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Council approves incentives for East Town Flats

BY [TODD HEYWOOD](http://LANSINGCITYPULSE.COM/BY-AUTHOR-152-1.HTML) ([HTTP://LANSINGCITYPULSE.COM/BY-AUTHOR-152-1.HTML](http://LANSINGCITYPULSE.COM/BY-AUTHOR-152-1.HTML))



An updated rendering of the development of the 2000 block as presented to Lansing City Council Monday night by developer Scott Gillespie
 Courtesy Photo

MONDAY, Dec. 14 – The Lansing City Council cleared the way tonight for East Town Flats, the four-story retail and apartment complex that would replace most of the iconic 2000 block of Michigan Avenue.

The Council voted unanimously to approve a brownfield incentive for the \$5 million proposed redevelopment of the south side of the block that Emil's Restaurant long anchored. The 7-0 vote, with outgoing Third Ward Councilmember A'Lynne Boles not present, clears the way for developer and former eastside resident Scott Gillespie to begin the formal development process.

The measure passed with very little debate, and speakers all supported the proposal. That's in sharp contrast to last month when over 100 people attended a community forum hosted by Gillespie to get input into the design of the building. That move came after residents condemned an early rendering as not fitting the mood of the neighborhood.

Tonight, Gillespie unveiled a new rendering of the building that, he said, brought in "more tradesman features"

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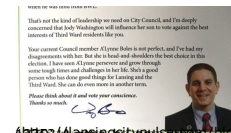
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"We were tasked with a lot of changes that we were able to make the majority of," Gillespie said after the vote.

Before approving the brownfield incentive, which will repay Gillespie for certain costs such as environmental remediation Councilmembers thanked him for his willingness to adapt to the needs of the surrounding neighborhood.

At-large member Judi Brown Clarke, who is expected to be the new president in January, told Gillespie that his community sense would be "setting a precedent for future projects."

The Council is mindful that it supported the redevelopment of the old Walnut Street School by the Niowave Corp. – which then angered neighbors by building a pole barn in their backyard. It did not blend into the neighborhood, and after two years of trying to find a resolution, Council earlier this year voted to rescind the tax breaks it had given the company. Council found out afterward that it had no legal capacity to rescind the breaks once they were granted.

To prevent that from happening here, Council is putting many of the community concerns and solutions into a development agreement, At-large Councilwoman Carol Wood said.

"I appreciate your willingness to wrap some of these things into the development agreement," Wood told Gillespie.

By including the deal in the development agreement, the city is on firmer legal ground to demand Gillespie address issues related to the look and design.

The property will still feature 11,500 square feet of commercial space on the first floor and 39,500 square feet of apartments on the upper three floors.

Gillespie said he is uncertain how much the modifications of the design will cost at this point.



The original rendering for the development of the 2000 block of E. Michigan Ave. as presented earlier this year by developer Scott Gillespie.

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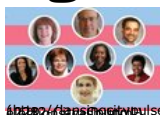
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