

April 17, 2020

Mr. Jon Barrett, Zoning Coordinator
Zoning Board of Appeals
City of Ann Arbor
Larcom City Hall – 301 East Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Dear Mr. Barrett and the Ann Arbor Zoning Board,

If you walk along Ridgeway Street from Geddes as it bends around and back, our homes abut the Nichols Arboretum to the West, the North, and the East. This topographic juxtaposition to the arboretum contributes to the iconic green character of our neighborhood in Ann Arbor and raises questions about the consequences of reducing the green footprint of #7 Ridgeway.

Our family lives at #2 Ridgeway, diagonal to #7 Ridgeway. Our skinny property means that we, along with most in the neighborhood, benefit substantially from more than a century of neighbors who have thoughtfully chosen to preserve existing trees and plant new trees, gardens, and ponds without many border fences. We are concerned that building a large home would require eliminating large trees and require fencing for privacy due to its close proximity to #3 Ridgeway and the street. From our home facing west, we see the greenscape of not only our property but the arboretum, #4 Ridgeway, #1919 and #1913 Geddes; facing north we see #4, #8, #3, #25, and #21 Ridgeway, as well as the lot of #7 Ridgeway. Even on a snowy day like today, the photograph shows how much trees contribute both to privacy and the forested beauty of the neighborhood from one point of view. Eliminating old trees and erecting fences when houses are built so close to each other will change the character of the neighborhood, reduce the economic value of homes, and limit the substantial benefits of green spaces that have long been shown to improve the lives and health of residents.¹



Views from #2 Ridgeway facing west toward the arboretum and north towards the #7 Ridgeway property illustrates how trees rather than fences contribute to privacy, beauty, property value, as well as health benefits for neighborhood residents.

Additionally, we are disturbed that this is moving forward right now during the height of the pandemic. Like most families we know with a member working at the hospital, my husband is dedicated to and consumed with work, and the brief moments at home have been reserved for sleeping, separated from

¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160412018316544>

each other on different floors due to exposure. That the handful of hours we've been together with our ten year old son over the past 5 weeks required a discussion and response to this town hall about pushing boundaries for an imagined buyer seems out of place with many more urgent and essential needs during this time. I imagine there are more neighbors than just us who will struggle to democratically prepare and participate in the town hall with the neighborhood for the board to be assured they have heard.

In conclusion, we oppose the reduction in green space to #7 Ridgeway and because of the difficult timing in which this town hall is being carried out when members of our household will not be able to participate due to the substantial workload for healthcare workers during COVID-19.

Finally, we also want to emphasize that we very much look forward to meeting our future neighbors at #7 Ridgeway and welcoming them to an amazing neighborhood!

Very best and thank you,

Dr. Jennifer Tucker (Ph.D.) and Dr. Ross Blank (M.D.)