



Ann Arbor City Council
301 E Huron
Ann Arbor, MI

July 15, 2016

Dear Council Members,

I am writing this to address concerns that have been expressed about the proposed project known as The Residences at 615 S. Main. Much of this information can be found in the many supporting documents in the project file on eTrakit, but I have tried to condense it here for your convenience and consideration.

Traffic and Parking

From the outset the project has been designed to be supportive and conducive of maximizing use of nonmotorized transportation options and minimizing the reliance of tenants on individually owned cars. The project is listed as "Very Walkable" with a walk score of 78 and is listed as a "Bikers Paradise" with a bike score of 94 and is served by several AAATA bus routes (the Blake Transit Center is just a few blocks away). A University of Michigan bus route is also just a few blocks away as is the Greyhound bus station/stop. The location in and of itself facilitates a lifestyle free of cars. Additionally, the project is sponsoring a new location for the ArborBike bike-share system on the property - the location will serve the new residents of the project as well as the existing neighborhood. The project is also providing a new shared-vehicle service location, hosting two cars that will be available to residents and the neighborhood alike.

New public parking will be provided along the reconfigured East Mosley and vehicular parking will be provided for the project residents who do choose to have cars in a private basement parking garage (163 spaces provided, many more than the minimum 120 required). The garage level will also provide bike parking way in excess of city requirements (113 spaces required and 258 spaces are provided - more than double the requirement, a 128.3% increase). We are working with the DDA to incorporate a mechanism (either through time limited and/or metered parking) to ensure that the new public parking spaces along E. Mosley will be available to customers of the retail space included in the project.

A traffic study was completed for the project (as required by city code) and thoroughly reviewed and vetted by city staff using the same standards that are applied city-wide. This study was approved by both staff and planning commission. Traffic at the intersection of E. Mosley and S. Main was analyzed using not just one but two industry recognized traffic modeling software packages. The modeling, taking into account local elements, such as signalization timing and the gaps that occur, predicts that cars exiting E. Mosley will stack only three to four deep during the 95th percentile, "worst case" scenario (5pm to 6pm - and far fewer during the rest of the day). All of the waiting cars would clear, on average, in just 23 seconds (and in only 90 seconds if local elements are not taken into account). It is important to recognize that this is the 95th percentile "worst-case" scenario - from 5:15pm to 5:40pm - the rest of the day the delays are minimal to nonexistent.

Planned Project status.

As many City Council members may remember the project across Main St., known as 618 Lofts, was a Planned Project originally approved for a building height of 85' (although the developer eventually elected not to build to that height but one story lower instead). Our project at 615 S. Main qualifies for Planned Project status on more levels than did the 618 project and we are only proposing a maximum building height of 75 feet - and this only at limited portions of our building (due in part to requests of the Design Review Board our building height varies by 'building module' in order to break up the massing of the building) - with heights around the building ranging from 66 to 75 feet at the two prominent corner elements along Main St. (75 feet, although the maximum, is NOT the predominant height of the building).

We have proposed greater setbacks along the perimeter of the building, some of which also require Planned Project modifications (some council members may remember that this was required for another project called The Varsity that had a portion of the building setback further from the street than permitted by code). Front setbacks proposed along the 615 S. Main project range up to 24.86 feet when the maximum permitted by code is 10 feet (it should also be noted that require side setback in the D2 zoning are Zero on this site and our side setback varies from 10 to 11.4 feet and also that the required rear setback is Zero and our rear setback ranges from 24 feet to a maximum of 63.8 feet).

The fact is that the project setbacks are in excess of the minimum requirement for the zoning district and this one attribute alone qualifies the project for Planned Project status. Besides increased setbacks there are seven other attributes enumerated in the city code any one of which qualify a project for Planned Project status. The 615 S. Main project also qualifies for Planned Project due to these additional attributes;

#2) Open Space in excess of the zoning district. The minimum required open space in the D2 zoning district is 10% of the site area (or 8,616 sf in our case) and the 615 S. Main Street project has open space totaling 36.3% (or 31,237 sf) - a 262% increase - on the site. Again this attribute alone qualifies the proposed development for Planned Project designation. The open space provided includes portions visible and/or accessible to the general public like the landscape plantings along Main Street (it should be noted that nearly the entire Main St. frontage is setback at least twice as far from the public right-of-

way than 618 Lofts across the street). There is space along Main Street intended for sidewalk cafe seating, and there is a pedestrian green-way along the east side of the building (it should also be noted that no driveways are included in the open space calcs).

