

To the Planning Commission,

I am writing to object to the rezoning of the Knight property on Spring Street from residential to commercial use.

Currently there are a number of small local businesses on Miller Avenue. These businesses are confined to Miller Avenue, and they provide some useful services for people in the adjacent residential area newly known as Water Hill. Knight' Market is one of these businesses and is located on the corner of Miller and Spring.

The Knight family want to rezone several plots of land on Spring Street for commercial use, plots of land that are currently part of the Water Hill residential neighborhood.

My concerns are several:

First, once a residential street starts to become commercial, there is a tendency over time for properties next to commercial property or in its vicinity also to become designated commercial. This process is part of the encroachment of the city as it spreads out from the city center. This encroachment has already happened on Ashley Street, once a residential neighborhood, with unfortunate consequences. Spring Street marks the beginning of the Water Hill neighborhood, and the redistricting of Knight's Market would signal the beginning of encroachment into this neighborhood.

Secondly, the Knights say they plan to keep these properties in the family. They say they intend to keep the current structures. That is a fine sentiment and intention. But we all know that over time, family fortunes and composition change, as well as the power dynamics within families as family members die and heirs appear with different needs and agendas. If and when these properties are sold, there is nothing to prevent a sale to someone who intends a very different scale of commercial enterprise and/or an aesthetic which jars with the neighborhood. (Note the unfortunate Fifth Avenue property in construction and the powerlessness of the commission to intervene due to the zoning.)

Third, one of the arguments underlying the Knight's request seems to be that BECAUSE they already own the land on Spring Street that they SHOULD to be able to use it for a baking facility because that would be convenient.

Yes, it might be convenient for them to use the house or houses that they already own for a baking house. But their convenience is not my concern. It is possible for them to expand their baking production in another way. If they are in need of a new facility to bake products, it is possible to buy or lease a structure in any of the commercial areas of town and truck products from the bakery to the restaurants as they now truck meat from the butcher shop in the back of Knight's Market to various restaurants, including their own.

The Knights seem like a very nice family. But this zoning issue should not be determined by who is nice or who is powerful in the city. Zoning should be made on the basis of what kind of city we imagine is a good one to live in, and I am not in favor of commercial enterprises encroaching into residential areas.

Sincerely,  
Margaret Buttenheim  
521 Cherry Street  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103