

Subject: Concerns regarding the 228 Packard development

From: Melissa Gryan

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To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>

Subject: Concerns regarding the 228 Packard development

To whom it may concern:

Hello, I am Melissa Gryan, a 5 year resident of 539 S 5th Avenue. I am writing to express my concern over the new 228 Packard development. I attended the initial meeting with the developers and was shocked both by the scale and poor design of their planned apartment complex.

My concerns are as follows:

1. The zoning is wildly outsized for the surrounding residential structures. 12 stories will completely change the character of the neighborhood and have numerous, onerous overflow impacts on the surrounding residents. Additionally, the design of the building directly abuts the sidewalk, which significantly increases the burden it presents to passersby and adjacent structures. This building plans to eliminate most of the permeable ground and will cast an immense shadow over nearby homes, significantly impacting the living experience of residents and their property values. In the development meeting this October, those present were unanimously and strongly against this development as it has been proposed for these reasons. As I understand, the city is in the process of rezoning existing neighborhoods. Such a dramatic override of the zoning rules for this development before this larger city initiative seems irresponsible and unreasonable. I would have much more confidence in the project's viability and the city's responsible development if 228 Packard were rethought to fit the more specific confines of these forthcoming zoning rules. As a former resident in the suburbs of Boston, which have undergone massive growth in the last 20 years, I have seen similar projects done with much greater respect for the local residents and the character of the neighborhood. I believe some form of compromise could be reached, but it requires a more holistic view of the city and its long term goals for sustainable development. This would include limiting the height of the building to 6 stories, and requiring a greater margin between the sidewalks and the building foundation to ensure permeable ground, tree preservation, and a safe and pleasant experience for neighbors, drivers, and pedestrians.

2. This is a significant loss for affordable housing. Although this project will technically increase the number of total units, it is a drastic net loss of affordable units close to the University of Michigan's central campus. The significant increase in price per unit was (reluctantly) admitted during the developers meeting. It is very clearly marketed towards the undergrads of wealthy parents (who already have a glut of downtown high rises from which to choose). This, combined with the University's new undergraduate housing project on South Division, has led to many current residents being forced out of their homes and out of the neighborhood entirely. Those being pushed out are both long term residents and those in middle or lower class income brackets. This is often a demographic who cannot afford an increase in rent, nor can they afford to purchase a car and pay for an annual parking pass (which given the current state of public transportation is unequivocally necessary for most households in the Midwest, including Ann Arbor). This issue of housing has come up in an official capacity in graduate student wage negotiations with the University of Michigan, as well as a general malaise I have witnessed among my peers about the difficulties of renting safe and reasonably priced housing in Ann Arbor. Development that eliminates affordable units instead of simply increasing the total number of units by using vacant land is not a solution to this everpressing problem.

3. The attitude of the developers was one of the most dismaying and concerning aspects of the meeting. They were

missing important information that was necessary for our assessment - the shadow study, the traffic study, the exact number of units in the building. Serious concerns were not adequately addressed. Importantly, their map of S 5th Ave was inaccurate - it showed a two-lane one-way street, which is not how that road is marked presently. It did not inspire confidence that the traffic study, shadow study, or water table and drainage study will be rigorous, or that we will be compensated should we experience increased negative overflow impacts if these studies are later shown to be inaccurate. In previous development attempts I have witnessed elsewhere, developers used numerous slights of hand to ensure the approval of their project (i.e. conducting a water table study in a flood zone based on drought years, averaging out the traffic throughout the day in order discount the density at rush hour, offering budgets and cost estimates using formulae for the incorrect building type). I understand we will receive more information as this progresses. I highly encourage the members of the planning committee and the city council to be critical about the studies presented by the architecture and development team.

I have other concerns about the broader dynamics surrounding development and renting in Ann Arbor, but I have chosen only to include the most pertinent information in this email. I greatly appreciate your time and consideration for reading my message. If it is helpful or relevant, I would be happy to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,
Melissa Gryan