

To the Members of the Zoning Board of Appeals,

RE: ZBA25-02: 315 West Huron Street

My name is Justin Herrick. I am one of the owners of both the businesses (Live and Last Word) and the real estate at 102 S First St. I have lived, worked, and raised a family in Ann Arbor for over 20 years. I care deeply about this city and its future. I am writing in support of the proposed height variance request. I believe I have meaningful insight as a business owner, property owner, and long-time resident.

Even my own sentimental perception of Ann Arbor is that of a small, quaint, tree-filled college town—a view many longtime residents understandably share. But the reality is that over the past decade Ann Arbor has been evolving into a growing city, largely fueled by the University of Michigan. This growth will continue. The role of the ZBA is to shape it in ways that avoid jarring or fundamental shifts in the city's character.

In my view, the variance requested here does not significantly alter the character of the surrounding area. The site is directly adjacent to other large buildings, and the variance is relatively narrow in scope—allowing a height increase between First Street, Huron Street, and the railroad tracks. There are already two buildings of similar height within a block of the site. Approving this variance would not disrupt the neighborhood; it would simply continue a trajectory of growth already underway.

The benefits of this project also align with Ann Arbor's long-term priorities. Allowing increased building height enables greater efficiency and advances key community goals: expanding affordable housing, improving walkability, supporting environmental sustainability, and increasing density. This is not about unchecked development. It is about smart, sustainable growth that benefits residents, supports local businesses, and ensures Ann Arbor remains vibrant and accessible.

Finally, as one of the business owners directly affected, I want to note that the developers of this project have been consistently supportive and communicative. They have committed to ensuring relocation support for our businesses, a meaningful step that reinforces the project's positive impact on downtown's economy and character.

Respectfully,
Justin Herrick