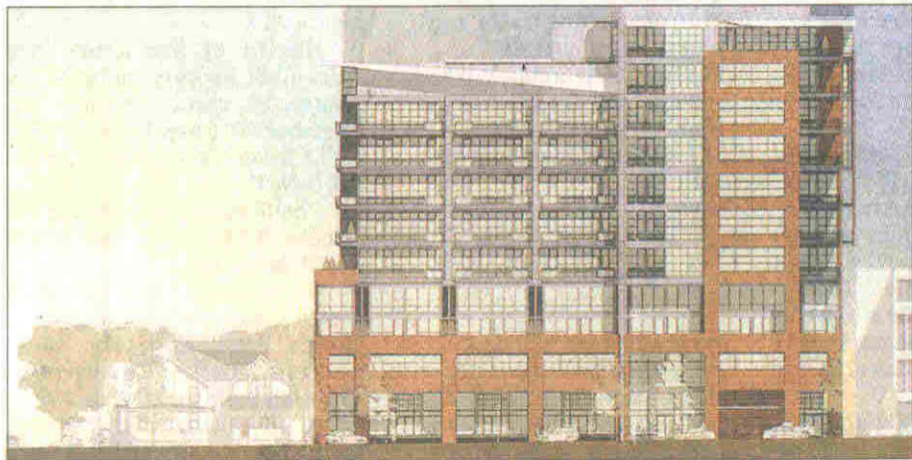


The Gallery in Kerrytown approved

- Two multiple-story buildings will have 123 residential units and a combination of commercial, retail and office uses.
- The bigger building, on North Main Street, includes two towers of 11 and 9 stories that will include 105 condominium units.
- There will also be an adjacent four-story building on Fourth Avenue that will have 18 lofts for rent and first-floor retail space.

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An artist's rendering shows what The Gallery will look like when it's finished.

City OKs Gallery plan

Tall buildings will change Main St. near Kerrytown

BY TOM GANTERT
News Staff Reporter

08-11-06

The Gallery – a \$30 million complex of residential condominiums, rental lofts, offices and retail space – will change the look and feel of North Main Street near Kerrytown, the Ann Arbor City Council agrees.

Whether it will be for better or worse was what divided members of a council that generally has agreed that more development downtown is needed.

The council on a 9-2 vote approved the project's planned unit development site plan and development agreement at its meeting Thursday night.

The proposal includes two multiple-story buildings that will have 123 residential units and a combination of commercial, retail and office uses on the site of the old Greek Orthodox Church, which will be torn down. The biggest building, on North Main Street, includes two towers of 11 and 9 stories that

will include 105 condominium units. There is also an adjacent four-story building on Fourth Avenue that will have 18 lofts for rent and first-floor retail.

Mayor John Hieftje and Council Member Bob Johnson, D-1st Ward, voted against the project

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The Gallery project



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Mayor, council member say buildings too tall for area; rest of the City Council disagrees

because of the building heights.

When it was evident it would be approved, Johnson gave a dire warning to his colleagues before the vote.

"I think the council is doing ad-hoc zoning and it's probably going to come back to haunt us," he said.

Hieftje said it was the right building in the wrong place. He questioned what Main Street would look like in the future and whether approving this project would eventually extend downtown with 10-story or higher buildings to the Huron River.

After the meeting, Johnson said he is afraid developers will

buy up more land in that area and use Thursday's approval as reasoning to put up more 10-story or taller buildings in a neighborhood of mostly two-story houses.

But other council members said this was the look and project that part of town needed.

Council Member Leigh Greden, D-3rd Ward, said height wasn't an issue because the zoning would have allowed for a similar sized building, but only if it was office space.

Council Member Jean Carlberg, D-3rd Ward, said the surrounding businesses aren't bothered by the project's height.

And other council members liked its look.

"I think it will be a stunning gateway into the city," said Council Member Margie Teall, D-4th Ward.

There were other aspects of the project most of the council trumpeted:

■ Developer Michael Concannon agreed to make a \$1.1 million contribution to the city's affordable housing fund. That money is used by the city to build affordable housing in less expensive places around the city. The Gallery won't have any affordable housing units on site. Carlberg said it is just too

expensive to build downtown to keep downtown housing costs low.

■ The developer is providing 213 underground and 11 surface parking spaces. Some of those spaces will be made available to the public on certain days.

■ The developer worked with the council and Planning Commission with many of their concerns. That included lowering the height of the building by 25 feet and 4 inches with a redesign that didn't eliminate any of the 11 stories.

"I think he will be a very good neighbor for the city," Council Member Marcia Higgins, D-4th

Ward, said about Concannon after the meeting.

The Gallery had the support of the Ann Arbor Area Chamber of Commerce and at least one member of the city's Downtown Development Authority.

"It's just the sort of project we should welcome to the downtown area," said Leah Gunn, a Washtenaw County commissioner and member of the DDA.

A few residents spoke out against the project.

Nina Howard said she's in favor of growth and development downtown, but The Gallery is just too big.

"The size and scope of this

project will significantly change Kerrytown forever," she said.

Still, The Gallery won't be as tall as the first project proposed for the church site. In 2004, Toll Brothers submitted plans to build 14- and nine-story towers on the site for a project called the North Main Condominiums. The Planning Commission tabled the proposal after residents said it would dwarf the surrounding neighborhood and Toll Brothers eventually withdrew the plan.

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