

February 10, 2008

Dear Planning Commission,

I am writing with my deep concern about the proposed changes to the Downer Avenue Project. I am not so much opposed to the development of Downer Avenue, as to lack of sensitivity to this historic neighborhood and little input this project has had by the neighborhoods that will be deeply and permanently affected by this project. There needs to be careful consideration to trying to develop Downer Avenue while being sensitive to its historic importance to Milwaukee's Eastside.

As a young 17 year old who grew up in Wauwatosa, I remember fondly my first date at the Coffee Trader on Downer. I had never been to the Eastside of Milwaukee and remember how quaint Downer felt and how special this small section of Milwaukee had been preserved. Soon after that I started college at UWM, living in the Dorms and eventually in apartments on both Farwell and Bellevue near the proposed project site. Almost 20 years later I am still an Eastsider and very proud of the neighborhood I have grown to love.

Although Downer businesses have come and gone, it has always had a special home town feeling that few areas of Milwaukee still have. I agree that new life and development would add to this neighborhood, however I am concerned about the speed this project is being pushed through and that lack of involvement that the community it will most effect has had.

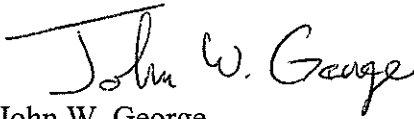
The huge five story parking structure on the corner of Downer and Bellevue being erected is way out of character for this neighborhood and gives no consideration to the existing buildings. The original facade of the structure has been greatly changed since the first drawings were presented and now it looks nothing less than Soviet Block Housing. It certainly lends nothing to the character of Downer Avenue.

Another great concern is the recent addition of a seven story hotel that will be right on Downer about the former Chancery Restaurant building. This structure was quickly added to the Planning Commission Agenda without being openly discussed by the neighborhood. Given the lack of sensitivity that the parking structure has to the neighborhood, I am deeply concerned that this hotel will lack the same attention to detail as the parking structure did.

From the drawings, there seems to be four large structures being developed on or next to Downer Avenue. I am deeply concerned that Downer Avenue will get the same tunnel effect that has permanently changed the historic character of Milwaukee's Third Ward.

Given that we are in the process of electing a new Alderman for District 3, I think the best solution is to wait until that individual has been elected and work with them, the developer and the neighborhood to come to some kind of compromise around this deeply troubling project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John W. George". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and address.

John W. George
2563 N. Summit Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53211

414-322-6770 (cell)