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Sent: Monday, February 06, 2012 11:13 AM

To: Schiller, Lynn; Kovac, Nik; Coggs, Milele; Mayor Tom Barrett

Subject: proposed Trinitas development at 634 E. Keefe Avenue - opposition from neighborhood homeowner

Hello,

My name is Stephanie McNutt and I am a homeowner on the 800 block of E. Keefe Ave., approximately a block and a half away from the proposed Trinitas development at 634 E. Keefe. Over the past few weeks, I've done a great deal of research on Trinitas' other developments and have come to the conclusion that their proposed 700-bed student boarding house would not be a good fit for the otherwise owner-occupied and/or light industrial-zoned area of north Riverwest. Below are the facts that I have used to come to this conclusion; though I understand there's a great deal of information here, I simply wanted to be thorough and direct. Your attention to these issues would be very much appreciated.

Of Trinitas' currently existing properties, 1/3 (2 out of 6) have already been sold: Willowbrook West in West Lafayette (sold after 6 years) and College Crossing in Indianapolis (sold after just 2 years). In addition, two of the remaining six properties have not opened yet: Cottages on Lindberg in West Lafayette and The Collegiate in Richmond (both scheduled to open in August 2012). As such, there are actually only four currently-existing, still-owned-by-Trinitas properties in operation on which to judge: 1201 Indiana in Indianapolis, Village at Muller Park in Bloomington, Collegiate Communities in West Lafayette, and Village at Colbert Park in Savoy. It doesn't give me a great deal of comfort that the two properties that were sold both have absolutely dismal reviews dating from both before and after the sale, as it suggests that Trinitas did not sell their properties to companies who had responsibility and support for their tenants in mind -- if they build here, there doesn't appear to be anything stopping them from using the same bait-and-switch/build-and-sell tactics here.

The complaints I have seen so far from Trinitas renters focus on Trinitas-owned and managed buildings looking nice but being poorly constructed, having very thin walls and/or vermin issues, a great deal of partying/noise, a perceived and/or clear lack of safety, vehicle break-ins and/or a lack of available parking, and trumped-up fees being levied -- for parking, late fees, etc. in addition to keeping security deposits -- that negate the cheap rent. The most prominent issues by far are complaints about high levels of crime and a lack of adequate parking, both of which would have profound and immediate effects on north Riverwest.

I understand that people with positive things to say about their housing situation generally don't take the time to write about it online, but at least reading reviews from actual tenants gives us another side to the story outside of Trinitas marketing materials. Trinitas has forms on each of their development's websites that directly solicit tenant reviews, but they have specifically declined to share those reviews with Riverwest neighbors, even after multiple requests were made over the span of multiple months. It definitely feels like Trinitas only chooses to answer "softball" questions, and when faced with difficult questions or unflattering facts, they have chosen to either outright ignore them or change the subject.

Even some of the otherwise-positive reviews mention having issues with partying/noise as well as not having enough available parking, which makes me feel certain that these are specific problems we would absolutely have to deal with as north Riverwest residents who own or rent within just a few blocks of the development. Remarks from the Village Manager in Savoy, Illinois regarding gang activity and increased levels of crime and noise following the Trinitas development there (in a rural setting; I can't imagine an urban setting, particularly in an industrial/residential neighborhood, would mean *less* crime/noise) were especially unsettling.

Please check out these tenant reviews -- with a grain of salt, of course; you shouldn't believe everything

you hear, whether it's from an anonymous online reviewer or Trinitas, but these reviews still offer significantly more inside information than Trinitas has chosen to provide to any Riverwest neighbor or resident.

****CURRENTLY OPEN & STILL OWNED BY TRINITAS****

University of Illinois - Champaign, IL

* The Village at Colbert Park, opened August 2007

Units/beds: 279 units; 699 beds

Office: 100 Village Park Way, Savoy, IL 61874

Property address: 115 Church St, Savoy, IL 61874

Reviews:

+ 34% recommended at ApartmentGuide.com: <http://bit.ly/wQQkiL>

+ 4 reviews, 2/5* average at Yelp: <http://bit.ly/yEAWfJ>

+ 3 reviews at Google: <http://bit.ly/zMIq1z>

Indiana University - Bloomington, IN

* The Village at Muller Park, opened August 2008

Units/beds: 248 units; 668 beds

Office/property address: 500 S. Muller Parkway, Bloomington, IN 47403

Reviews:

+ 10 reviews at RateMyApartments.com: <http://bit.ly/wBpXUc>

+ 22 reviews, 2/5* average at Google: <http://bit.ly/ypoC87>

IUPUI [Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis] - Indianapolis, IN

* 1201 Indiana, opened August 2011

Units/beds: 253 units; 667 beds

Office/property address: 1201 Indiana Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46202

Reviews:

+ 6 reviews, 2.5/5* average at Google: <http://bit.ly/zcScoN>

Purdue University - West Lafayette, IN

* Collegiate Communities, opening date unknown

Units/beds: 72 units; 192 beds

Office: 214 Marstellar Street, West Lafayette, IN 47906

Property address: various

Reviews:

