

RE: 228 Packard

Dear Members of the City of Ann Arbor Planning Commission:

Adverse Impact on Public Health & Safety. The proposed PUD “228 Packard” will adversely affect public health and safety and should not be permitted. It entails a change in the pattern of traffic flow on S. 5th Ave between Packard Road and East Madison Street from one-way to two-way while massively increasing density. It is obvious that there will be an unacceptable increase in vehicular collisions on S. 5th Ave, which serves 4 bus lines (25, 26, 27, 28, 29) and is a major artery during the evening rush hour. This block is a steep hill and several residents have driveways/parking that force them to back out onto S. 5th Ave, which will be hazardous with two-way traffic. The Developer seems to have recognized that S. 5th Ave is the Achilles heel of his project and has not shown the massing context as seen from S. 5th Ave. That is the block where the proposed massing is greatest. 228 Packard will aggravate an existing choke point in the rush hour circulation and will create unsafe circumstances.

These are sufficient reasons for this PUD to be turned down, but I will also comment on the ways in which the alleged “community benefits” for this project are deeply flawed and misleading.

1. Not Affordable Housing. Developer alleges that the project will help to solve a “housing shortage.” That is not the case as this is yet another high-rise with high rents as opposed to the housing that the city needs, which is affordable housing for families. Given that there are already many housing towers catering to the high-rent student market that have been built where the zoning is appropriate, there is no reason to grant a PUD to allow the developer to build another such tower in an established R4C residential neighborhood. The city was wise to turn down the Moravian and should turn down this PUD as well.

2. Not Sustainable. The project lies squarely within the **Flood zone and Flood Plain of the Allen creek.** This is not an acceptable place to put a PUD. This PUD will create a very real risk for flooding and sewer overloading. Moreover, the project will reduce the tree canopy, green space, and pervious ground in the City’s near downtown areas, which is a change opposite to what is best for sustainability. Climate-conscious cities are increasing not decreasing urban green spaces.

3. It will NOT reduce sprawl or miles travelled in vehicles. The Developer makes the false claim that this PUD will reduce sprawl. However, it does not cater to persons who might otherwise drive into the city to work or who might contribute to sprawl. Those persons will never live in this student-centered high-rise. Students generally live close to campus. If they don’t live in this high-rise they will live in the many other existing housing options within the city where there are abundant vacancies. Some families live in the affordable housing that will be demolished and they will be forced out. Thus, this project is more likely to increase rather than to decrease miles travelled. The City has not shown that there is a scarcity of housing for students making it necessary to overturn established zoning. That burden of proof has not been met and must be met before a PUD is allowed.

4. Natural Features. This PUD aggravates the issue of stormwater management as it is planned to be built in a flood zone and flood plain. It will demolish a grove of native black walnut and other trees that the city saw fit to number as part of its tree inventory. The massing of the building is so great that there is minimal scope for native plants and pollinators. The idea of “enhanced landscaping” as a benefit of

the project to the city is unfounded. It will extend the downtown unfairly into an R4C established neighborhood, which is a zoning change that has no merits.

5. Economy. The city will need to **defend against law suits** brought on by the unsafe traffic circulation pattern proposed. Moreover, the city will need to invest in infrastructure to counter-act the adverse impact on traffic flow. South Fifth Ave is presently an important artery that takes traffic out of the city during the evening rush hour. It is not capable of withstanding a new PUD on this massive scale without clogging traffic flow.

6. False Context Photos. The developer is disingenuous in regard to his choice of context photos. He should have shown the houses that will remain after this PUD is built and that will be adversely impacted. These houses are all in R4C zoning and lie on the East side of S. 5th Ave, the West side of S. 4th Ave., and on S. Packard Rd. The proposed PUD is squarely in an R4C neighborhood and it was improper for the developer to use structures in D2 zoning as the context.

Please keep me informed about the status of this proposal and about any opportunities for public education or participation. The developer has not once contacted the Germantown Neighborhood Association or myself about this proposal and has not sought the required community input. Instead he has made offers to individual owners to buy their properties for vast sums that are something like two times fair market value or even higher. Such offers do not constitute citizen input and do not provide relief to all persons owning homes that will impacted if this PUD is allowed.

Thank you for taking these concerns into consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Beverly I. Strassmann

Beverly I. Strassmann
Germantown Neighborhood Association, President