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Petitions bloom on Ithaca neighborhood developments

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Ithaca City Hall / File Photo

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Two development proposals in separate city neighborhoods are generating vigorous petition drives and discussions.

In Fall Creek, an online petition is circulating regarding plans for the block of West Falls Street between Cayuga Street and the dead-end at Route 13, where Lansing builder Ron Ronsvalle's Heritage Park Townhouses company has a proposal for 128 W. Falls St. The plan is for three buildings, each with two units, four with three bedrooms in each apartment and two with two bedrooms.

The city Board of Zoning Appeals is scheduled to hear a variance request at its May meeting. An existing house is 4.8 feet short of the minimum 10-foot front yard setback from the property line. The request was on the agenda for the March meeting but was postponed after the meeting ran until nearly midnight, and the April agenda was already full.

Neighbors have objected to the scale of the project as being out of character for the street of single-family homes, and potentially enlarging the population of the block by 50 percent, based on proposed total bedrooms. Some, however, do credit Ronsvalle for cleaning up a neglected, grown-up lot and fixing the existing house.

Similarly, residents of Cornell Heights opposed to plans for a student apartment complex at 1 Ridgewood Road continue to gather petition signatures.

They say the development would be too large and not fit the character of the city-designed historic district. They want the city to impose a development moratorium there until more specifics are added to historic-district guidelines and the zoning district at the site adjusted to reduce the size of allowable buildings.

That project is likely to go before the city Planning and Development Board for initial review this week.