+ 15% recommended at ApartmentGuide.com: <http://bit.ly/y8SJ5C>

****NOT OPEN YET****

Virginia Commonwealth University - Richmond, VA

* The Collegiate, opening August 2012

Units/beds: 260 units; 690 beds

Office/property location: unspecified (Trinitas website states "1/2 mile immediately north of VCU's Monroe Park Campus in the heart of downtown Richmond")

Richmond Times-Dispatch news article about the development: <http://bit.ly/x9B6zy>

Purdue University - West Lafayette, IN

* The Cottages on Lindberg, opening August 2012

Units/beds: 193 units; 745 beds

Office: 214 Marstellar Street, West Lafayette, IN 47906

Property address: 2191 Mida Drive, West Lafayette, IN 47906

****SOLD****

Purdue University - West Lafayette, IN

* Willowbrook West, opened August 2000 & sold August 2006

Units/beds: 360 units; 1,134 beds

Office/property address: 2053 Willowbrook Drive, West Lafayette, IN 47906

Reviews:

+ 9% recommended at ApartmentGuide.com: <http://bit.ly/y3MXc6>

+ 23 reviews, 1/5* average at Google: <http://bit.ly/zl4SgY>

University of Indianapolis - Indianapolis, IN

* College Crossing at National, opened August 2006 & sold August 2008

Units/beds: 56 units; 168 beds

Office/property address: 1840 National Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46227

Reviews:

+ 2 reviews at Google: <http://bit.ly/zcScoN>

Some additional facts...

* UWM's vice chancellor of university relations and communications has stated clearly, very recently, that there is already a current *surplus* of existing apartments available on/near UWM campus. "At this point, we really do not see the need for additional housing. We understand the Trinitas folks have said they are going to meet a need for additional student housing, but that need does not exist.' [...] UWM studies show vacancies in the two ZIP codes are up around the main east side campus, and landlords are cutting rent to compete, Luljak said." Source - The Business Journal, December 2, 2011:

<http://bit.ly/AaZ2JQ>

* For around \$550-\$650/month, which is roughly what someone moving to the Keefe Avenue development would pay to live in a unit with up to 3 roommates and no on-site parking, a student could rent a 1-bedroom apartment on or very close to university campus, with water/sewer/trash included and possibly with heat, cable TV, and/or internet access included as well. A quick search of Craigslist listings that match this assessment and are currently available to rent in the UWM and Marquette areas:

<http://bit.ly/xtntsS> & <http://bit.ly/zMG8ep>

* The Keefe Avenue development is projected to have approximately 275 units and 650-750 beds/residents with 150-165 parking spaces, or less than 1 parking space for every 4 residents. In addition, residents who are unable to secure on-site parking will be allowed to park anywhere that is 500 or more feet away from the property -- which is only about 2 blocks. No plans have been made or suggested to mitigate this.

* If full occupancy is consistently achieved, even if only half of the residents who can't secure an on-site space bring a car, the area immediately surrounding the development will need to accommodate at least 150 additional on-street parking spaces specifically for Trinitas renters. Particularly during winter, this would present huge problems for current residents. Both the village manager in Savoy and the property manager in Bloomington have also pointed out that most residents bring their own cars even though Trinitas provides a shuttle service.

* It is highly likely that most, if not all, of the new renters will prefer to park east of Holton; as such, parking overflow (both daytime and overnight) must be absorbed by north Riverwest side streets two or more blocks from the development site, such as Townsend, Booth, Pierce, Fratney, and Bremen. Overnight parking is not allowed on Keefe itself. The "exclusion zone" for Trinitas parking is highlighted in green here (a 500-foot radius from the development site): <http://bit.ly/zOp5Ve> The only locations that will be 'spared' are the 3400 blocks of Booth and Pierce. There are no other off-street parking accommodations anywhere nearby. The entrance to the Trinitas on-site parking lot will be on Keefe Avenue.

* There's basically nothing for students to do in the immediate vicinity -- going south, there's the Citgo on Holton and Keefe, RET Lounge on Holton and Townsend, a closed grocery store and an open Family Dollar store on Holton and Concordia... going north, there's a bunch of industrial buildings, the Post Office distribution center, RK Motors, and then WalMart (etc.) on the corner of Holton and Capitol. North Riverwest simply doesn't have any of the coffeeshops, bars, book/clothing/merchandise outlets, etc. that 18-26-year olds tend to gravitate toward... it's not clear where they would be expected to go to find recreational opportunities. Burleigh? Locust? Center? Why would they choose to travel south, when their campuses are located to the north? Why wouldn't residents just go to the East Side, which is where they will be directly shuttled by Trinitas, or to Shorewood, which is significantly safer/"prettier" than Riverwest as well as geographically closer to both the development site and UWM campus?

* Reports from the village manager in Savoy, IL and the property manager of the Trinitas development in Bloomington, IN have specified that no new business developments have occurred as a result of Trinitas properties being built in their locations. There is no evidence that this complex would or could inspire a groundswell of neighborhood business growth or development. Even if the demand was ginned up, there are very few locations where commercial businesses could expand in our neighborhood; unless additional re-zoning work is done, north Riverwest will remain a light industrial/owner-occupied neighborhood with few commercial opportunities.

