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Street Committee**
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April 22, 2014

SUBJECT: Case No. 14-009MA – 1300 North Main Street

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing on behalf of the Summit Neighborhood Association (SNA), a volunteer and nonprofit neighborhood association open to all residents of the Summit neighborhood.

As the development is located in the Summit (Hope) neighborhood. SNA has reviewed the project information available to date. While we welcome a new business to North Main Street, we have concerns about the project as designed, as follows:

Streetscape and layout. The proposal as designed places at least 400 linear feet of parking lot along North Main Street. The neighborhood has envisioned, through a charette and the resulting Mount Hope, Hope and Blackstone Neighborhood Plan, an URBAN streetscape, not a suburbanized one dominated by parking lots. The developer has laid out the parking so as to maximize its visual impact to the street, but alternatives are possible. We request that the developer be required to provide an alternative design that respects the vision for North Main street and is architecturally respectful of the historic streetscape, with at least some of the parking away from North Main Street, behind the building. If developed as currently designed, the development will further degrade North Main Street and the city's efforts to restore a pedestrian friendly street. Any new development should support and enhance a functional, healthy city neighborhood.

Parking lot size. The proposal is for 300 parking places, but it is unlikely that the applicant will need a parking lot of this size. The impact of a surface parking lot to the landscape is well-documented: it is visually degrading, diminishes water quality, builds up heat in the summer, increases the likelihood of flooding during major storms, and it utilizes space that could better be devoted to some other purpose. We request that the developer construct no more parking than what is found by planning staff to be needed for the proposed activity at this time and designate the balance as reserve parking area for future development, if shown to be needed.

Landscaping. The proposed landscaping is minimal and appears to do no more than meet the minimum required by the zoning ordinance. Summit, with the entire city, is working hard to green the landscape, and the developer should contribute to these efforts. The parking lot has virtually no interior trees. The developer should provide planting beds with trees at the ends of each row of parking stalls. Beds along the street should be raised so plantings will survive. Benches should be included along the street frontage and bicycle racks should be added.

Architecture. The building as proposed is entirely unrelated to building facades typical of and appropriate to North Main Street. We request that the developer provide the Commission with a modified facade that respects the proportions, materials, detailing, and fenestration that will respect and enhance the existing neighborhood. Windows should be provided on all sides of the building.

The Summit neighborhood Association requests that the City Planning Commission defer action on the preliminary plan at this time and reconvene the hearing at a future date to give the developer the opportunity to respond publicly to concerns of both citizens and the city planning staff, with additional opportunity for citizen comment at a subsequent hearing.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael McGlynn for the
Summit Neighborhood Association

