

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Banker supportive

I was pleased to read in your Jan. 11 edition that the Farmington Planning Commission took a positive step to ensure the health and stability of the Farmington Central Business District by approving the rezoning of property at 33432 Oakland for use by Baker Street Draperies.

It was a plus for Farmington when Shelley Raymond, the owner of Baker Street Draperies, chose to move her business here from Livonia in 1992. The uniqueness of her business and its product offering has drawn customer traffic to the downtown from a wide geographic area. Her success over the past nine years indicates the business's staying power and its prospects for the future.

It would be a shame to lose this business to another community. I applaud the foresight of the Planning Commission in taking action to prevent that from happening.

Robert P. Heinrich,
Farmington Hills

Editor's note:
We have received several letters to the editor on the subject of Baker Street Draperies going into a house on Oakland Street in downtown Farmington. We have published as many as space would permit.

to accommodate business or any other special interests to get these results.

It is clear that if the city, seller and business owner (all of whom are our Farmington neighbors), go forward, regardless of how nice the business frontage looks, they will drive down the property values of the historic district and make it more difficult for us to sell our homes in the future.

I do not even factor in why the interests my wife and I, who already reside next door, are not given the primary consideration. We continue to make our home and that our neighborhood, more beautiful than any other, is being invaded for reasons that appear purely selfish, superficial and unwanted by us.

Jack and Sandra Felsol
Farmington

Bite out of time

Last Monday evening, the city of Farmington took another bite out of time.

When the planning commission voted to recommend rezoning a house in the Historic District for commercial use, the charm of the Old Village was being consumed. The city must have some economic motivation to attempt to increase the size of the Central Business District at the expense of the historic Old Village neighborhood. However, what they do not realize is that they are eating up all their bread and butter.

It is the old-world charm of the residential neighborhood which attracts people to the city. It is the charisma of history that makes people want to live in, visit and shop in Farmington.

When we tell people we meet (from all over the metro area) that we live in Farmington's Old Village, they know about it and speak positively about it. They have driven by to admire the houses.

Some of them drive here and park so that they can walk through the picturesque neighborhood. And they shop on their

way in and out.

Without the uniqueness of the quaint old neighborhood, Farmington and Grand River is little more than another strip mall. One might say that the historic charm of the area brings home the bacon.

For this reason, and for many others, historic houses in residential neighborhoods should not be re-zoned. It is bad for business. It is bad for the residents.

The city council should turn down the re-zoning request, and the Master Plan, recently revised to include 33432 Oakland and its western neighbor in the CBD, should be corrected. Keep businesses on the main streets, not in neighborhoods. The City of Farmington needs to realize it can't have its cake and eat it too.

Lance and Holly Glannola,
Farmington

A treasure

There is a house for sale - a home - at 33432 Oakland Street in Farmington's Historic District. Oakland Street is lined with beautiful, historic homes. This one is nestled in that little section of Oakland that runs between Grand River and Farmington Road. It's a beautiful brick home with a big front porch. The neighborhood is a treasure. So are its people.

And it looks like they're going to ruin everything. This Tuesday night at 8 p.m., Farmington City Council may re-zone that beautiful Oakland Street strip from "Residential" to "Central Business District."

Even though it's not in the Central Business District. And a business owner is changing at the bit to turn that brick home - in that residential neighborhood - into a store. With a parking lot. And traffic.

And declining property values for all the caring homeowners who have pumped their hard-earned money into their historic homes to keep them beautiful. And if Farmington residents don't speak up, it's gonna happen Tuesday.

So why didn't the homeowners complain about putting a business into that home in the first place? They did. They went to a Farmington Zoning Board of Appeals meeting and they complained. So... the ZBA listened to the residents, right?

Nope. They granted the business owner allowances for parking and landscaping. The residents were so angry and upset that the next planning commission meeting was packed with angry neighbors. Standing room only. The people spoke to the commission one by one. They said they didn't want their

neighborhood re-zoned. They didn't want a business shoved into that beautiful house in their historic neighborhood.

So, the planning commission listened to the citizens this time, right? Nope.

The commissioners practically tripped over themselves passing motions to recommend to City Council that the area be re-zoned to "Central Business District," and that the business owner's site plan be approved.

The packed roomful of neighbors was stunned. They spoke, they pleaded, they asked nicely, they asked not-so-nicely, they did everything except get down on their knees and beg and their pleas fell on deaf ears. It was a ridiculous and embarrassing moment for our beautiful city.

