

From: Joan O'Connell <joankoconnell@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 18, 2018 3:19 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
Subject: "Cottages" proposed on Pontiac Trail near Barton Dr

Dear Commissioners:

First, thank you so much for hearing the residents' concerns. It was impressive and encouraging to me to hear some of you folks echoing and sometimes sharing some of our written and spoken concerns at the meeting last evening. (April 17)

Many thanks to any of you who are taking the citizens' resistance and concerns seriously, doing extra research, possibly trying now to figure out how you can get out of the previously-awarded "go ahead" for such an ill-conceived, not-Ann-Arbor, not here, not now, hopefully never project.

You have heard citizens concerns about noise, traffic, storm run-off, filling in of wetlands, the concentration of young students...

BTW, does Trinitas presume to know more about undergraduate housing than the University? What provision is made in their development plan for on-site supervision/counseling, such as is provided by dormitory RA's.

I'm writing to re-iterate and fill out a bit more systematically what I said at the meeting last evening.

My concern is **integrity**. [Forget the Code for a moment. Codes can be changed. Values run deeper, like long-established trees - comparison intended.]

Q. Is this project in line with what Ann Arbor is/stands for/how it defines itself? The city of Ann Arbor has certain long-established values reflected and carefully described in the **Master Plan**. It falls to the Commissioners job to implement that Plan on behalf of the City and the residents.

Please read again a few excerpts from these impressively values-laden documents:

- **Vision Statement, p. 5 of 135 in the Introduction:** https://www.a2gov.org/departments/planning/Documents/MasterPlans/Land_Use_Plan_Nov_09.pdf

"The City of Ann Arbor will be a dynamic community, providing a safe and healthy place to live, work and recreate. It will be a place where planning decisions are based, in part, on the interconnectedness of natural, transportation and land use systems. Natural systems, including air and water, natural features, native flora and wildlife habitats, will be improved and protected. It will be a place where the Huron River is a cherished part of the community and a focal point for recreation. Downtown will continue to be a vibrant part of the community that ties all parts of the city together. Transportation systems will include enhanced opportunities for public transit, extensive opportunities for alternative modes of travel and improved management techniques to reduce the impact of traffic on existing streets and neighborhoods. Land use systems will be compatible and complementary, and will include residential, recreational, commercial, office, educational, institutional and industrial uses, which will provide extensive choices in housing (including low cost housing), shopping, employment and recreational activities. Historically significant buildings and neighborhoods will be preserved. The quality of life in Ann Arbor will be characterized by its diversity, beauty, vibrancy and livability and ultimately will depend upon the positive interaction of these systems."

- **Chapter 4: Natural Systems and the Environment [pgs. 15-18]**

Go ahead and read the sections preceding part III: It's quite lofty.

I believe the citizens and hopefully the governing bodies of this city actually believe those words. And strive to live by and beside them. Individual citizens are urged to plant rain gardens and native plants, not to water their lawns, etc. Beware the storm drains. Of course!

So, why would an outside organization like Trinitas be *permitted* by the city (literally --one might ask "Why?" and "How?" but that's another discussion) to break, ignore, disregard, side-step, and override these expectations of what it means to be Ann Arbor?

"Oh, it's all good. This plans meets all our codes. Please proceed, Trinitas, with this completely out of compliance with our city's vision and values project. We're happy to support your business plan."

Really?!

Let's imagine: even while noticing that the north side neighbors are quite upset about this petition, you go ahead and approve the project, per the staff recommendation.

What next?: shall we **clear-cut** the existing natural area, as they did for North Sky?

What an embarrassment for The City of Ann Arbor which, and I quote from the city's website:

"..has always prided itself in maintaining a green image through the preservation of open space, parkland, and natural features."

In the master Plan, there are statements about trees, with a note that trees in "*the downtown area grow in disturbed soils under harsh conditions so that healthy growth, let alone tree survival is difficult. In residential areas, **especially the older neighborhoods**, tree cover is more prominent. ..[emerald ash tree borer discussion] **it will take many years to regenerate the urban forest.**"*

So here we are, having given the go-ahead in theory to Trinitas to build this nothing-good-about it project. There's a provision in the Master Plan.

See Objective 2 below:

Objective 2: Encourage developers to consider alternative land use designs that provide the best protection for existing natural features.

Action Statements:

- a) Encourage multiple-story buildings where appropriate, structured parking or cluster design development to reduce impacts to existing natural features and reduce surfaces that are impervious to water.
- b) Ensure that the placement of buildings, parking lots, driveways, sidewalks, and storm water management systems minimizes the impacts to natural features and encourages storm water infiltration.

How about those **559 parking spaces/** Impervious surfaces. For comparison, that is close to 1/4 of the parking area at Arborland.

Please review what the Master Plan says about Water Quality and the Huron River.

Meanwhile, more verbiage from the Master Plan:

There has also been an effort to convert lawn areas to native species, and to create and maintain prairies as well as wetlands and rain gardens. **The change is a result of a growing awareness of the ecological benefits of deep-rooted plants that result in**

increased storm water filtration, as well as a desire to preserve the cultural heritage of the region by restoring plant communities that were common when Ann Arbor was settled.

"Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got til its gone
They paved paradise
And put[in] a parking lot"

-Bob Dylan "Yellow Taxi."

I appreciate that the task(s) before you are not easy. Thank you for trying to help make Ann Arbor what it thinks it is/was/will be.

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North side resident since 1973