

City of Ann Arbor - Citizens Participation Meeting

413 E. Huron Street Summary Report

November 1, 2012

Carter hosted a Citizens Participation meeting on November 1, 2012 to review the proposed development for 413 East Huron. The following report contains a summary of the issues the participants discussed with the development team to consider in finalizing the design proposal. One comment was received via e-mail. The team mailed 1,625 postcards and 171 were returned to sender.

Meeting Discussion Summary

Conor McNally introduced the project and reviewed progress in addressing comments from the Design Review Board. Adjustments included changing the look and feel of the building and the site. These changes include variation in the facade of the building to break up the mass, variation in the brick color to further break up the building, pulling back the retail facade along both Huron and Division, movement of the loading dock to the rear of the property and treatment of the Huron Division corner with more glass and higher building cap. He also addressed what the project team would like to do as far as allowing retail to feel local and non-industrial.

One of the men in the audience addressed the light coverage of the building after Conor explained the different exterior brick materials. It turns out though that the citizen is really more concerned with the amount of land that the building is going to cover on the lot.

Norm Tyler said that Conor and company are reluctant to show what the view will look like from Division Street and brought his own hand sketches to show his point of view. He also says that while an attempt has been made to address the historic look of Huron Street no effort has been made to adapt the building to the historic 4th Ward on the North side. He wants a total overhaul of the project because he thinks it's going to get in the way of his sun and that the building is too large for the area.

Next the president of the 4th Ward association said she was frustrated that no one ever tried to contact her personally. She acknowledged that the project team set up time to meet with the surrounding neighbors, but said that they never took time to meet with anyone from Ann Arbor.

A man suggested a way to reposition the elevators so that more light might make its way around the building. By lowering the "U" between the buildings more sun would be available during the day. He also suggested using lighter brick so that the building wouldn't be so imposing to the neighboring community.

A woman said that the back side of the building is not being taken into consideration. She said that putting a driveway or parking to the back of it is not appropriate, and suggested the building be smaller.

A man stated that the emphasis of retail on Huron is inappropriate. He said there is no parking along the street and that traffic is constant and retail will be unsuccessful in that location. He thought the location was inappropriate for student focused housing. If the project fails due to the 3,000 beds currently being added to Ann Arbor they will be left with an unconvertible building.

Another man stated that he feels the building doesn't seem compatible enough with the buildings of the university and looks too industrial.

Another man is worried about the amount of traffic that is going to be added to E. Huron.

A woman followed up on this idea saying that the amount of noise is going to be harmful to her psychiatry practice and the elderly people living in Sloane Plaza.

A man running for board of regents at UM says that the incoming group of regents is going to try to curtail out of state enrollment and that the out of state enrollment is driving the new development.

A woman says that Carter should try to get into the elderly retiree demographic.

Another man points out that the road changes at the lot so that it makes a building there very conspicuous.

The final citizen comment came from an architect who said the building should be viewed in the round. She suggested looking at the spaces and traffic first before designing the building.

The final comment below was received via e-mail in response to the public notice post card.

October 31, 2012
Earl Ophoff
Midwestern Consulting

Re: Proposed Development at 413 E. Huron Street

Dear Mr. Ophoff, Developers and City of Ann Arbor:

I would like for this development to succeed. But your current business plan aims at an already saturated student market and misses a strong a growing market of the baby-boomer generation looking to downsize and move to a vibrant and exciting downtown. One of the worst results of this project -- for you and for the neighbors -- is for it to fail.

Last December my wife and I moved to Sloan Plaza, having sold our "big house" of over 35 years when we no longer needed the space and became interested in downsizing. We moved about

one mile, so the distances were not great. But the change in life style was considerable. We were in search of the vibrant, "green" convenience of downtown living and we feel we have achieved that. We really enjoy the restaurants and cultural events within walking distance of this location. I can walk to work.

Many of our friends have expressed interest in a similar move. They say, "our youngest is about to go to college, we should do what you and Kathy have done." I am convinced that there is a considerable market among the baby boomer generation for housing downtown with the amenities that this location offers. Many would want equity (condos) but some would want the flexibility of renting.

Aiming at this market has implications for your design – and your chances of success. A design with boomers in mind would not preclude the graduate student, young professional you have in mind but might cause a different floor plan and overall feel for a more intergenerational audience. You might build units that are spacious with two bedrooms, but not 4 or more bedrooms suited for student life. Ann Arbor has a long tradition of intergenerational living and I personally find that one of the most attractive aspects to living downtown.

Once you shifted your sights to an intergenerational market, I think some of the other decisions about design will be positively affected. You'll want a positive pedestrian experience, quality retail, and a welcoming visage to the rest of the community. I do not offer specific architectural suggestions, which are beyond my expertise, but I do offer this suggestion which furthers the vision of many neighbors, the city government and the developers.

All the best,

Don Duquette
505 E. Huron, #603