There is also open space in the internal courtyard of the proposed building created to afford its residents a peaceful, restful, refuge from the busy traffic and industrial influences surrounding the site (not the least of which is the adjacent railroad) and general hustle & bustle of the city. This courtyard will have amenities like a pool, outdoor seating/gathering areas, a fire pit/feature, landscaping including planters that have trees, and active open areas for games like bocce' ball, etc. This area qualifies under the city's ordinances as open space as it would if it were not in an enclosed courtyard. The courtyard accounts for approximately 14,400 sf of the 31,237 sf total open space provided (leaving 16,837 sf of open space surrounding the building outside the courtyard - about twice that required by code).

#3) Natural Resources preservation. The proposed project removes a significant amount of uncontrolled stormwater run-off from the neighborhood and adjacent floodplain through a network of detention tanks. Currently the site has only uncontrolled stormwater run-off exacerbating flooding and soil erosion in the area and downstream to and including the Huron River. The decrease in impervious area, along with on-site detention, will reduce flooding and help retain soil through reduced erosion. Additionally the project will remove 81,200 tons of contaminated soil from the city - clearly an environmental benefit.

#4) Preservation of Architectural Features. The corner two-story portion of the old buggy factory is being retained in its existing, historic, location and the architecturally inappropriate single story addition on the Main Street facade will be removed (as well as the modern stairwell addition on the NW corner of the building). The portions of the new construction above will be setback (in two directions - both eastward and northward) significantly more than the 5 foot offset required by the D2 zoning - by more than 7 feet on the main street side and 10 feet on the E. Mosley side. This is a greater effort of preservation of architectural features than was achieved with the much acclaimed salvation of the old bus depot facade on Huron St. (part of the new hotel project approved and built there). This portion of the site will be repurposed and reconfigured into neighborhood retail space, space with merchants serving both the project's residents, the neighborhood, and the city at large.

#5) Energy Conserving Design and/or solar orientation. The project owners have committed to construction technologies that yield a building at least 15% more energy efficient than required by the local energy code. The building will be equipped throughout with high efficiency heat pumps. While each apartment will have its own thermostatic control unit, these thermostats will permit only a narrow temperature range as options (between 68 & 74 degrees F) to select from. It should be noted that this is the same type of set-up as in the Arbor Blu project at 624 Church St. (which is LEED Silver certified), and the recently approved Hyatt Place hotel on S. State St. (an approved Planned Project). It should be noted as well that the apartment building across the street has individual HVAC units with individual thermostatic controls (and is an approved Planned Project).

All the lighting in the building will be high efficiency LEDs. The ventilation fans in the basement garage will be connected to CO & CO2 sensors so that they will run only when necessary. The building will have a white membrane roof to reduce heat load to the building as well as to reduce the heat island effect in the city. The exterior wall cavities will be insulated to a min of R21. The roof of the two story buggy factory incorporated into the project will have a green roof system which will help retain more than the minimum 120% of the 100 year storm water runoff (the latter in the storage tanks below the 1st floor of the building) - additional storm water will also be retained in the planters in the courtyard.

The roof of the building affords opportunity for an unobstructed southerly solar exposure. The roof structure will be adequately reinforced to accommodate installation of solar panels thereupon at any time. Extra electrical conduits will be run from the main electrical room to the roof for connection to solar panels.

#6) Public Benefit. The project offers many public benefits including an improved streetscape along both Main & Mosley. These streetscapes have been designed in accordance with the city's new streetscape design guidelines (one of the first in not THE first project to be so) offering significant improvement to the public right-of-way at private expense rather than public expense (DDA is NOT participating/contributing financially in these streetscape improvements as it did on the west side of S. Main across the street from 615).

81,200 tons of contaminated soils will be removed from the city.

As previously indicated the project is pedestrian oriented (downtown, markets, restaurants, coffee shops, bus/transit station, parks, employment, educational & entertainment opportunities, and other amenities, are within walking distance) resulting in reduced carbon emissions.

Reduced need for individual motor vehicle ownership due to transit access as the site is on at least 4 AAATA bus routes (8A, 8b, 7, & 16) resulting in reduced carbon emissions (the AAATA Blake transit hub, greyhound bus station, and university bus system are within a walkable distance as well).

Shared motor vehicles and bikes will be located on the site and available to the general public also resulting in reduced carbon emissions.

Impervious area will be reduced and on-site stormwater detention created resulting in reduced stormwater flow off-site and thus a reduction in off-site flooding and erosion and property damage.

Local, neighborhood, retail uses are included in the project that are walkable from the surrounding residential neighborhood resulting in reduced carbon emissions.