* Trinitas sold two of its previous developments in order to facilitate the funding of additional developments. There is no guarantee that Trinitas will not build and sell this development in order to do the same; as far as I can tell, there is no requirement for them to remain committed to Riverwest, Milwaukee, or Wisconsin for any period of time. This is their first development in the state.

* Trinitas is also currently seeking to develop similar properties in Chapel Hill, North Carolina and Cobb County, Georgia, albeit in rural/suburban areas. The Keefe Avenue proposal would be Trinitas' only urban development that is not directly on a college campus.

* Re-zoning the proposed development area to accommodate a boarding/rooming house will decrease the space available for light industrial facilities. Trinitas' proposal does not fit the Northeast Side Plan's recommendation for Riverworks to remain a corporate business park with compatible uses; the Common Council must "throw out" the Northeast Side Plan in order for the DCD to approve this development. The loss of 5 acres of manufacturing space in a location where there is not much room for industry to expand may have serious negative ramifications down the line if the demand for light industrial work is rekindled.

* Nearly half of the units and well over 2/3 of the beds in the Keefe Avenue development will be in the form of 4-bedroom shares, which clearly discourages long-term tenancy and serious investment in the improvement or sustenance of the neighborhood by Trinitas renters. (The proposal specifies 64 1-bedrooms, 60 2-bedrooms, 21 3-bedrooms, and 111 4-bedroom units.)

* Riverworks Lofts, another new housing complex, is already in the process of being built on the corner of Holton and Townsend -- two blocks from the proposed development. There are 12 1-bedroom and 24 2-bedroom units. Each unit will be priced from \$550-\$730/month, with underground parking spaces priced at \$36/month [PDF]: <http://www.riverworksmke.org/rdc/documents/RDCNews0411.pdf> It is not clear why nearly 800 additional beds' worth of housing should or must be shoved into such a small parcel of north Riverwest; property values here are already stagnant and/or significantly depressed.

* Current resident survey data is available for existing Trinitas properties [<http://1201indiana.com/CurrentResidents/ResidentSurvey.aspx> / <http://villagecp.com/?page=Resident+Survey&id=228> / <http://www.villagemp.com/?page=Resident+Survey&id=228>] but Trinitas has specifically declined to share it with Riverwest neighbors, even after repeated requests. Publicly available online reviews for Trinitas properties are, as outlined above, quite negative.

* Per the published Trinitas development plan, exterior recreational facilities at the development (pool, patios/balconies, basketball and volleyball courts, lawn areas, gathering spaces, etc.) will not be open before 7 AM; however, they will be permitted to remain open and in use until 11 PM Sunday through Thursday and until 1 AM on Friday and Saturday. This includes balconies and patios facing homes on Keefe Avenue. There will be screens/fences between the development and the surrounding industrial areas, but not between the development and the surrounding residential areas. This will necessarily result in an increase of late-night noise for current residents, a sizable number of whom rented units and/or purchased homes here in order to live in what they reasonably assumed would remain a quiet, mostly owner-occupied neighborhood.

* Trinitas' own estimates suggest that this development will create only 14 permanent jobs, which is dozens to hundreds fewer than would be provided if industrial facilities were to purchase the same land and use it for its intended purpose. We need to bring light industrial manufacturers to Riverworks to create jobs; with UWM already struggling to fill their current housing availability, there is clearly no need for additional student housing, particularly at this site.

All Trinitas developments are either in rural/suburban areas or directly downtown/on campus, so there is no way for us to tell what effect this development could have on our urban property values. However, given the almost universally negative tone of their tenant reviews, particularly when it comes to crime, noise, and parking, I am not at all confident that bringing this development to our neighborhood would result in an increased or unchanged level of safety or peace/quiet, let alone the property value increases we're all dreaming of. I am more than willing to be proven wrong, but I have yet to find any evidence or even evidence-based suggestions from anyone but Trinitas themselves that this development would be a good and mutually beneficial fit for our small, sleepy corner of north Riverwest. I understand very well that this construction would bring additional revenue into the city's coffers, but the lasting effects this development would have on the neighborhood will necessarily ripple out in ways that affect much more than the tax base.

As a homeowner in the immediate vicinity of this proposed student housing whose financial standing, peace of mind, and living situation would be directly affected by this project, and having done many hours of research without finding any proof that this will be a positive addition to our neighborhood, I am firmly opposed to this development. Whether the units are consistently filled to capacity or the project is built and then sold after being unable to maintain the 93% occupancy rate that Trinitas requires for their properties to remain profitable/viable, based on the available evidence, I can only foresee it doing more harm than good.

I moved out of the East Side and purchased a home in north Riverwest specifically in order to escape the noise, late-night partying, property vandalism, and general misbehavior that were rampant in student-centered housing on and near UWM campus. It has been disappointing to learn how much the opinions of paid lobbyists and PR representatives can be valued over the opinions of nearby property and business owners during negotiations of this nature, but I am still hoping that the voices of actual neighborhood residents can be heard. Please do not allow this development to occur.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,
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