

From: Laura Strowe
Sent: Thursday, June 15, 2017 1:23 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
Subject: 1140 Broadway

To the Planning Commission of the City of Ann Arbor:

We urge you to reject the zoning change for the proposal known as "1140 Broadway."

Morningside is requesting a zoning change from PUD to C1AR: Campus Business and Residential. The only other properties I could find thus zoned are clearly "campus:" properties caught between the central campus and the dormitory area. This location on Broadway is not "campus." It is obvious that this zoning was chosen, not for its aptness, but because it gives the developer a zoning with minimal restrictions on height, density, open space, set-backs and use, without having to provide benefits to the city.

The conditions Morningside is offering to place on the C1AR zoning merely describe their proposal, and while we are grateful to have future development restricted, the conditions still allow for a site plan---as the one proposed---that is too dense, too massive, too tall, and with inadequate protection for the neighborhood.

If you look around the city, you will not find another complex that is this dense and this tall in any neighborhood outside the downtown area. Morningside's proposal will put over 600 units on 6.4 acres. This is an extraordinary number! Note that the four apartment and condominium complexes to the east of the "1140 Broadway " lot hold 739 units on about 35 acres.

The level of urban density allowed by this proposed zoning is not appropriate to a transitional area such as the former Kroger's lot. Instead, we should have a zoning that limits the height and massing of the buildings so that the transition from the Wall Street medical buildings to the historic neighborhood of mostly small single-family houses and small duplexes is more gradual. The zoning should better reflect the neighboring ratio of open space, and should better protect Traver Creek. We demand a zoning more appropriate to this location.

The zoning change request cannot be considered without reference to the Master Plan, in particular the Northeast Area Plan, which was revised in 2005, after many meetings and much discussion. We understand that many consider the Master Plan outdated, yet at your last session you voted to re-approve it.

If we reject the validity of the Master Plan, then we are essentially leaving it to each developer to dictate what is good for that property, good for that neighborhood, good for the city. This is not wise policy, as any developer's goals are not necessarily compatible with the community's goals. Letting developers set policy defeats the idea of planning.

Obviously, a developer's bottom line is profit. In this case, using the excuses of "workforce housing" and "urban density," Morningside has designed a project that crams as many units into the property as they think the city will stomach.

Interestingly, after claiming that the Master Plan has no validity, Morningside claims, in documents submitted to the planning department, that "the site adheres to the vast majority of the Master Plan's suggestions." Look carefully at their list. Most of the items are necessary parts of any plan: parking, sidewalks, access, landscaping and lighting. Other items are completely inadequate responses to the Master Plan's recommendations and the comments of the planning staff. And at least one item creates a "public benefit" out of a city street, the cul-de-sac at the end of Broadway.

We are not asking for a strict adherence to the Master Plan, but we wish you to honor its intent in determining the proper zoning and appropriate site plan. The intent of the Master Plan is to have a transitional design that respects the character of the neighborhood, that has open space consistent with that character, and that has mixed use. This plan violates this intent.

As part of the "Planned Project" designation that Morningside is seeking to allow set-back modifications, the developer must show "public benefit." They claim four ways that they tap into what they call "community values" to benefit the public. The four are: infrastructure, cleaning the contamination, affordability and sustainability. None of these depends on the extraordinary size of this proposal. Any development---and you should know that there were other bidders on this parcel, at least one of whom would have followed the Master Plan---will provide infrastructure and will clean up the site. The clean up doesn't even cost the developer, but will be covered by a Brownfield TIF. I understand that the number of affordable or workforce housing units is still being negotiated. How many units are a proper exchange for ruining the character of a neighborhood and setting a precedent for intrusive, inappropriately sized developments in Lowertown? As for

sustainability, the mention of solar panels---only enough to heat water---and a small green roof is deceptive. It is equally deceptive, by the way, to include the green roof as part of the project's "open space."

Morningside often cites two design features that will benefit the immediate neighborhood. One is that they are proposing to grant a "public access easement" along Traver Creek. The developer claims that by doing this they are fulfilling a promise to the neighborhood. However an easement---essentially permission to walk along the creek---is not what we want. We want, and repeatedly asked for, a path and a reasonably sized greenway that would connect the park across the street with the paths towards the river. This he cannot give us because Building A is too close to the wetland buffer.

The other benefit they are offering the neighborhood is a useless "public space" on land that is not theirs. They are offering to fix up the cul-de-sac at the end of a city street, Broadway, with brickwork and benches so that it can be used by the public for community gatherings. This is a laughable offer. Who wants to gather right next to a busy intersection when we have a nice park nearby? Moreover, this piece of street is the only access to the driveways of two businesses.

These dubious "public benefits" do not reflect "community values" as the developer claims. A real community value would be to respect a neighborhood's history and integrity and to design a development that is in harmony with its surroundings. Morningside has clearly not met the criteria for "public benefit" and their application for a "Planned Project" should not be approved. Likewise, the application for a zoning change, and thus the site plan, should be rejected.

Thank you.

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