

From: Christine Brummer
Sent: Monday, February 06, 2023 7:51 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
Cc: OWSBoard
Subject: Hearing regarding PUD at 415 W Washington

Members of the Planning Commission and others interested in the development of 415 West Washington:

The hearing tonight investigates a change in zoning to accomplish a conceived proposal for 157 residential spaces (units with a maximum of three bedrooms and two bathrooms) in a 134,180 square foot, three story building. The proposal before you is again using a “concept plan” which does not show final dimensions or placement on the property. The request is for PUD status although City zoning specifically addressed the plot as part of a compromise to form the D1, D2., etc. change to zoning.

You will note that the staff recommendations agree that a final plan with specifics revealed will need to go through an approval process including review by the Historic District Commission as the property is within the Old West Side Historic District. Under the last Downtown Plan, staff note that the site plan will need to be reviewed under Downtown Development Character guidelines. Further, permits and approval by the MDEQ will be required to allow construction in the floodplain.

Much effort has been expended on the concept of this project including participation meetings. As you may see from the summaries of the various meetings, efforts have been made to answer as many of the goals set forth by Council for development of City sites rather than optimizing this particular parcel. This has come with a price of focusing on only some of the advantages of this location and its context.

The former City Yard property is located in an interface or transition zone between downtown Ann Arbor and the Old West Side neighborhood which effectively abuts the site.

Thus, the proposal tonight assumes a PUD is necessary to allow development plans addressing chosen options among the goals enumerated by Council as far as the concept has been conceived.

This probably comes as no surprise, but, there is a question of how far along efforts should proceed before a site plan with specifics is available.

Aside from that, it seems that the D1, D2 etc zoning is not working in practice. All projects near or in the Old West Side have required departures. Most have become PUDs. What are the aspects of the underlying zoning compromise that are not working out parcel by parcel? Is that necessarily true at 415 West Washington?

Please take a look at and consider how topics broached during the lengthy public input process have been addressed or dismissed to evaluate appropriateness of the concept plan. Examples include adhering to historic district massing and setbacks, retention of the chimney for birds, municipal walking trail inclusion, remediation allowing safe motor and pedestrian traffic along this popular east/west corridor already burdened by the Y, and suppression of noise pollution particularly now that the City has an entertainment zone on the west side of downtown.

Finally, we keep talking about the lack of inviting gateways to downtown Ann Arbor. Yet this proposal appears to be another wall of a building isolating the center of town from its surroundings. This site is worthy of development sympathetic to its context for that reason as well.

A PUD designation may be advantageous but exactly what is it fostering?

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