

The Facts About The Moravian

Clarifying the inaccurate claims made about The Moravian

Claim: The Moravian will result in a net loss of affordable housing stock.

Fact: The Moravian will result in a net gain of 12 units of high quality, perpetually restricted, sustainable/green, affordable housing.

None of the existing housing on site is affordable housing according to the standards of the Community Development Office.

Housing that may appear “affordable” in price alone is often only so due to the poor condition or outdated nature of the property.

The affordable housing provided at The Moravian is more affordable than its rental rate alone would indicate due to the energy efficiency of the units which will lower utility costs for the residents.

Affordable units at The Moravian are guaranteed to remain affordable in perpetuity. This is not the case for un-restricted units that may appear affordable based on their current rental rates but could be lost or converted to more expensive housing in the future.

Claim: The Moravian doesn’t meet the standard for public benefit that previous PUD’s have.

Fact: The Moravian significantly exceeds the level of benefit provided compared to any prior PUD while requesting just a fraction of the level of variance.

The PUD comparison chart provides specifics.

Claim: Because The Moravian has been submitted under the PUD Ordinance, its approval by the City is discretionary.

Fact: The PUD Ordinance, like any other law, has a set of standards by which it must be administered. Although some aspects of the PUD Ordinance have more discretion afforded to them than some other laws, the standards are not discretionary or arbitrary.

The City of Ann Arbor has a long standing and well established history of administering the PUD Ordinance in a manner that has clearly defined the minimum standards for the PUD ordinance.

Claim: The Moravian’s application as a PUD is simply an attempt to avoid the R4C zoning.

Fact: Half of the properties included in The Moravian are zoned Industrial and half are zoned R4C.

This mixed zoning is precisely a condition intended to be accommodated via a PUD.

Rezoning as a PUD would make non-conforming existing uses conforming.

Not one of the parcels underlying The Moravian could be redeveloped in conformance with the existing zoning. Every one of them would require a variance to be redeveloped.

City staff has confirmed The Moravian meets both the letter of the law and the spirit and intent of the PUD ordinance.

Claim: The Moravian is out of scale with the neighborhood.

Fact: City Staff and the Planning Commission have found The Moravian to be in scale with its surrounding.

The City has had an existing definition of this neighborhood and its very specific boundaries since at least 1999. The Moravian is located in Neighborhood # 022 which is titled the South Central neighborhood. This neighborhood includes structures such as Ashley Mews, Baker Commons, The Perry School and many other structures significantly larger or taller than The Moravian.

The Neighborhood around The Moravian includes much more than just the former single family, now primarily multiple-family, structures immediately to the north of the site.

According to the staff report prepared by the City’s experts in such matters:

“The proposed architectural design compliments the context and character of the neighborhood.”

“The Moravian’s mass has been broken down through architectural details and offers a reasonable transition between the existing nonresidential buildings on East Madison Street, the industrial uses on the south side of East Madison Street, and the residential buildings to the north on South Fourth and South Fifth Avenues.”

“The site will serve as a bookend and frame for the South Fourth and Fifth Avenue blocks and is compatible with the scale and style of East Madison Street.”

This is a mixed use and mixed zoning area with residential, industrial, commercial and office uses and zoning in close proximity to each other.

Approximately 90% of residential properties in the blocks adjacent to The Moravian are rentals. Only three are truly single family homes.

Claim: The Moravian is inconsistent with the Central Area Plan (CAP).

Fact: City Staff and the Planning Commission have found The Moravian to be consistent with the overall goals of the CAP.

The use is specifically what is called for in the master plan, that being multiple-family residential.

The Central Area Plan, in discussing the primary intended uses, describes this location as an area “where higher density development such as apartments and group quarters is appropriate”.

Consistency with Sections of the CAP:

- Housing and Neighborhoods
 - The primary issue addressed in the neighborhood preservation section of the master plan is protecting established residential areas from commercial and institutional expansion.
 - The Moravian does precisely this by reaffirming the site as residential with a higher value residential use.
 - The Moravian eliminates the existing threat of commercial expansion posed by the Industrial zoning that exists on half of the properties.
 - The Moravian redevelops this property into an asset very unlikely to be acquired for future redevelopment by the University as they have often done in the past and as they previously attempted to do with the properties across S. Fifth Ave. from this site.
 - The Moravian replaces converted single family homes not suited for multiple-family use.
 - The Moravian minimizes adverse parking impacts.
 - The Moravian promotes an attractive residential area and aims to serve both the current and future population’s housing needs
 - The Moravian provides affordable housing opportunities
 - The Moravian increases the diversity of people, housing types, lifestyles and income levels in the downtown area
 - The Moravian provides mixed income housing opportunities

- Downtown
 - The Moravian increases housing units and people living in the downtown area
 - The Moravian increases pedestrian activity creating a stronger 24 hour presence
 - The Moravian increases the range of the population for which there are affordable housing options in the downtown area
 - The Moravian provides an opportunity for lifestyle choices that will reduce reliance on automobiles

- Redevelopment
 - The Moravian enhances residential use amid opportunity for commercial and institutional pressure
 - The Moravian provides residential uses close to the downtown core and will increase activity during weekends and evenings which promotes greater downtown liveliness
- Circulation and Parking
 - The Moravian reduces congestion
 - The Moravian results in no additional parking in neighborhoods

Claim: The Moravian shouldn't be approved because a portion of it is in a floodplain.