However, dear readers, this thing is far from over. The planning commission is appointed. The city council is elected. By the same folks who begged the planners to back off a business deal that looks shadier and shadier by the minute.

Farmington City Council will listen to the planning commission's recommendations Tuesday night, Jan. 15, at 8 p.m.

That's where you come in. You are needed. Your voice is crucial. The residents of Farmington's Historic District need you to tell city council what you think - that you want to keep your city. Do you want your own neighborhood re-zoned into a commercial area? Probably not. Do you want special treatment given to businesses at the expense of your city's beautiful Historic District? That happens when this business owner turns the home over to a new buyer? If the area is commercially zoned, we may very well have to kiss that home good-bye and say hello to a parking lot. Or worse. Tell city council what you think on Tuesday. They have to listen, and listen carefully. You voted for them.

Jim Pfeiffer,
Farmington

Opposed

I want to voice my objections to Baker Street Draperies' proposed zoning change for 33432 Oakland from Residential-1 to CBD. I live at 33300 Oakland and I am adamantly opposed to this request. Such a change may provide Baker Street Draperies some benefit - though it's hard to see what this might be in light of all the appropriate retail business property already available - but it will be borne by those of us who live in the neighborhood.

Let me point out that we already experience serious parking and traffic problems. Commercial traffic and parking is bad enough in the summer but

when the street is narrowed by winter snow it is sometimes nearly impossible to get in and out of one's own driveway thanks in part to overflow parking from the funeral home that stands less than a hundred yards east of the property in question. Adding another commercial establishment will only make matters worse.

Of greater importance is the issue of the character of the neighborhood and the property values that reflect that character. Those of us who choose to live here do so because we appreciate its distinct charm. We don't want businesses slowly infiltrating what is a unique and irreplaceable residential area. Having Baker Street Draperies in Farmington undoubtedly brings benefits to all of Farmington but it is unfair and unnecessary that the costs associated with that business be borne by our residential neighborhood.

Dana Neuhouse,
Farmington

Backs Raymond

I own the property in question. I would like to address the opposition to the proposed rezoning:

Mrs. Raymond has approached the City with her intentions to relocate her business within the city, and has expressed her concern that there is no commercial property available in the downtown area. It was the City that encouraged her to stay in Farmington, and to explore the possibility of relocating to my property on Oakland Street.

People in the neighborhood have expressed their opposition to commercial use on this site. I think it should be noted that the City of Farmington Master Plan designates commercial use proposed for this site. To attempt to implement that use, therefore, should come as no surprise to the residents of the neighborhood.

There are three neighbors adjoining my house: to the east and most of the rear is the Salem Church parking lot, at the rear lot line is a condominium owner, and to the west is a single family residence.

The condominium neighbor to the rear has a view of the back of my garage. As a result of the rezoning, his view will now be of

a row of evergreens, after demolition of the garage. I cannot imagine that evergreens will be more offensive to any neighbor than the back side of my garage.

The church to the east has opposed the proposed rezoning with concerns about commercial users parking on their lot, and about drainage issues. I find it difficult to believe that one of what is arguably a commercial institution, namely a church, can object to having commercial neighbors. The Salem Church parking lot, accommodating some 50 cars, is by no stretch of the imagination a residential use.

The neighbors to the west have been very vocal in their objection to commercial use on this property.

They argue that they are being violated, having moved to the neighborhood two years ago to enjoy the residential character of the area, and that this zoning change would compromise their privacy. What I have not heard from them is the fact that their house is, and has been for some 40 years that I know of, adjacent to commercial property, namely the real estate office next door to the west. If they have such an objection to commercial neighbors, why then did they knowingly buy a home next door to a business in the first place?

These are clearly very aware and intelligent people, and they knew, by their own admission at the last Zoning Board meeting, that their property is and has been Master Planned for commercial use. It seems it is somewhat disingenuous for them to come to the City and oppose the prospect of having a commercial neighbor.

In conclusion, Mrs. Raymond of Baker Street Draperies has invested time, money, and energy into this project, with the encouragement and support of City officials.

To abandon her now would be to send a message to current and future business owners that the City of Farmington is not interested in attracting new businesses, or even in keeping the good businesses that are already here, and that the City of Farmington is not a business friendly environment.

Ken Johnson,
Farmington

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