

Mary Lou Terrien

From: Meagen Coburn <meagen.coburn@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 9:01 AM
To: Mary Lou Terrien
Subject: NO to the Historic District bills before you today.

To the committee who are reviewing the bills that threaten my neighborhood today, I understand you sit on the committee that will be hearing discussion, and possibly voting on, two bills being pushed forward by Representative Chris Afendoulis and Senator Peter MacGregor.

Please let me be clear in my, and my fellow historic homeowners neighbors opposition to this bill.

We are a neighborhood back from the brink in 25 years time -and it is because of our historic designation. The absentee landlords, the vacant properties, the rampant drug use and gun violence...all part of a history that you would never believe if you walked our sidewalks today. Today, we have one of the hottest neighborhoods in Grand Rapids...literally. Have you heard how low the vacancy rates are in GR? How agents are practically begging people to put their house up because inventory is so low? It's because WE LOVE IT HERE.

Let it be known: these neighbors are not the ones complaining, or asking for any sort of change to our current designation, or committee composition, or approval processes, or wanting "more control over our properties." My house IS in my control, and it's my most prized possession as we work little by little, loving every step of restoring our 1890 Queen Anne.

We...are not asking for this bill.

This bill as written puts our designation up for vote every ten years. So every ten years all the work I put into restoring my home could be for nothing? To fall back to a neighborhood where houses could get knocked over for a price, in favor of condos because I won't have the safety net of the historic designation to keep us banded together?

We are not asking for this. We are not complaining for a change in policy.

What we're seeing is more and more developers entering our neighborhood with clipboards in hand every single weekend, assessing land, assessing formerly vacant commercial buildings, building new, assembling these Clip-Art, copy/paste complexes that look just like anything else you see in the suburbs in 2016 - where in many places they're falling vacant again as people come back TO our beautiful city that WE THE PEOPLE have worked so hard to make a place to be. And through our established district, we are able to work WITH developers on making sure that the integrity of our neighborhood is upheld - be it materials, the overall look, or simply fighting to keep our mixed income neighborhood banded together so no one loses a home to being priced out - while also hearing these developers, their plans and desires, and the need for more properties to maintain the influx of people trying to move here.

Do you want to know the "issue" in our neighborhood of East Hills? Our issue is that we don't have enough parking spots because all the suburbanites are realizing how great our boutiques and restaurants and watering holes are, that they can't find in their area. They're flocking to OUR neighborhood, our historic neighborhood, to entertain. To walk our sidewalks. To point at houses and talk about "those colors, those windows!" They come to our dinner parties and enjoy themselves in our grand dining room, with woodwork you can't find in 2016 no matter what you paid someone to try. We talk about 'what these walls must have seen in its 130 years.'

We are not interested in leaving. We aren't interested in being another suburban development.

You want to see a group of people who are passionate about their homes? You're not going to find it in a condo building or a subdivision in Grandville. You come downtown to Grand Rapids and you'll see us on ladders or hauling paint in the house and we'll tell you about what we are working on, and laugh about the hell the house has given us as we work through renovations, and how we would. not. have. it. any. other. way.

For me, if you took away my old house, you're taking away my livelihood. There's nothing that says home about new properties for me. It's old railings, wide porches, and beat up wood floors with stories to tell where my heart is. And I know beyond a shadow of a doubt, my friends and neighbors feel the same. And that is why you're hearing from us in droves.

Please, please consider this when you're forming your opinions of these bills. You won't find a more loud spoken group of passionate, crazy old-home owners than us.

Sincerely,
Meagen Coburn
Proud homeowner in Cherry Hill Historic District
Homeowner of nicknamed "Clown House" for its quirky color



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