

Email sent to Lowell Planning Commission members on 10/7/23

Dear Commissioners,

I won't be speaking at Monday's meeting, and I won't force Sue to read my long letter into the record either. However, I still want to share with you some thoughts about the CopperRock proposal.

First, I appreciate the improvements on the plan, including the reduction in units and increased setback by 721 E. Main Street. Still, as long as this is a three-story building, it CANNOT meet Standard F.

That standard refers to the "general purposes and spirit of...the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Lowell" and yet, somehow, in Andy's memo, that gets boiled down to the future land use map. The Master Plan is so much more than a map.

[On page 36](#), the plan says:

"It is the intent of this master plan to strengthen the existing character of neighborhoods in parts of the City where they already exist and to promote the creation of distinct neighborhoods in parts of the City where they currently do not exist."

The east side neighborhood has an existing character and adding a high-density development will not strengthen it but rather diminish it.

On page 49, the plan says:

"...building heights of 3 stories may be appropriate in some locations that are located at least 150 feet away from any single family residential neighborhood."

Clearly, it was not the intent of the 2007 Planning Commission that single family homes live in the shadow of three-story buildings.

For Standard F, Andy writes that it appears the "change in zoning is in line with the City's Master Plan." This is true of the zoning, but not of the development itself. Andy's memo never actually addresses whether this particular site plan meets the "general purposes and spirit" of the Master Plan. It only mentions zoning, but this is a review of the site plan – the zoning is not in question.

Quite frankly, I find some of the very aggressive language in the memo to be concerning. I greatly respect Andy's past work, but it feels very much like you are being strong-armed into approval of this plan.

I also find it concerning that all three memos for this site plan – July, Sept. and Oct. – say the site plan application is complete and yet none of them mention a lighting plan. In conversation with Andy after the Sept. meeting, he mentioned that CopperRock hadn't submitted one yet – so how can the site plan application be complete?

Something to note: **Mixed-use is not the same as high-density.**

Certainly, you can have high-density mixed-use developments, but when the 2007 Planning Commission was creating the Master Plan, we envisioned low-density developments to complement residential areas (think: corner shop with a couple apartments.)

Other questions/concerns that are lingering about this project:

- What is the opinion of the fire department, police department and city engineer (whom I was told by the city manager is Prein&Newhof)? Progressive AE has weighed in, but they have worked on several projects with CopperRock (see [here](#) and [here](#) for examples) so I am not sure they are an unbiased source.
- Who will own the development? (i.e. Where does the buck stop?)
- What apartment complexes has CopperRock managed before? (i.e. Do they have a record of success?)
- If there is no on-site management, how will parking be managed/monitored? CopperRock said residents would get parking passes, and guests would need to request a pass to stay in the lot. Who polices that?
- Will the restaurant have a liquor license and how late will it be open?
- Can some landscaping be planted to provide screening between the restaurant and 721 E. Main Street?
- Where will lighting be placed and what fixtures will be used to ensure neighboring properties aren't illuminated?

Residents have many questions and concerns, and because of the format of regular meetings, it is impossible to have a conversation about them there. I would encourage the commission to call a special meeting/worksession to give residents an opportunity to discuss this matter more informally with you. Only two commissioners need to request a special meeting for one to be called.

As always, I appreciate your time and commitment to serving the City of Lowell on the Planning Commission. Thank you for your consideration of my concerns.

Sincerely,

Maryalene LaPonsie

Former chair of Lowell Planning Commission.