

From: mswishka <mswishka@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, July 08, 2021 2:43 PM
To: HDC <HDC@a2gov.org>
Subject: Development of 415 W Washington

My name is Mark Wishka and I live at 211 3rd Street.

I'm writing to convey my perspective of the proposed development of 415 West Washington.

The Road Commission building, and complex has been my silent and neglected neighbor for 43 years. I have been on numerous committees and commissions since 1988 with the goal of repurposing the complex.

I was in the board of the Downtown Kiwanis Club when the city representatives approached the Club on our interest in the building to expand our sale. I was vocal in pushing to allocate funds for a structural assessment (which it passed) and for its purchase. Unfortunately, the city chose not to pursue our interest and the Club subsequently exited Downtown for a site with more space.

I've watched with interest over for almost a half a century as projects and proposals came forward only to fade, patiently waiting for the "right" one to come along to secure the site for the benefit of: The First Neighborhood Historic District in the Nation.

Over my decades of residence, I have worked with the HDC on several occasions on my personal property. I can say it was a learning experience and over time I developed a good relationship with staff and the varying commissioners with whom I've interacted.

I am pleased with the structural changes completed on my home and outbuilding, as they have greatly enhanced their useability not only for me, but those who will become its caretaker in the decades to come.

It was this experience that left me with a strong confidence that the HDC has the best interest of the community and its contributing structures in mind.

I found it distressing that though the HDC deemed the 415 W. Washington buildings contributing, they also cleared them for potential demolition. It seems no one was available to speak positively for the building on the day of discussion.

Costs of renovation has been sited as reason to bring it down, though I find that odd, as historic preservation is seldom inexpensive.

The "preferred option" you are reviewing this evening does not integrate itself into the neighborhood but creates a six-story wall between the neighborhood and downtown. I feel this is the antithesis of the goal to establish the Historic District back in 1972: To Protect the Integrity of the Neighborhood.

I suggest this site be developed as a gateway between downtown and the neighborhood. Preserving the buildings and develop a park area as an anchor for the Treeline Trail.

There seems to be a great deal of political wrangling around development in Ann Arbor, particularly high-density development. This is the only site in those discussions designated as historic and protected by the HDC. I ask the Commission to steer clear of the politics and stay true to the visionaries of 1960's who saw how high-density projects within the Old West Side were destroying it as a community.

Respectfully,

Mark S. Wishka