

From

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To

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Subject: Michigan Natural Remedies SEU for 1202 Packard Road

April 1, 2018

Greetings,

We live live at [1118 Wells Street](#) and recently received a notice that “Michigan Natural Remedies” (hereafter MNR) has applied for a Special Exception Use of [1202 Packard](#) for a medical marijuana facility. We have also received notice that the City Planning Commission will consider this petition on Tuesday April 3. The property in question is very familiar to us, and integral to our neighborhood. [1202 Packard](#) is visible from our front yard and our upstairs windows. One of us walks by the property each day on the way to work and we are frequent visitors to the Argus Farm Stop, the neighboring property. We have long been worried that the property appeared to be semi-abandoned, and were heartened by recent improvements.

Because we are unable to attend the scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission, we write to offer our comments in opposition to this application in advance of the April 3 meeting. We reviewed the Special Exception Use application, and sent several detailed questions to Greg Stamatopoulos, who responded promptly with similarly detailed answers. He did not directly answer all of our questions, including one in which we asked if security staff would be armed, which we believe to be an important detail for which nearby residents should have a clear answer. But his application did help us better understand his motivations and we believe that he is committed to operating responsibly and qualified to do so. That said, based on the location and some features of the property, we continue to have concerns about this application and do not believe that this is an appropriate location for a medical marijuana dispensary.

The C-1 zoning district, in which this property resides, allows for medical offices and for medical marijuana facilities, but, according to the zoning ordinance it is intended “to serve the needs of the surrounding residential neighborhood, providing goods that are day-to-day needs.” As residents served by this C-1 district, we do not believe that a dispensary will serve these general, day-to-day needs. Further, our neighborhood, which is dense with student rentals,

does not seem to be underserved by medical marijuana dispensaries. Two others are now operating at 1818 Packard Street and 700 Tappan Street, both about a five minute drive or a ten minute walk from the site. According to a March 27 article in MLive, special use exception applications have been filed for both of those properties. We hope that the Planning Commission will consider the density of these proposed facilities when making its decisions.

MNR's application materials note that 1202 Packard is located more than 1000 feet from Burns Park Elementary or any other public school. This is true, but only just barely. According to a map produced by the city, our own parcel and the one immediately to the west at 1112 Wells are both located fully within that buffer zone for Burns Park Elementary School. As residents of Wells street, we know that there are many small children who reside in the neighborhood. The single crosswalk at Wells and Packard, which is directly in front of 1202 Packard, is frequently used by parents walking their children to and from Burns Park Elementary, to and from Burns Park, and/or to and from Argus Farm Stop. Mr. Stamapolous wrote to us that he intended to have no signage that would indicate that MNR provides marijuana, but we still believe that the proximity to Burns Park and the frequent pedestrian traffic involving children makes this an unsuitable location.

This property and the one in which Argus Farm Stop operates have been little utilized or vacant in the last few years. Increased business for MNR at 1202 Packard may present safety hazards. The application materials note that 9 dedicated parking spaces behind the building will be sufficient to serve the businesses clients without impacting the surrounding neighborhood. The opening of Argus Farm Stop last August increased the demand for on street parking in the C-1 strip on Packard and on our block of Wells. The driveway that exits 1202 Packard's parking lot is between two buildings and hidden from southbound drivers on Packard. Two photos included below show the location of the driveway from two different directions and demonstrate that parking at Argus Farm Stop further decreases visibility for both southbound drivers and those exiting 1202 Packard.

In addition, a driver exiting the driveway must cross a bicycle lane and enter an intersection between the stoplines without a visible stoplight opposite the driveway. We have observed many times that impatient drivers traveling south on Packard will pass drivers waiting to turn left onto Wells by entering the bike, bus, and parking lanes adjacent to the exit of this lot. Still other drivers turning left onto Packard from Wells do not respect the pedestrians using the crosswalk to get to Wells Street, and often attempt to beat them through the intersection by quickly turning left. We are concerned that any further increased volume of traffic out of the driveway and onto Packard may pose additional risks to drivers and pedestrians. We asked Mr. Stamapolous about these issues but he did not address them, except to note that the number of parking spaces exceeded city requirements. If the city were to grant this special use exception both the property owner and the city should take new steps to improve safety and visibility for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians.

Finally, we are alarmed by MNR's stated business hours in the application, which would be 9am to 9pm, seven days a week. These are completely out of the norm for this district. While there are several medical offices within a couple of blocks of [1202 Packard](#), none of them are retail facilities, and none to our knowledge are open until 9pm. Before it went out of business, Coffee Works at [1232 Packard](#) closed at 1pm. Arbor Vacuum at [1226 Packard](#) closes at 6pm. Argus Farm Stop at [1200 Packard](#) closes at 7pm on weekdays and 6pm on weekends. Toarmina's at 944 Dewey closes at 11pm weeknights, and 3am on Friday, and Saturday--however, their primary business is not walk-in, but delivery. Pedestrian and party noise on weekends and some weeknights in our neighborhood has necessitated police response many times in the past year. In short, we don't need increased noise or traffic at that time of night. Mr. Stamapolous explained to us that "the hours stated on our application are in compliance with the operating requirements set forth in the local ordinance. We are open to gauging the necessity of our hours, and shortening them if appropriate." If the city were to grant an exception to use this property as a dispensary, it should impress upon the Mr. Stamapolous the importance of keeping MNR's hours consistent with those of the surrounding businesses.

We appreciate the city's thorough approach to permitting medical marijuana facilities in the city limits, and we hope that the processes put in place by the city and the state help to make medical marijuana provisioning safer for patients who need it and less problematic for residents who do not. But it remains to be seen whether these changes will be successful, and thus we and many of our neighbors are cautious about the introduction of new provisioning locations in residential areas in the city.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our opposition to Michigan Natural Remedies locating its business at 1202 Packard.

Sincerely,

Mike Furlough & Ellie Goodman

PHOTO 1: March 31, 2018

Facing northwest. The corner of 1202 Packard is visible at the left. The driveway to exit the parking lot is between the two buildings. The large van parked in front of Argus obscures southbound traffic.



PHOTO 2: March 31, 2018

Facing southeast. There is nothing to indicate the driveway beyond Argus and behind the van.

