

October 3, 2022

RE: Objection to Certificate of Appropriateness for new house to be built at 2409 N. Terrace Avenue in the North Point Historic District

Office of the City Clerk

Via email: jowsca@milwaukee.gov and lelmer@milwaukee.gov

We are writing to oppose the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the building plans currently before the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) for construction of a new house at 2409 N. Terrace Avenue in the City of Milwaukee. This is the third new house to be built along Terrace Avenue on property formerly owned by St Mary's Hospital in the heart of the North Point Historic District. The property is immediately south of our residence (2411 N. Terrace Ave.) and shares a property line with our lot. In 2006, Columbia St. Mary's Hospital executed a quit claim deed transferring 5.3 feet along the north edge of the 2409 parcel to our lot so that the entire driveway between the parcels now belongs to us. The result is that the 2409 parcel is narrower than the average lot on the block.

The use of the parcel in question has been a concern of the City and the Terrace Avenue neighborhood for some time. In 1975, St. Mary's, the City and a group of Terrace Avenue neighbors entered into a Boundary Impact Agreement (copy enclosed) to assure that any future development would "blend and be harmonious with the fine nearby residential" neighborhood. The Agreement promised that any future construction on the site would be limited to residential houses that "conform to the nearby setbacks and be harmonious in mass, height, and exterior architectural appeal to the nearby residences on Terrace Avenue. . ." The group of neighbors who secured the agreement from St. Mary's with the assistance of the City were some of the first members of the Historic Preservation Commission, and while the agreement they secured in 1975 has expired, the principles it established remain sound.

Those principles are reinforced by the current North Point North Historic District Guidelines for New Construction which provides that "New construction must reflect the traditional siting of buildings in North Point North. This includes setback, . ." They also state "The building materials that are visible from the public right-of-way should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials traditionally used in North Point North. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained." The Guidelines for Streetscapes state "Maintain the height, scale, mass

and materials established by the buildings in the district and the traditional setback and density of the block faces. Avoid introducing elements that are incompatible in terms of siting, materials, height or scale.”

We chose to live on Terrace Avenue because of the historic nature of the neighborhood and the broad open feel of the Avenue. We have significant concerns about the impact of the submitted building plans as we understand them on the historic feel of the neighborhood. First, we object to the proposed front setback of only 23 feet. All of the historic homes to the North of 2409 are set back at least 30 feet. While the recently constructed homes to the south of 2409 are set a bit further forward (27.5 feet), the 2409 house would stick out nearly eight feet in front of our home and 6 feet in front of their neighbors to the south. As a result, instead of a gentle narrowing of the Avenue, the proposed house would jut out dramatically, blocking our and our historic neighbors' light and view to the south and the open feel of the Avenue. The proposed setback violates the siting requirements for new construction in the North Point North district. We believe a set back of 30 feet would both comply with the Guidelines and be more consistent with the historic houses that make this neighborhood so desirable.

We also have concerns about some of the construction materials proposed for the home. We applaud the owners' plans to use recovered cream city brick for parts of the construction. However, we are concerned that the use of metal siding on the front bay and long, low portion of the north side of the house is quite industrial looking with the zinc metal looking a lot like corrugated steel. We also note that none of the historic houses on our street have metal roofs or siding, so the proposed material is not consistent with materials traditionally used in North Point North. and a zinc roof and metal siding (though popular in modern construction) would not be in keeping with the brick, stone, stucco, and shake cedar construction of the other homes on the block, in violation of the Guidelines. As the home closest to the proposed house, we are also worried about the noise of rain storms on the roof and from the second story patio proposed to be built on the North side of the building, which will be just outside our primary bedroom windows. Our windows are over 100 years old, and we were recently advised by the State Historical Society that we cannot replace them with newer wood windows that might help to diminish the noise. While metal roofs are well insulated inside to protect those dwelling in them from noise, there is nothing to protect those of us whose historic homes are within 20 feet of the outside of the roof. We can already hear the sound of rain on the solar panel roof of the newly constructed house at 2387 N. Terrace Ave, but it is farther away.

Finally, we are concerned that the landscaping plans the owners submitted may be misleading to the Committee. We have had discussions with the owners about trying to

save one of the mature trees toward the back of the lot along our lot line that helps to block the view of the St. Mary's parking structure for us and our neighbors to the North. The owners have already removed the row of evergreens along the west side of their lot that covered some of the concrete parking structure wall, and they plan to remove all of the other mature trees along the front portion of our lot line. In an effort to preserve the one mature maple toward the back of the lot that would not interfere with their construction, we had offered to allow them to use the upper portion of our drive to turn around so they could head forward down their driveway without laying more concrete in the backyard. The plan they submitted to you shows the tree, and no space on their land for them to turn cars around, but in a recent email, they advised us that they plan to remove the tree. If they insist on removing the tree, they will need to create space in their own backyard to turn their cars around. We are concerned about potential grading issues due to elevation differences and seek assurances that the construction will not result in water run-off onto our driveway. We also believe approval is premature since two surveyors, one hired by the applicants and the other by the individuals who sold them the lot, found different northern lot lines. We have hired a third surveyor to try to determine the actual boundary between our properties.

While the immediate neighborhood and the Historic Watertown Neighborhood Association (HWTNA) had significant opportunity for review and input on the plans for construction of the two new houses to the south of 2409, the HWTNA was unaware plans for this house had been submitted to the Commission until its meeting on October 5. Members were notified on October 6, but that offered little time for them to provide input to this Commission. We ask that you defer any approval action to allow time for additional review.

We have enclosed petitions signed by more than 40 of our neighbors in the past week opposing construction of the home as it is currently proposed. As we spoke with them, they shared our concerns about both materials used and the setback proposed.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our concerns. Please enter this objection and these petitions objecting to the proposal into the record for the Historic Preservation Commission meeting scheduled for Monday, October 10, 2022.

Thank you.
Sheila Reynolds and Robert Chang
2411 N. Terrace Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53211