

July 5, 2022
Office of the City Clerk
200 E. Wells St. Rm. 205
Milwaukee, WI. 53202

Dear Ms. Elmer,

I have lived at 2629 N. Summit Ave. for the last 25 years. My property sits directly behind the site where the proposed apartment and new parish hall will be housed on Hackett Ave. If permission is granted, naturally as a homeowner I am interested in the outcome.

Right here and now, I want to say that I strongly object to the building projects and the rezoning efforts.

My foremost objection

is my reasoning that a massive apartment and modern rooftop structure on the parish hall will not fit in with the beauty, character, design, and historical values already afforded to this unique area.

In one sentence I am also concerned about the issues of the lack of privacy, extra noise, more cars, blocked sunlight, constant humming of generators, possible damage to my inground pool and the ugly view from my windows and yard because of my direct proximity to

this project.

Thank you for taking
my comments into consideration.

sincerely,
Grace Sorbjan

Grace Sorbjan
2629 N. Summit Ave.
Milwaukee, WI
53211

Elmer, Linda

From: Kay Wosewick <kwosewick@wi.rr.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 7, 2022 10:06 PM
To: Elmer, Linda
Subject: File 220279, Hackett Ave Apartment Building Opposition

Hi Linda. This will require the same extra step you did to make my St Mark's document readable.
Thank you very much!
Kay

To: Historic Preservation Commission members: Alderman Bauman, Ann Pieper Eisenbrown, Matt Jarosz, Nicholas Hans Robinson, Patricia Keating Kahn, Rafael Garcia, Sandy Pelts

As a resident of 2633 N Hackett Ave, I'm writing to present objections to the proposed apartment building at 2018 N Hackett (**hereafter referred to as APT**) as it specifically relates to the Downer Historic District (**hereafter referred to as DHD**) Guidelines for New Construction. The Guidelines are presented below, one at a time, in bold, followed by my comments. When my comments reference specific wording in the Guidelines, those are also in bold. If you have already read my opposition the St Mark's addition, this format will be familiar, but my specific objections are significantly different.

But first: In his Zoom presentation on June 13 to nearby residents, architect Jim Shields openly describes the APT as "contemporary." In earlier comments about the St Mark's addition, Shields also described that building as "contemporary". He said contemporary designs are in line with National Historic Trust guidelines. This statement seems to be Shields' justification for designing, in his words, a "modern" and "contemporary" apartment building. **IMPORTANTLY**, the National Historic Trust guidelines are **NOT RELEVANT**. The proposed apartment building is in the Downer Historic District (DHD), which has its own historic preservation guidelines. These two sets of guidelines must not be conflated in the Historic Preservation Commission review process.

Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed so as to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the district.

Mr Shields often refers to APT's similarity with apartment buildings **OUTSIDE** the DHD. Most of the design cues he takes from these buildings **DO NOT ALIGN** with DHD buildings. Mr Shields could have taken cues from two beautiful, historic buildings directly across the street from APT's property. Both St Regis and Georgetown were originally apartment buildings. They were converted into condominiums in the 1970's and are now owner-occupied. They look like they belong on the block. Since Mr Shields must take clues from outside the DHD, these two buildings, directly across the street, are the **OBVIOUS** buildings he should take design cues from for the APT so as to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the district.

By taking most of his design cues from much larger buildings, on much longer and wider streets and amongst other large buildings, Shields has designed an APT that does not, in any meaningful way, conform to the statement that **INTRODUCES**, and therefore can be thought of as a **REPRESENTATIVE SUMMARY** of, the four detailed 'Guidelines for New Construction.'

The proposed APT can move forward only if the Historic Preservation Commission disregards DND's historic guidelines. The consequences would be destruction of both property values and quality of life for residents on the 2600 block of Hackett and some residents on the 2600 block of Summit. Personally, I'm convinced the consequences of granting approval of the two proposals would resonate significantly beyond these two streets. The experience of living on an intact, quiet, friendly, neighborly street would likely disappear on other blocks and streets nearby. It is also conceivable that one or more businesses on Downer Avenue could go bust due to huge parking issues.

Now I'll address each of the four guidelines.

Siting

New construction must respect the historic siting of the district. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the cohesiveness of the district as a group of contiguous, stylistically compatible structures.

The APT respects almost nothing about **the historic siting of the district**. The APT's contemporary design plus its domineering bulk ENTIRELY ERASE the existing cohesiveness of the district as a group of contiguous, stylistically compatible structures.

It is disappointing to see no landscaping in front of APT. Shields cites code that demands no more than a 20' setback. That's inconsistent with buildings adjacent to APT. It may be consistent with DHD buildings on Downer, but that seems entirely inappropriate for APT's siting. St Mark's is in the DHD, and it has a nice setback with attractive landscaping.

Perhaps the most egregious siting problem resides on the south side of APT. The light bricks used on most of the side are starkly visible in the photo mock-up that is on the internet. The building is screaming: I DON'T BELONG HERE!! I'll talk more in depth about that light brick in Materials.

When it comes to the 'stylistic' element of siting, that can be dismissed with one statement: the APT design is modern; the rest of DND is almost entirely composed of buildings from the early 1900s.

Net, there is no relationship between the proposed APT and this historic district in terms of siting.

Scale

Overall building height and bulk, the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof, and individual building components such as overhangs and fenestration that are in proximity to historic buildings must be compatible to and sympathetic with the design of the buildings.

The scale of the APT is vastly out of synch with the DHD. Its **height and bulk** alone make it incompatible with the **historic buildings (it) must be compatible to and sympathetic with**. The fourth story has a huge 'eyepoint', which takes it entirely outside the DHD and the block. It adds significantly to APT's bulky look, and when combined with the building's wide footprint (about 155 feet) the APT immediately becomes THE visually dominant building on the block. It clashes with everything. The other nearby buildings almost look like doll houses in comparison. APT also blocks the view of Church in the City from south. That's just plain rude, especially since the building is so beautiful (oh, maybe blocking that lovely view isn't an accident).

