huron Highlands and with nearby Arrowwood Hills, Olson Park and the River District, all of them diverse, stable neighborhoods. It also ignores North Sky, now under construction, which will be predominantly single family homes.

We propose a partial remedy. The Cottages developer, Trinitas Ventures, recently completed The Annex, a 202-unit development in Oxford, Ohio, home of Miami University. In addition to the same student-oriented duplexes and townhomes they’re proposing here, in Oxford Trinitas built 22 single family homes clustered together along the project’s periphery. We ask that Trinitas do the same thing in Ann Arbor. We would like the company to make a written commitment to market these homes to families. This should lead to some long-term tenancy on the property, and the nucleus of an actual neighborhood.

We have some secondary proposals. As in Oxford, the pool, deck and clubhouse should be located on the interior of the property, instead of their current location against our neighborhood, due to noise concerns. Failing that, the recreation complex should be reoriented so that the clubhouse helps shield the pool from our neighborhood. Also, as in Oxford, there should be an interior park or green space, both as an amenity to residents and to reduce the pressure on our Huron Highland park. We propose removing buildings 29, 30 and 31, thus connecting the tot lot with the basketball court, but any interior location would do.

We presented these proposals to Trinitas at an October 5 meeting. Unless Trinitas makes the appropriate changes to its site plan, we ask that Commission vote to deny the current petition. In addition, the city’s land development regulations (attachment D, section 1:3) state that “Proposals that will contribute traffic to streets or intersections that are or will be as a result of this proposal at a Level of Service D, E or F as defined in the Highway Capacity Manual may be denied by Commission and Council until such time as necessary street or traffic improvements are scheduled for construction.” Midwestern Consulting’s traffic impact study identifies several such problem intersections. On this basis also we ask that Commission vote to deny the petition.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Marianne Bach, Elizabeth Benson-Cox, Erin Bigelow, Pat Bigelow, Mary Bruening, Rodney Cox, Ed Dawson, Bryan Debbink, Ken Garber, Michael Greenlee, Linda Harris, Tracy Jensen, Karen Johnson, Joe Kastely, Deborah Katz, Ralph Katz, Brigid Kowalczyk, Jane Landefeld, Corey LaRose, Justin Munter, Kate Pepin, Betty Peters, Cloyd Peters, Jane Pollock, Jessica Prozinski, Cristy Starkweather, Karen Warmingham