Public infrastructure will be upgraded at the expense of the developers as a result of the project - including installation of a new 12" city water main under S. Main Street - improving water pressure and availability in the area and reducing required capital improvement expenses for the city. A portion of South Main Street will be repaved at private expense once the new water main is installed - about half the width of Main St. will be repaved for one block between Madison and Mosley as part of the project reducing required capital improvement expenses on the part of the city.

All of East Mosley from Main St. to the rail road will be repaved at private expense including new road base, pavement, curb & gutter, landscaping, street lighting, sidewalk and new public parking spaces. This will be a direct benefit to the neighboring property owners and the city as a whole (city street upgraded and improved at private expense thus reducing capital outlay from city coffers).

A landscaped pedestrian walkway will be created along the east side of the building for the length of the project paralleling the historic rout of the Allen Creek. This walkway will be open to the public and may become a future link to or component of the Allen Creek greenway.

The parks department will receive a contribution of \$140,000 to go towards the improvement of local public parks enhancing the parks system and reducing required capital improvement expenses.

Curb-cuts along the east side of Main Street will be eliminated for the length of the property/project reducing the probability of pedestrian-vehicle conflicts and thus enhancing pedestrian safety along the east side of S. Main St. The project owners will work with the city to enhance and sign the pedestrian crossing at Mosley and Main Streets.

The completion of the proposed building will buffer neighbors on the west side of S. Main St. from railroad noise.

Increased building setbacks along both S. Main St. and East Mosley, as well as along the east and north sides of the building, provide more green, landscaped, areas along the public right of way than required and reduce the impervious area on-site.

The project will remove blighted structures from the city and neighborhood.

The project will sponsor/include an ArborBike shared-bike station expanding the system to more users including neighboring residents and residents city wide.

These public benefits eclipse those of the project across the street, which was approved as a Planned Project.

Active Streetscape

The project has been designed with a variety of active streetscape influences/features. There is retail space along both S. Main and E. Mosley Streets including sidewalk cafe space. There are residential porches (large enough to accommodate patio furniture) along both Main & Mosley, the ones along Main St. are the main, individual, entrances to townhome units which front on Main St. (raised, street-facing front porches are common in the neighborhood). Balconies, large enough to accommodate furniture, overlook Main St. on the 2nd and 3rd floors of the dwellings. The building is set-back further than required from the sidewalk along Main St. allowing for more greenery than on the west side of the street. There are large, tall, windows of clear glass along the north end of the building facing Main St. allowing the general public views into the active interior spaces and through to the internal courtyard.

Public Parking for retail tenants

The developers are working with the DDA to insure that the new public parking created along E Mosley will be available for the customers of the retail merchants. This may be by signage limiting parking to specific time limits and might also include metering or other means designated by the DDA (who has charge over public parking in the downtown). It is the intent of the developers that this public parking along Mosley be dedicated and available for their retail tenants - it is in their best interest to work diligently toward that end.

Courtyard Day-lighting

The internal courtyard will be full of light, diffuse or direct, so long as the sun is shining. Between the vernal and autumnal equinoxes there will be at least some portion of the courtyard floor in direct sunlight with the greatest amount occurring at the summer solstice. This is the time of the year, it should be noted, when the courtyard will get the greatest amount of usage. Fortunately during the hottest portions of the hottest days of the year (late afternoons in summer) much of the courtyard will be in desirable, relieving, cooling shade.

Unit Mix

Thirty-five percent of the units are either studio (14%) or micro-studio (21%) apartments - these will be the most affordable options for those looking to have their own place downtown on a budget. These units will range between 370 & 580 square feet. The many common area amenities within the building as well as the project's proximity to the pubs, restaurants, cafes, markets, parks, and entertainment venues within walking distance will offset the reduced individual living space (although I would point out that 370 sf would seem palatial to some New Yorkers).

Thirty-two percent are one, two or three bedroom units. These will appeal to individuals, young couples, or friends who wish to live downtown for all the reasons listed herein above. The townhouses with individual entrances off Main St. may appeal to young professionals with home occupations or families attracted to all the amenities, vitality, and liveliness of downtown living.

Twenty-nine percent of the units are four bedroom units and only four percent are 5 bedroom units. These units are intended to appeal to single millennials who wish to reduce the cost of downtown living by sharing living costs (apartment/room mates) and can include students.

Courtyard Enclosure

It was decided after lengthy consideration not to open the courtyard to the south as this would introduce railroad/train noise into a space intended to be a restful, quiet, reprieve creating instead a potential echo chamber of railroad noise.

I consequently urge you to approve the project known as The Residences at 615 S. Main as proposed.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of the above with respect to our mixed-use project that compiles with, or exceeds, all D2 zoning requirements and that qualifies on many levels as a Planned Project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Brad Moore', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brad Moore, AIA
J Bradley Moore & Associates Architects