Fact: The Moravian's design and the storm water system actually improves the floodplain characteristics.

The Moravian increases the floodplain capacity of the site by over 100%

The Moravian reduces peak hour flows by over twenty fold and retains on-site and even some off-site storm water for approximately 24 hours in a major storm event.

Claim: The Moravian shouldn't be approved because the FEMA flood maps haven't been updated yet.

Fact: The data for the new FEMA maps has been finalized and is known. The administrative process of publishing the maps is all that remains to be done.

The City's floodplain coordinator has reviewed The Moravian based on the updated and now accurate topographic information included in the new FEMA maps. He has verified The Moravian meets or exceeds all applicable standards.

Claim: The Moravian hasn't complied with the requirements of the Citizen Participation Ordinance.

Fact: The Moravian is not subject to the Citizen Participation Ordinance; however The Moravian has voluntarily complied with all of the requirements of the Citizen Participation Ordinance, which City Staff has confirmed.

The Moravian development team has held more neighborhood meetings than required and continues to have an open-door policy regarding future meetings with concerned or interested residents.

One of the neighborhood meetings, that was held at the apartment of Newcombe Clark, was coordinated by a resident of the area and not by the development team. Mr. Clark's apartment is frequently used for gathers such as fund raisers, exhibitions and other public events for local non-profit and other organizations.

Claim: The architectural renderings depicting the project are out of scale.

Fact: The renderings and the photographs with the new building superimposed on them are accurately represented.

Neumann Smith, the project Architect, is one of the most highly decorated and most well respected architectural firms in the State. They are experts in their field and develop these types of renderings on a regular basis. The drawings are intended to portray the relative height and scale of the project to the existing conditions.

Great effort has gone into designing a building that gives the visual appearance of lessened height and size through the use of the site's topography, a variety of building materials and colors, physical relief and other architectural techniques. It is confirmation of having achieving that goal if the building appears shorter than might initially be expected.

The representation of the relative heights has been verified to ensure accuracy.

Claim: The Moravian should not be approved because other approved projects have not yet been built.

Fact: The construction status of other projects is not one of the ordinance standards The Moravian must satisfy.

The Moravian, unlike some other projects is able to be financed even in today's economy and the team pursuing The Moravian has the capacity to make that happen. There is construction financing available for rental apartments through both conventional sources and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The Moravian targets a non-luxury market which is chronically undersupplied in the downtown Ann Arbor market and remains an attractive investment space for debt and equity financiers alike.

As a statement of The Moravian team's financial capabilities and belief that The Moravian exceeds the standards for PUD approval as confirmed by City Staff and the Planning Commission, the properties underlying The Moravian were recently purchased.

Claim: The Moravian will cause traffic problems and accidents on South Fifth Ave.

Fact: The City traffic engineers have reviewed the traffic that would be generated by The Moravian and concluded there will be no significant impact. In fact, based on City standards, the volume of trips it will generate does not reach a level that warrants a full traffic study.

Claim: Sustainable characteristics of The Moravian have no beneficial effect on the public.

Fact: The construction of The Moravian will eliminate leaching of volatile organic compounds from the contaminated soil into the Huron River Watershed

The Moravian will eliminate an estimated 636 metric tons of greenhouse gasses annually. This is the equivalent of approximately 129 vehicles being taken off the streets of Ann Arbor.

Claim: The Moravian will only attract students as tenants.

Fact: The Moravian is targeted at the young professional market and has been designed to have flexible units that will appeal to a broad range of future tenants.

The Moravian is envisioned to attract residents that include University employees, young professionals working in downtown or elsewhere who desire an urban environment, graduate students, visiting professors, medical residents, retired graduates of the University, recent graduates of the University, service workers employed by downtown businesses and others.

Claim: The Moravian will block out the sun from surrounding properties.

Fact: The Moravian uses an L-shaped design and the advantageous topography to almost entirely eliminate any shading effect beyond that which existing structures in the area have on each other.

In some cases, The Moravian will have less shading effect on its neighboring properties than existing single family homes on 5th Avenue do on their neighbors.

Claim: The Moravian shouldn't be approved because there are high vacancy rates in nearby houses for rent.

Fact: The occupancy rate of other properties is not one of the ordinance standards The Moravian must satisfy.

The market segment targeted by The Moravian is a very different market than that targeted by old houses being listed for rent. The Moravian's target market seeks high quality, newer and sustainable apartment living wired for the latest technology with professional onsite management, security and other features not offered by an older, single family home.