

Matt Lonnerstater
23201 Forest Street
Oak Park, MI 48237

January 31st, 2024

RE: 477 W. Alexandrine – Commercial Parking Lot/Gate House Proposal

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing in opposition to the proposed commercial parking lot at 477 W. Alexandrine. Note, I am not in opposition to the proposed residential structure, nor the design. More housing is great! However, per the Zoning Ordinance, a four-unit multi-family residential structure only requires a minimum of four parking spaces; even fewer in transit-oriented, traditional development districts such as this neighborhood. What is being proposed is not a parking lot accessory to a multi-family residential structure, but rather a multi-family residential structure accessory to a commercial parking lot.

As Historic District Commissioners with a primary focus on architecture and design, I understand that you are somewhat limited in your capacity to review land uses, zoning, and larger transportation-oriented issues. However, similar to the application for a stand-alone parking lot on this same parcel (made by the same applicant) back in 2023, I urge you to scrutinize this project under the following Secretary of Interior Standard:

A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

A commercial parking lot in this location, regardless of whether or not it is screened by a small residential gatehouse, goes against the historic use of this parcel for multi-family residential uses; in fact, it severely limits the potential to create additional attainable housing units toward the center and rear of the parcel. A building envelope which could be used to house people is now being proposed to store vehicles.

There are approximately 140 on-street parking spaces in the block bounded by Cass, Selden, 2nd Avenue, and Alexandrine. Public parking can, and should, be accommodated through the management of existing on-street spaces and existing off-street parking lots (of which there are already too many) as opposed to the creation of new underutilized surface lots.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Matt Lonnerstater, AICP
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