October 15, 2018

To: City of Northville Planning Commission
RE: Proposed PUD for Northville Downs Development

Dear Planning Commission Members,

I attended the October 2nd PUD review meeting and had a chance to voice a concern towards the end of the meeting. It was a last minute decision to speak so I didn't feel I had enough time and reflection for my thoughts to fully come to form. Thus my follow up with a letter.

I echo support for many of the concerns expressed at the meeting: traffic, density, aesthetics, opening the river, etc. My point was regarding the developer's plans for x-amount of square feet of retail and commercial space. The developer did not present much information about this, and I question whether or not Northville needs additional retail and commercial spaces. It seems shops and businesses struggle to fill the existing space downtown. Perhaps this is not a fully informed statement on my part, but it is my impression.

I am curious to know what planning and thought is behind accepting more retail and commercial as part of the PUD. Does the developer have a real plan about how that would play out given the quantity of residential spaces in their proposal and an analysis of existing residences and businesses in town? Has the City put thought into how that would roll out? How businesses, retail and commercial would be courted? What types of businesses? Is this well thought out with data behind it, or is it just a "shiny object" promise that is simply a buzz word commonly rolled into discussions about "multi-use development."

One of the key charms of Northville is our lack of chain businesses.....retail, restaurants, etc. (excepting of course, Starbucks and Kroger). Our businesses are as unique as our neighborhoods. Our City is a localized area where small retailers and businesses do not have immediate, next door competition from chain outlets. Preserving that local business atmosphere is critical to the uniqueness of Northville and the draw of visitors, as well as the preservation of residents' ability to shop local.

I, personally have experienced first-hand, the failed outcome of a developer's attempt to contrive a downtown / village-type atmosphere. Manfred and I lived in the Cherry Hill Village area of Canton, which was an effort to create a quaint Northville / Plymouth style downtown area.

We lived there from 2007 – 2015, prior to coming to Northville. In that timeframe we saw many local shops come and go. The coffee shop changed proprietorship 3 – 4 times, finally closing up for good by the time we had moved. Gift shops and small grocery markets struggled to survive, but ultimately closed. Even the local Huntington Bank branch closed after a few years as it did not have enough traffic. This 3 – 4 block area is located smack in the middle of an

enormous apartment complex and surrounded by multiple single-family home sub-divisions, all within walking distance. **None of the businesses managed to stay open** -> coffee shop, grocery store, sandwich shop, restaurant, gift shop, bank branch.

Northville is a TRUE community. A neighborhood that has developed and sustained itself over a couple of centuries. A community like this cannot be created overnight by a master plan drawn up on some developer's architectural software. It is organic. It takes time, people, community. "Build it and they will come" doesn't work. Planned urban developments do not necessarily translate into successfully building "community."

I feel it is important to evaluate and understand the buyers who opt in to developments like this one proposed for The Downs property. It would be interesting to see data from the developer that demonstrates PUD's can and do successfully support the proposed commercial and retail space. It has been my personal experience that this is not the case.

I implore you to consider Brian Turnbull's closing words at the meeting. For City leadership, this may be the most important and impactful decision for the future of Northville.

Respectful Regards,

Lisa and Manfred Schon
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Northville