

# BARDENWERPER, TALBOTT & ROBERTS, PLLC

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April 20, 2023

Chris French, AICP, Supervisor  
Planning & Design Services  
444 South Fifth Street, Suite 300  
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Hon. Sharon Bond, Chair  
Board of Zoning Adjustment  
c/o Planning and Design Services  
444 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Louisville, KY 40202

RE: 4607 Atterberry Court – Docket No. 22-APPEAL-0014

Dear Chris:

Atterberry is a small street, with only 17 lots, zoned R-5. It is bounded with residential property to the north and east. To the south, it is bound by Gagel Ave., very close to Dixie Highway. The area immediately to the south on Gagel Ave. is zoned R-6, and has many apartment buildings. The area immediately to the west is zoned commercial C-2, has many businesses one would expect to see on or near Dixie Highway.

The 4607 Atterberry property was developed as a 4-plex in 1969 from all available evidence. In fact, 5 of the 17 lots on Atterberry were originally built as multi-family duplexes and 4-plexes. 1712 and 1713 Atterberry were both built as duplexes. 4603, 4605 and 4607 Atterberry were all built originally as the 4-plexes. From a review of the zoning documents for the City of Shively, it is apparent that all five properties were allowed to be built in violation of the zoning regulations in existence at the time. Although we cannot be absolutely certain as to the reason, in looking at the zoning maps (attached hereto as Exhibit A), the lines of demarcation are somewhat confusing, and it appears that they were mistook for the R-6 zoning immediately next to Atterberry on Gagel Ave. Regardless of how it occurred, it is apparent that some how a government official allowed these 5 properties to be built in the 1960's when it was clear they were multi-family residences.

A review of the Carons publication, shows that the property subject to this application and appeal was originally built and identified as a 4-plex "Apartment". Indeed, all five properties were clearly identified as having multiple residents in violation of the zoning regulations. The three 4-plexes are all identified as being "Apartments". Review of the Carons' books shows that this designation continued uninterrupted, and it still continues to this day. (See Carons books attached hereto as Exhibit B).

The three 4-plexes also have parking for multiple units as well as separate meters for utilities. Again, from all available information, this has been the state of these properties since they were built in 1969, so for over 50 years. As can be seen in pictures today, all three 4-plexes have parking for apartments, which can also be seen as far back as the historical imagery goes on [lojic.com](http://lojic.com).

Additionally, in 2014, the property at 1712 Atterberry Ct. also filed a similar con-conforming use application, under 14-NONCONFORMING-1019. Again, this property was built as a duplex in 1962. The evidence in support of its application was for all material and substantial purposes identical to the evidence in support of the current application. It was originally built as a duplex as documented in Carons and had continuously been used as a duplex since that time. This application was approved by the staff at

Office of Planning & Design Services, finding that nonconforming use rights were established for the property.

It seems apparent that the correct decision was arrived at in the case for 1712 Atterberry Ct. Again, from all available evidence, these properties were built with their use as apartments abundantly apparent. The duplexes have two doors easily seen from the street. (See Exhibit C) And the 4-plexes stand out with their size, being much larger than the single-family homes, in the area, parking and multiple meters. (See Exhibit D).

This case should be treated the exact same way as 14-NONCONFORMING-1019. If there is concern that there is not legal authority to make this designation, that concern is misplaced. Kentucky law has long recognized the doctrine of “honest error” and equitable estoppel against the government attempting to enforce laws where it made a mistake in allowing them to be violated. See Berea v. Wren, 818 SW2d 274 (Ky. App. 1991). In this case, the Court held that where a building inspector acted in good faith, even if his or her actions were not sound, “[t]here should be some point at which the owner of the property who acts in such circumstances becomes secure.” *Id.* at 277. As in the present application for non-conforming rights, the Court held that it would be inequitable to revoke the building permit, explaining that “[t]he City officials were fully aware of the use which appellee intended to make of this property and made no complaint as to the erroneous zoning until more than a year after the permit was issued and Wren had expended a substantial amount preparing the site.”

The equities of this case are even more persuasive that the “honest error” doctrine merits application for approval of the nonconforming rights. See also City of Richmond v. Spangler Apts., LLC, 547 SW3d 556 (Ky. App. 2018) which affirmed the courts continued adherence to the “honest error” doctrine as applied to government actions and inability to enforce regulations.

Additionally, since 14-NONCONFORMING-1019 was granted nonconforming rights in 2014, Planning and Design Services and this Board should be bound by the doctrine of collateral estoppel in accepting this application in the same manner. If BOZA decides differently than what was granted to the property at 1712 Atterberry Ct., its finding would be arbitrary and capricious under existing case law.

We also believe that under the facts existing under the circumstances that the rights are vested. The property should be permitted to be used exactly how it was knowingly built in 1969 and how it has been operated over the last 54 years. In further support of this application, it is also notable that this property, as well as the other two 4-plexes were all known to the Office of Planning and Design Services in 2014 as being used for multi-family apartments, yet made no effort to enforce the zoning standards. (See page 43 of the 14-NONCONFORMING-1019 file).

Consequently, the application for nonconforming use rights should be approved. The doctrine of “honest error” clearly permits this approval, and collateral estoppel prevents any contrary determination. And further, under the circumstances, any enforcement of the zoning regulations on this property would be arbitrary and capricious on the basis of the prior determination at 1712 Atterberry Ct. in 2014.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Talbott', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

John Talbott

c: Travis J. Fiechter, Assistant County Attorney