

## **Comments Regarding Citizens for Northville Recommendations – Barbara Moroski-Browne**

*Barbara Moroski-Browne*

*City of Northville resident and property owner, Candidate for City Council, 2019*

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I have been a member of Citizen's for Northville since the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, in July 2019. I did not join because I am running for Northville City Council, and I feel bad that my membership may have made the group seem 'political'. It IS NOT. I joined simply because I care about our Town and I think this group is comprised of thoughtful, caring people that want to be informed and get involved. I hope there is more of this in Northville. This is not residents and business working 'outside' the process, rather this is working collectively to make a positive, supportive difference in the process. Working through and discussing these issues together allows for a collective, thoughtful voice for our concerns and work towards positive change—far better and more effective than one citizen with five minutes at the podium at a public hearing.

That said, I will summarize my views on the Citizens for Northville's "Specific Recommendations for Discussion" from the Oct 24<sup>th</sup> Town Hall Meeting. Specifically, I will address one critical recommendation that 'relevant data should be available for any redevelopment project'. Detailed data should be readily available early-on in the development/redevelopment decision-making process—for the Planning Commission and the Public. That does not mean simply relying on information/data provided by the developer. The recent "Downs" development project provides valuable lessons learned—so we can do a better job next time for our Town and any developer.

For the "Downs" development, relevant data was missing, or down-played/deferred, at the critical Planned Unit Development (PUD) Eligibility Determination (April 16, 2019 PC meeting). Much discussion of detail, or lack thereof, was deferred until the Preliminary Site Plan/PUD Plan review step (e.g. June 4, 2019 PC meeting). I believe this was a mistake and that the PUD approval process was rushed unnecessarily. If the Planning Commission had afforded itself time for careful deliberation on each of the nine PUD approval criteria, it would have been evident that the Downs project fell far short on at least three of the nine criteria. While the Planning Commission members' June 4<sup>th</sup> comments laid bare the deficiencies in the proposed development, I believe it put the City in an unnecessarily vulnerable position because PUD eligibility had already been approved. It also did a disservice to the developer. The missing or deferred relevant data, and the needed detailed deliberation and discussion, included: "Public Impact Reports" (as referred to in Citizen's for Northville recommendations) on the financial and quality of life impacts on City residents, taxpayers and the larger Northville community (e.g., short-term and long-term costs associated with City resources and property taxes, including the DDA, maintenance/repair costs of proposed infrastructure, police and fire, water and sewer, vehicular and pedestrian levels of service, public space, long-term economic viability). These important issues should be evaluated thoroughly and fully disclosed, to the Planning Commission and the Public, in a readily accessible user-friendly way—early and often. Community input should be embraced fully, with adequate time afforded for views to be heard.

Yes, it takes time and resources to fully evaluate the costs and benefits of a project of this scale. But it is time and money well-spent -- our charming Town's future is at stake.

### **My Policy Position on Development and Redevelopment in the City of Northville**

Over the past year, I have often heard that Northville can only go 'so far' in the Master Plan and that there is 'not much we can do' to guide developers towards our vision for our charming town. I disagree, and much research and experience in other Michigan cities supports my conclusion. Our community vision

does not need to be at odds with property rights. It's about creating a sense of place, through the Master Plan and related Codes and Zoning ordinances, not creating a prescriptive design/development.

I am a strong proponent of "Placemaking" in community planning, and many Michigan cities have embraced this concept effectively. Placemaking is based on a simple premise "...people choose to live [and work] in places that offer the amenities, resources, social and professional networks, and opportunities to support thriving lifestyles." Placemaking is all about tools and techniques to grow a sense of place. In Michigan, the Master Plan process and requirements provide many opportunities for incorporating Placemaking. The Master Plan is a vision-based planning process, where early AND on-going public involvement is extremely important. This starts with community visioning and leads to community consensus on design, whether as an illustrative plan and/or regulating plan. For example, Northville has the opportunity to wholeheartedly adopt form-based code (FBC) and Complete Streets into our Master Plan and Codes/Ordinances —especially in areas adjacent to the CBD (e.g. racetrack district, south Center Street, East Cady Street). The City is already moving in that direction with the Floor Area Ratio requirements for residential development. Form supports function to accomplish the future vision for space. The legal process to adopt FBC provisions, including illustrative plans in a master plan or subarea plan, is the same as for adoption of any master plan, subarea plan, or master plan amendment. See *"Placemaking as an Economic Development Tool", MSU Land Policy Institute, 2019*

Finally, Northville should be a "Redevelopment Ready Community" to remain vibrant and competitive: "This involves planning for new investment and reinvestment, identifying assets and opportunities, and focusing limited resources. Certified Redevelopment Ready Communities better attract and retain businesses, offer superior customer service and have a streamlined development approval process making pertinent information available around-the clock for anyone to view". An RRC offers a transparent, predictable, and efficient development experience, with sites targeted as priority redevelopment opportunities. See *Miplace.org, Michigan Economic Development Corporation*

With these tools in place, Northville can attract and embrace high quality projects that match our community's vision and sense of place, for now and in the future, AND have the legal framework in place (via the Master Plan, Codes, Ordinances, etc.) to say "no" to inadequate projects.