

Position Statement on the Development of Parcel C in the Proposed West Side Land Use Plan
Arcadia Neighborhood Association Board of Directors

Presented to the Kalamazoo City Planning Commission
and the Kalamazoo Office of Planning and Development
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The City of Kalamazoo intends to update its West Side land use master plan to address new realities of demographics, population density, and transportation problems while maintaining desirable neighborhoods. On May 22, 2003, the Arcadia Neighborhood Association board expressed its written support for almost all of the components in the draft update plan produced by Smith Group JJR, Chicago (see our attached position summary). Road improvements and rezoning proposals in selected areas have been largely agreeable to neighborhood residents. However, for over 10 years, the Arcadia Neighborhood Association has opposed construction of a Drake-Kendall connector road through parcel C. On March 6, 2003, several association members prepared a statement that renewed our opposition to this concept and revived a two-year old alternative plan for single-family residential development of parcel C. This statement was directed to City Planner Jeff Chamberlain, officials of Western Michigan University, and to members of the Kalamazoo City Planning Commission.

In May, 2003, our board conducted a survey in the single-family residential zone of Arcadia to determine support for the connector road concept (see attached survey form and map). By a 5:1 margin, residents favored internally connected expansion of our current single-family neighborhood and opposed a Drake-Kendall connector road. Note that this was not simply a reaction to loss of open space, but a constructive appeal for responsible development. Our neighborhood appreciates the sincere attempts of the City to advocate for 40 acres of much needed park space in parcel C. Most residents admit that some development of parcel C is reasonable and inevitable, but owner occupants in Arcadia are widely alarmed by the recent demise of surrounding single-family zones and of the prospects for a similar outcome on our north boundary. Let's review some pertinent details of the proposed draft plan.

First, consider the overall density of development. The City's land use plan prior to construction of WMU's Arboretum Apartments showed the remaining undeveloped parcels in Arcadia to be Zone 8 (single-family, residential). This represented 212 acres of property, including the AYSO soccer fields. The proposed draft plan recommends land use as shown in the table. Even with needed open space accommodations in the new draft plan, the proposed development would provide for about 12% greater overall residential development than was intended for these properties.

Table of Allowed Residential Unit Density in Original and Proposed Land Use Plans

Zoning density	Original Plan		Proposed Plan	
	Units	Acres	Units	Acres
Low density residential (5.8 units/acre)	1230	212	232	40
Medium density residential (12 units/acre)	0	0	600	50
High density residential (15 units/acre)	0	0	300	20
Commercial (non-residential)	0	0	0	20
Open space (parcels B, C, D, and F)	0	0	0	62
Including WMU Arboretum Apartments (2001)	0	0	240	20
Totals	1230	212	1372	212
Average residential unit density	5.8 units/acre		6.5 units/acre	

Next, consider the proposed plan for new single-family homes in parcel C. We believe that connection of these new homes to the proposed Drake-Howard connector road is a poorly defined and poorly justified development concept. The southern half of parcels C will have a north-south width of only about 200 yards, which means that the connector road will be within 100 yards of most, if not all, of the new single-family homes. The proximity of these homes to a primary campus route will create strong pressure for rental to students, just as we experience now in the single-family homes that are near West Michigan Avenue. Private developers would logically recognize this opportunity and build homes at the maximum allowed density of 5.8 units per acre. As we have already learned, these conditions create zoning/parking/noise enforcement problems, lower home values, and lower owner-occupancy rates. This will not enhance our neighborhood. In order to boost property values, the City would likely be confronted with a decision to rezone this detached area for multi-family rental as occurred in Knollwood in 2002.

The Arcadia Neighborhood Association does not oppose development of parcel C, but strongly favors single-family development that is contained within and connected only to our existing neighborhood streets. These homes would be more likely to resemble those already in our neighborhood at an overall density of about 2.5 units per acre. They would have higher owner-occupancy rates and sustain higher long-term property values as single-family homes. These homes would be more attractive to families with young children because of convenient, safe access to our neighborhood elementary school. History has shown us that many WMU staff and faculty will be drawn to these new homes because of their location and the sense of community that Arcadia residents presently enjoy. The homes would increase and help retain family housing within our rapidly growing and surrounding rental community.

In summary, the Arcadia Neighborhood Association recognizes WMU's ownership rights and the need for the City of Kalamazoo to expand the property tax base. As permanent city residents, we favor well-planned, thoughtful development that will add long-lasting value to our community of students and permanent residents. For this reason, we strongly oppose the consultants' proposal to combine a Drake-Kendall connector road with single-family homes on parcel C. We urge the City to adopt a plan that is consistent with the overall density in our current land use plan and provides sustainable neighborhood development.