

City of Ann Arbor Planning and Development Board  
c/o Matt Kowalski

August 13, 2015

Dear Mr. Kowalski,

We would like to offer the following observations regarding the Davis Row condominiums in advance of the Planning Board meeting on Tuesday, August 18.

Planning staff requested the petitioner to respond to the recommendation of Section V Action E, "that the Davis/Hoover area should be rezoned to a lower density residential use." The response (Petitioners Response Letter #1 05-07-15) pointed out that "The area is presently the location of two very large apartment complexes, Nob Hill and 125 W Hoover." Although this is true, a glance at an aerial view of the neighborhood shows that both Nob Hill and 125 West Hoover are completely anomalous within the area south of the Historic District, and cannot be regarded as strong precedents. Moreover, Nob Hill is essentially self-contained and intrudes surprisingly little on the surrounding structures. 125 West Hoover is more of a parallel, but is more detached from its neighbors, the setbacks in every direction being roughly double those proposed for Davis Row.

The petitioner went on to suggest that the cited recommendation conflicted with Master Plan Section V Action C, which asked if "regulation ought to be more consistent with established development patterns?" True again, but Action E is a recommendation and Action C is just a question. In any case, the argument that damage already done justifies more damage is not attractive.

The present situation makes it possible to see the two existing complexes as slightly unfortunate aberrations. But a third would really set new precedent, not so much by its scale, but by its scale in relationship to the site. Squeezing four units onto a site that would best support two or three can be seen as authorizing forty units on a site that might support twenty. Disrespecting the scale of a neighborhood cheapens its atmosphere. Two small lots have been combined into one medium lot, which will now hold the largest structure that can legally be built after obtaining the needed variances. These variances are required by the ambition to create a greater number of units than the site can support. Adequate garage space can only be provided in a basement, and a driveway has to be placed directly opposite a side street. We wish to point out that any vehicle leaving by that driveway has to reverse up what appears from the drawings to be a 1:4 ramp.

The site plan consistently underplays the scale of the construction in small but misleading ways. The context drawing shows the distance from the East wall of the structure to the existing warehouse on its Eastern boundary as 27'. The actual distance is the 15' setback plus 3' (measured onsite), or a total of 18', which changes the picture substantially. The site cross-section shows the distance between the lot line and our property as being 10 feet greater than it actually is. The combined effect of these errors is that anyone looking at page 10 of the site plan has the impression of a spacious layout that has no real existence.

Respectfully,

Philip and Jacqueline Roe  
124 West Hoover Ave.  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103