Also, while much is made of the fact that the APT is shorter than Church in the City, CITC sits on higher ground than the APT. So much for bragging about height.

Shields justifies APT's massive size by citing the depth of the property. The properties on the east side of Hackett are 150' deep, compared to 120' deep blocks north of Park, and 120' lots on the east side of the 2600 block of Summit. Cross Hackett, and you'll find very shallow lots. So what? Visually, a building's width and height significantly contribute to **maintain(ing) the cohesiveness of the district as a group of contiguous, stylistically compatible structures**; depth plays a smaller role.

The APT's **fenestration** also fails. While window sizes are compatible with nearby historical buildings, the black treatment inside the windows immediately puts the APT in the contemporary category.

Form

The massing of new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the complex as a cohesive group of historic structures. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from any new construction in the complex should express the same design continuity established in the historic complex.

APT's form fits somewhat with the DHD. The roof profiles and projecting and receding bricks conform with nearby DHD buildings. The U shape doesn't fit anything in the DHD.

Siting and scale issues overwhelm any contribution form might make.

Is the APT maintaining the integrity of the complex as a cohesive group of historic structures and express(ing) the same design continuity established in the historic complex? NO.

Materials

The building materials, which are visible from the public right-of-way and in proximity to the district, should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions and combinations of cladding materials used on the individual buildings. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained

The APT has significant material incompatibilities with DND buildings. The proposed bricks have a distinctly modern look. The brick length is double that of historic buildings' brick, and the texture is very smooth while historic bricks look rough. While the chosen colors may match the historic brick when placed side by side, when seen from a distance (in mock-ups), the bricks' different size and texture somehow erases the the match.

Shields talked quite a lot about the "appropriateness" of using light gray brick on the bulk of each side as well as the back of the APT. He showed photos of other historic apartment buildings in the area (NOT within the DND, not surrounded by historic architecture, and on much larger/longer/wider blocks than the diminutive 2600 block of Hackett). These comparisons are irrelevant.

Shields also said "all the other buildings on the block" have similar light brick on their sides. This is simply NOT TRUE. Starting with the Georgetown, the face brick used in front is also used on its entire north side, which faces Park. That makes sense. The brick used in back and next to St Regis? It can hardly be called white or gray, and it doesn't call attention to itself like the brick on APT does. The St Regis face brick is also used on the entire south side of the building, which is adjacent to a 10' wide strip of concrete where trash and recycling bins are kept for St. Regis, some businesses on Downer, and the Barber south of St. Regis. The north side and back are of a somewhat lighter brick, but it is barely noticeable; they have the same chunky character of the face brick. I've lived in St Regis for 7 ½ years and never even noticed the brick on the back was different than the front. I have windows that look on what Shields described as Georgetown's 'light' brick; again, I never noticed it was different from the front. The cheaper brick visually FEELS the same as the face brick.

Moving south, the building with the Barber also has face brick on the north side where we share trash storage. There is a narrow alleyway between that building and Hollander; yes, the brick on both buildings is different, but not OBVIOUSLY so. Crossing the street, Church in the City's face brick is used along the entire south side that faces the green space.

Bottomline, the immediate neighborhood buildings do not, in fact, have very light side walls that look cheap. The sides made with cheaper brick are virtually invisible from any point on the street. Even when viewed closely, they don't feel out of place. The APT light walls, on the other hand, are highly visible and they look truly awful.

Has the view of APT from Summit Avenue property owners been considered at all? Today they have sunny backyards in the afternoon and a distant view of lovely historic buildings and trees on the green space. Their backyards will lose much of their afternoon sun (goodbye beautiful sun-loving gardens), and they'll have a monster-sized white wall looming over them. A red wall would be better, but still bad. These property owners will lose all backyard privacy. APT balcony users on the north side can choose between looking at a brick wall or looking into once-private yards. Hmm, I wonder which view will be most interesting.

Shields had another reason for using the light brick (I guess he hopes at least one argument will work): light brick is meant to reflect light up and into adjacent buildings. First, I doubt Church in the City would prefer to have "extra light" reflected by a white wall versus having a more attractive colored brick (hmm, they could be asked), but no brick at all would certainly be preferred. The APT doesn't abut another building on the south side, plus there's a 25'-wide strip of concrete running along that entire side, which will reflect light and heat. There is NO REASON to use light brick there. It will look awful—and cheap—when seen from the DHD, from Café Hollander's patio, and when strolling north on Hackett.

As I also mentioned in my email about St Mark's addition, the Historic District Commission's task is to compare the new addition with buildings ONLY within the designated historic district. I think this task is too limited. The other buildings on the 2600 block of Hackett are also relevant. The average person walking down this block is clueless about specific standards, rules or laws that govern the block. People see what they see.

What people see today is a beautifully **cohesive neighborhood with stylistically compatible structures** that are entirely **sympathetic...with the character of the district**. The APT will visually dominate any view of/on the walk. Visitors walking down this block (as many Café Hollander and other DHD patrons do) will no longer be surrounded by an historically cohesive neighborhood of beautifully maintained buildings...a block virtually unchanged on the outside for over 100 YEARS. A block of this historic quality and cohesiveness is RARELY adjacent to a lively business district. Perhaps the block is even the last of its kind in Milwaukee.

If new buildings must be built, **please, please** demand that they genuinely look like they belong with the other historic DHD buildings, as well as with the other buildings on the 2600 block of Hackett.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Kay Wosewick

2633 N Hackett Ave Unit E

Milwaukee