

April 10, 2016

This letter is in response to recent concerns that have been brought forward by a local advocacy group. Personally, I will address these issues in the memo attached. I would like to first say, that all of the issues that have been outlined by this advocacy group are very important issues, and they should continue to be treated with care, as they have the potential to either negatively impact us or positively impact all of our communities.

All of us in Belknap have, in some form or another, in my case over the last fifteen years, worked in good faith, and worked hard to carefully and delicately allow development that would compliment this community and revitalize our neighborhood without destroying and displacing. We have ALL collectively been committed to enhancing the quality of life for every one of the neighbors of Belknap Lookout.

MEMO

A.S.P.

The Area Specific Plan is now five years in age, and during that process we engaged every segment of this community, several of the committee members were in fact renters, most of who still live here today. It was an epic undertaking, and something that once complete, had the markings of all whom shared in drafting it, and it took into consideration all socio and economic backgrounds. It is and was a community driven vision.

Outside of the specific points speaking specifically to the portion of the neighborhood where our development is being proposed, it also addresses the concern of displacement. It should also be noted while on the topic of A.S.P. The block where we are proposing our development is designated Belknap M.H.

The Artesian/Orion proposal has actually modeled the development after the Belknap T.R. Which is the least impactful of all use categories in the A.S.P. We felt this was more appropriate and reasonably scaled for this area of the neighborhood, even though the M.H use designation would have afforded us something else.

Please see below the exact references made to these issues and corresponding pages for which you yourself can go find within the A.S.P. document.

Housing Stock - Page 7 – Belknap A.S.P.

We are committed to Belknap Lookout being a residential neighborhood. We value the diversity of our neighborhood and are committed to maintaining a balance of rental, owner, low-income and mid/upper-income housing opportunities. We recognize the need to provide a broad range of housing types and price points to serve a variety of households (families, students, seniors, etc.).

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- b. Encourage the availability of housing at varying occupancy opportunities and price points (e.g., owner-occupied, rental, special needs populations, low- moderate- and upper-income households) to meet the diverse needs of existing residents and to attract new residents to the neighborhood.*
- j. Advocate for a relocation plan that provides housing choice and opportunity to tenants who may be displaced by change.*

Choice – Page 10 – Belknap A.S.P.

- a. Encourage a mix of affordable, mid-price and upper-end housing choices to attract a broad range of people into the neighborhood and avoid the displacement of existing residents.*
- b. Maintain a share of the neighborhood's housing as rental to provide for entry opportunities into the neighborhood.*

South of Fairbanks and west of Lafayette: Page 17 – Belknap A.S.P.

The area is indicated as Belknap MH (orange) on the ASP Map, which allows for a wide variety of residential housing and ultimately a great deal of choice for housing opportunities within the neighborhood. The decision to designate Belknap MH at this location is the result of many factors, including the condition of the existing housing stock, the potential for redevelopment of the existing fabric, the surrounding districts to the north and south, and the opportunity to provide flexible living arrangements and more housing opportunities close to Coit Elementary. A vast majority of neighborhood input indicated that the homes in this area are less likely to be preserved and rehabilitated to single-family owner occupied residences due to both their condition and their ownership.

DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT

What we have done, what we do, and will continue to do.

- Timely notification of needing property vacated - 60 days
- Full return of deposit
- Assistance in finding a new home
- First priority would be to place them in another home within Belknap

- Provide a good reference
- \$500.00 moving fee and \$500.00 towards a new rental unit if we cannot place them in one of ours.

JOBS

I am fortunate enough to have not only built a business from scratch with very little financial resources, but to have built a business where I have offered work to other minorities, and young Hispanic and African American men or women, some of whom also had felonies in their pasts.

As a leader, I always encouraged those that trained and became more skilled to think bigger. Some of them no longer work for me, but work with me, and have moved on to start their own businesses. They are now subcontractors on our projects.

Every last one of them lived in this neighborhood. Some continue to live in this neighborhood. Over 60 % of my subs on my Brownstone project are minority owned companies, and I am more thankful than proud to say this.

I value all of the who work with us, minority or not, but it does bring a great feeling when you see hard working Hispanic and Black men making a way for themselves in this life and learning a trade that will last a lifetime. I am very fortunate to be a helping hand in that effort.

Pastor Jerome asked if I would provide similar opportunities for men and woman that he is working with in this new project. Without question, I am grateful to assist.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable or low-income housing for sale –

From the first meeting we had with the community, we made a personal commitment that we were working to devise a plan that would make it possible for us to offer 2 to 4 affordable “for sale” units within this project. This was a decision that was unprovoked, but something that I felt was needed and important.

We have had several conversations with local non-profits who provide low-income housing. My first goal was to first better understand the business obstacles we would face in making this kind of housing possible, and second to discuss a potential private/public partnership to do just that.

To my understanding, a private/public partnership to partner in this capacity would be a first in the City of Grand Rapids.

Our goal is not to just build a home for a low-income family, but we are hoping to create a sustainable model that could then be replicated by other developers in other redevelopment projects.

Our commitment is to at the very least, assure that we will have two units that accomplish the goal of two affordable lower income for sale units in our project one way or another.

Working in a community for fifteen years requires trust, respect for each other, and it requires accountability.

I am more than willing to work with our Community and the City Commissioners on what I believe would be a common goal, in order to make this affordable housing portion happen.