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Sent: Tuesday, January 15, 2013 4:57 PM

To: Planning

Cc: Stupka, Allison; murphyb@umich.edu Murphy; Detter, Ray

Subject: Proposal for 413 E. Huron has not been compliant with the letter and spirit of citizen participation as well as design guidelines after A2D2

Dear Commissioners:

The Old West Side is not directly affected by the development planned for 413 E. Huron.

However, we want to be very vocal in pointing out a disregard for Ann Arbor standards in the process thus far for this proposal.

Briefly: what is proposed is the largest building in Ann Arbor along a stretch of Huron Street already supporting two high-rise structures. The projections show a fourteen story edifice approaching 271,855 square feet. This is to allow 537 bedrooms in 216 apartments above mixed used retail and parking (139 spaces). The parking entrance/egress is opposite existing portals for the other high-rise properties across the street. Our concerns, however, highlight the other exposures of neighbors to the north and east.

First, information was not available at the Citizen's Participation meeting to evaluate the four sides of the projected building. I attended that meeting, asked for more complete details, and went away having only seen two sides of the property addressed. A request to have that information made available at a later date was not entertained. Nevertheless, concerns regarding context were voiced.

Second, the Design Guidelines contain character overlays as well as other indicative attributes for the context for the building proposed for 413 E. Main. Instead of addressing these, developers stated that the municipal center is the object of their comparison for their building. Plans available to date do not speak to efforts to specifically address character parameters or design particulars away from Huron Street itself. Comments made to those who have met separately with the development team cited constraints of economics.

Third, the Design Review Board addressed the proposed development at 413 E. Huron. Specific suggestions were made. Among these were improvements to massing, scale and setback. Details of the development proposal available to-date do not speak to efforts to specifically address these concerns--in particular modifications to those parts of the building facing the north and the east do not resolve issues identified.

It is possible to summarize all of the suggested changes as being made to address context and consideration of neighboring properties by altering massing, scale and setback in keeping with the Ann Arbor Design Guidelines

In other words, the proposed construction at 413 E. Huron has not been altered to better fit with many of the suggestions or requests made. This is particularly true for facades not on Huron Street.

Context does not consist of one façade. Historic districts abut this project to the north. Sloan Plaza lies to the east. In neither direction have the proposals to-date addressed suggested setbacks or other

means of buffering impact on neighboring properties. Please recall that the various components of the city plan going back to the Central Area Plan, A2D2, the design guidelines, recent DDA work with “Connecting William” and other provisions contemplate a need to specifically address context.

Using these same criteria, the Old West Side and Urban Group Development Company were able to share forums, construct suggestions, review alterations and come to some understanding regarding the project proposed for 618 S. Main. That structure will now better address its context and its neighbors after successfully navigating the evaluation process.

Although it predated the design guidelines and the current citizen participation process, the project that became Liberty Lofts took a similar route of forums, suggestions, alterations and understandings. That structure allowed for a historic property to be altered but in the end, the property became a better addition to the neighborhood successfully refined as it underwent the process.

We urge you to carefully consider the project at 413 Huron Street in light of your own charter.

At this stage of the process, it is still necessary to ask if the project might better fit itself within not only the intent of the design guidelines but also within the spirit of the proceedings by which a development is evaluated for approval.

Do you find that the development team for 413 E. Huron has done enough to insert this building on this site as a structure respecting context?

Thank you for your time and attention.

Christine E. Brummer,
President
Old West Side Association