

Re: 20-CAT3-0008

Proposed 27 unit apartment building 318-330 E. Saint Catherine St.

Dear Development Review Committee Members,

My name is Teresa Schoggins and I have been a homeowner at 327 E. Saint Catherine St. since 1995.

In early June I saw a sign go up on the empty lots at 331 and 318-330 E. Saint Catherine, I learned that the proposed structure would be a 27 unit apartment building, and a duplex or possibly 4-plex at 331. Unable to find out much more than that I contacted my metro councilman, his office informed me of the public hearing.

While I am happy to see investment and development in my neighborhood, I have serious concerns about the size of the proposed apartment building. I am also worried that the structure at 331 will not be in keeping with the homes that are part of the Preston-St. Catherine National Register District.

Smoketown Apartments which has 16 units (some of them as large as 3-4 bedrooms) is right next to the proposed 27 unit structure.

The site is elevated (compared to the street and all the homes across the street) and the building is planned to have 3 stories with balconies overlooking Saint Catherine St. - this seems terribly incongruous and hulking.

Several of the houses on this block have been purchased and converted back to single family dwellings in the last 5-7 years. I doubt you could find one resident of this block that wants a 27 unit 3 story apartment building across the street. I like living in the city, and I never expected it to be quiet and calm, but this is simply too many people jammed into one block.

Traffic and parking is also a concern. The proposed access to the parking area for the residents' vehicles, the only inlet or outlet appears to be the current entrance to the Smoketown Apartments parking area (approx. 16 spaces). I am unclear if this is a public roadway or not. Either way, it is already a difficult area from which to enter the traffic of Saint Catherine St. and I am sure that the addition of a 27 unit building using that same area as an entrance and exit, won't be helpful.

Saint Catherine St. is a major artery between the Highlands/Shelby Park to Old Louisville and most significantly to the Interstate. It is heavily traveled, used by busses and commercial vehicles and plagued with vehicles exceeding the speed limit. This area becomes even more dangerous during evening rush hour with vehicles driving directly into the setting sun, speeding towards the interstate.

I know that it is permissible under code, but it is worth noting that allowing public on street parking (11 spots in this case) to be counted as part of a new development's parking requirements seems problematic . I feel sure that, with only 33 designated spots for a 27 unit building, the street will be constantly lined with parked cars. Unfortunately, there are no plans for a bicycle parking area.

I believe in affordable housing. I want to see development and improvement for our city, but stacking people up like cordwood isn't the answer.

Apartment buildings have a much shorter lifespan than houses.

Take a look at places like Smoketown Apartments, Cornerstone, Jackson Woods-- all within blocks of here; They are all run down, poorly kept and problematic in a number of ways. It seems to be the inevitable destiny of developments such as this.

Development in the KY Opportunity Zones come with Federal and State tax perks for the investors, and for the citizens who live in those areas presumably the benefit of having defunct properties and lots revitalized. Which all sounds great, but it is important that these working class/low income areas be protected too. Many of the residents of these areas don't have the wherewithal, information or engagement skills to try to help direct what happens in their communities. Not because they are lazy, or poor, or stupid, but because they are busy struggling to work through all the day to day challenges of being poor in the richest country in the world! In a more affluent area a project such as this would likely face serious and concentrated opposition.

Investors who are set to receive these tax breaks should be given criteria for these projects that reflect what is truly needed in our communities -and it is possible that this is the case, if so the information was not readily available when I searched for it.

Plans for our city need to consider the future, we need communities, homes, groceries, drug stores, and green spaces not people warehouses.

I am aware that a more modestly sized building or even homes might not generate the maximum profit that investors are looking to realize. That's what makes committees such as yours so vital, you have the chance to say "Yes, make a profit but your plans must also benefit the community." Squeezing every dollar possible out of every investment may be a good philosophy for business, but a truly humane society calls for something more.

You can find a balance, I believe that you care about doing what is best for all the people in our city.

Thank you,
Teresa Schoggins