

Mattingly, Gabrielle

From: Tim Messer <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2023 4:20 PM
To: Planning
Subject: Franklin Flats PZC 23-1-014

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Planning staff: Please forward these comments to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Thank you!

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Commissioners:

First, as I often do, I'll note that these comments are my own and not those of any board or group of which I am a member.

While I'm not entirely thrilled with the proposal for Franklin Flats, I don't think it's the end of the world, either. I appreciate that the developers have put together a design that complies with setback requirements, and are not seeking variances for height or additional stories. I also concur with the need for a diversity of housing types in Naperville and understand what the builder is seeking to do here.

Nevertheless, I take issue with a couple of items in the petitioner's response to the standards for granting a variance. First, there is this statement on page 5: "The neighborhood surrounding the Property is in transition. Many of the older homes have been replaced with large teardowns. While some of the older homes remain, the general character of the area has certainly shifted towards much larger teardowns." This really isn't accurate when looking at the immediate area. Huffman Street is on the eastern edge of the East Central Homeowners Organization territory, which includes the Historic District where teardowns remain rare. Outside of the Historic District boundaries, Julian Street north of Chicago Avenue has seen some redevelopment activity in recent decades, but relatively little when compared to the West Side, or East Highlands to the south. Several homes on Julian, one block west of Huffman, have undergone significant remodels rather than full teardowns. Huffman Street has had very few new large homes constructed, much of this owing to a floodplain designation at the bottom of the hill which was removed in August 2019. While there are duplexes at the top of the hill, what little new construction has occurred more recently on Huffman has generally been single-family detached homes. An attempt at building a duplex at 125 N. Huffman in mid-2019 sought variances for height and number of stories, and ended up failing to obtain City Council approval; a single-family detached home has since been constructed on that lot.

More notably, I feel the standards are not met for a zoning variance. The petitioner first states that the variance meets the intent of the zoning code and master plan by arguing that City code should have a different lot coverage requirement for duplexes than for single-family detached homes. I think there is a reason the requirement is the same: to provide continuity and maintain neighborhood character. There are several duplex units on Huffman that comply with lot coverage requirements while still fitting in with the character of the neighborhood. This proposal doesn't do the former and I'm not certain it really does the latter. I also don't see a hardship here. Again, while I appreciate the developer's intent, having to change the design to remove first-floor bedrooms hardly seems like grounds to seek a hardship-related variance. There isn't anything particularly unique or difficult about developing these two lots that

would justify granting one.

Those of us who live on Huffman Street expect change. The removal of the floodplain designation in 2019 has opened the door to redevelopment on a street near downtown that has largely been otherwise skipped by this trend. Duplexes can be built by right in R2 zoning, and I have no problem with this. Diversity of housing types is a stated goal of the City, and many duplexes exist in this neighborhood. However, it had been my hope that the first new duplex construction on lower Huffman in recent years would not seek variances. While variances are reviewed on their individual merits and are not supposed to set precedent, I fully expect this variance to be sought on other lots in this neighborhood if this petition is approved.

As always, thank you for your time and service to this community.

Sincerely,

Tim Messer

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