

From: Christopher Graham <grahamz@umich.edu>
Subject: Testimony to CPC
Date: February 5, 2013 4:41:46 PM EST
To: Raymond Detter <rdetter@umich.edu>

Members of the Planning Commission, I am Christopher Graham of 925 Aberdeen Drive --

I have served the City as a participant or member of all of the incarnations of the natural features committee, since the early 1980's. I have served the City as a member of the Planning Commission and as a member of the Environmental Commission. I am currently Chair of the latter, and Chair of its Natural Features Committee.

I own my own business in Ann Arbor, which I have operated since 1980. I am trained as a Landscape Architect but practice as a professional gardener.

The building proposed at 413 East Huron, is, in my view, simply too tall. A large building on this site should STEP DOWN from the height of Sloan Plaza and the Campus Inn.

Why? Because, unlike those two other buildings, this one does not have room on its site to absorb even the amount of shadow those buildings at their heights cast on their own property. Both of them have rear parking lots. This one, instead, has no back property -- but has two (maybe three) neighboring houses on other people's properties that will all but be completely shadowed by this building, most of the day.

In fact, even at noon, the northward shadows of the building proposed are so great as to completely shade these houses, if I interpret the shadow maps correctly. Are the sensitivities and sensibilities of homeowners in these houses not

important?

True, shadows in a location with big buildings beside one another downtown are to be expected. But are shadows this great into and over a historic, house sized, residential neighborhood adjacent to be ignored and permitted?

How would one grow a vegetable garden? How would one still have and continue plant materials that are adapted to full sun? How well can existing trees do in such an environment? What would it be like to live in a house always its whole life with sunshine in the windows and on the garden, then have it extinguished?

I am told there is at least one very old tree on these properties -- perhaps it is one of the original trees of Ann's Arbour? This is the neighborhood for which our City was named, the area first platted as our fair town. It is area of the grove of trees under which Indians camped and managed the landscape into a spectacular, open, old tree canopied setting. A few of those old trees still exist, and the one immediately nearby may be one of them.

Indeed, I don't think there are valuable natural features on the petitioner's site -- but there do seem to be landmark trees in harm's way to the north, in the shadow zone.

You know of course that the great thrust of all the natural feature work done in our fair City over four decades was on behalf of landmark trees. They are the first and, to most folks are the foremost in importance in the protection of our natural features. Especially in the case of old and practically irreplaceable ones, development should do them no harm.

Does it matter that harm comes from cutting them down -- or from sending them to the same fate via a slow decline, from never having sun again?

Further, it seems to me such a tall building smack up (without

a back parking lot to absorb even part of its shadow) is counter to the grain of the spirit and work and intent of all those who have so carefully crafted our historic districts, including this most special one, the one that is original Ann Arbor, the one named for a grove of trees and a couple of founders wives' first names.

I would urge you to delay this application until you take time to re-calibrate your zoning code -- to better blend structures along the north side of Huron Street with the neighborhood behind, it to the north. This side of Huron Street is NOT the downtown (as described and envisioned in those plans). It should be in a much more carefully tended transition zone.

Thank you.

Chris.

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