

COMMENTS ON RE-ZONING PROPOSAL FOR 805-807 W. WASHINGTON STREET

As owners of the adjacent properties located immediately to the south of the city-owned property at 805 & 807 W. Washington, we respectfully request that the Planning Commission postpone any decision about re-zoning this property until neighbors and other interested parties in the immediate vicinity have been afforded adequate time and opportunity to confer with City of Ann Arbor planning department staff about the full implications of the proposed re-zoning. We were notified only 14 days prior to this hearing - by postcard - of the proposed re-zoning after Citizen Participation requirements were waived by the City. The stated purpose of the proposed re-zoning was “to more closely reflect the current use.” The staff report relating to this matter was not made available to the public via posting to the City’s website until 4:30 p.m. this past Friday afternoon (5/2/14). From that report, we have learned for the first time that the proposed re-zoning of the property is designed not just to recognize the actual current land use – but, more importantly - to facilitate either the rehabilitation of the property or (perhaps more likely) its sale. Indeed, per the staff report, the sale of the Washington Street property has already been approved by City Council and HUD if renovations are infeasible or if the sale proceeds are needed to rehabilitate the city’s larger properties.

Among other things, the relevance of a re-zoning decision resides in what it enables or allows to happen that could not happen without the change in classification. A potential exit by the City of Ann Arbor from its long-term ownership of this property – which would be facilitated by the proposed re-zoning - would be a significant concern for us until such time as the city has satisfactorily addressed our long-standing issues with inadequate management of stormwater runoff from the Washington Street site. This problem has been made significantly worse for us in recent years after the city paved large portions of the southern half of its property to enable it to be used as a heavy vehicle parking lot and staging area. **The resulting impact to our property of inadequate stormwater detention on the city-owned property has been a significant exacerbation of flooding in our rear parking lot, rendering much of the area inaccessible and unusable during heavy rain events.** We have brought this to the attention of the city on a number of occasions but have received no firm commitment to deal with the issue.

Thus it concerns us that that the city may be positioning itself via this re-zoning request for an eventual exit from the Washington Street site that leaves our issues unresolved, potentially separates the city from its responsibilities as the long-term owner of the site, and opens up the possibility – in the event of sale – that residential re-development of this non-conforming property of small lot size could take place without adequate mitigation of the stormwater impacts to our property. Indeed, in the event that the city determines that it is not feasible to rehabilitate the existing public housing units at the property, one could at least raise the theoretical question as to whether the property should remain in city hands with the existing zoning classification in place to ensure adequate control over stormwater impacts to our property and others in the Allen Creek floodplain.

In closing, we reiterate that we have questions and concerns that we and other potentially affected neighbors have not yet had an opportunity to raise and discuss with City staff. This fast-track planning process around the proposed re-zoning has been anything but transparent and open to citizen input so far, and we ask that you slow it down by postponing a decision to recommend re-zoning to City Council until these conversations have taken place.