

## **East Lansing residents oppose potential affordable housing**

A new plan for affordable housing in East Lansing led to public disapproval at the city council meeting on Oct. 3. Residents voiced their concerns about a potential development at 530 Albert Ave.

It was expected that there would be a council vote on the building plan following a public hearing, but the agenda was changed at the beginning of the meeting.

“I’ll move approval of the agenda with a couple of changes here,” East Lansing Mayor Ron Bacon said. “We’re going to retain the public hearing. I’m going to remove site plan special use permit approval for property at 530 Albert to date certain on Oct. 17.”

This caused an uproar from the crowd, as many showed up for the hearing and decision of these plans and thought their concerns would not be heard, but Councilmember George Brookover provided some context and explained the situation.

“The practical effect of that is all of the folks that are here can say what they want to say tonight,” Brookover said. “We’re not going to vote on anything tonight and we didn’t have to vote on anything tonight. Everybody can come back on Oct. 17 if they want to and they can speak.”

The details of the plan include building a five-story building with 122 units of affordable rental housing and 1,100 square feet of commercial space.

East Lansing residents took to the podium during the public hearing to voice their opinions and concerns on the project, many of which were in opposition to building the apartments.

Most of the concerns have to do with surrounding businesses in the 500 Block of E. Grand River Avenue. People in the community are concerned that the development would negatively affect businesses like the Peanut Barrel and Kimchi Box. The owner of the Wild Goose Inn, Al Bay, was one of the community members who voiced these concerns.

“I’m concerned that the proposed development for 530 Albert could do irreparable harm to the businesses on the 500 block of downtown East Lansing,” Bay said. “This proposal is bad for East Lansing, resulting in a decrease in the number of visitors to our downtown. We will not give up on creating a vibrant business district in the 500 block of downtown East Lansing.”

Bay also talked about how the new apartments would negatively impact his business. Bay explained that losing the parking lot would take away an easy drop-off and unloading point for guests at his bed and breakfast. Bay has been working with surrounding businesses for months to find a different solution.

“We want to work together to find a better alternative,” Bay explained. “In June we had an idea to form a group that would try to gather up the businesses in the 500 block and the surrounding neighborhoods of East Lansing to push back on the Albert Avenue development proposal.”

With the help of others in the community, Bay gathered almost 900 signatures from people who opposed the proposal.

“This community is strong. The people who live here and went to school here and work here care,” Bay said. “They want the best for this city and they are united against this proposal.”

Justin Booth spoke to the city council representing the Bailey Community Association and opposed the proposal.

“Our neighborhood organization is united in our deep concern regarding the proposed construction of apartments on 530 Albert,” Booth explained. “Affordable housing is the right idea, but this is the wrong location.”

Parking availability downtown is a big concern for multiple East Lansing residents, including Booth, and this plan would take away parking options.

“One critical aspect of our downtown vitality is parking,” Booth added. “Parking is not merely a convenience. It is an essential lifeline for our retail and service businesses. It is crucial to recognize that removing parking spaces directly threatens the economic sustainability of our local enterprises on the 500 block.”

The vote for the proposal of 530 Albert Ave. will be made at the city council meeting on Oct. 17. Many members of the community encouraged each other to show up again on Oct.17 to make their voices heard.

Link to article:

<https://news.jrn.msu.edu/2023/10/east-lansing-residents-oppose-potential-affordable-housing/>