

Re: January 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting

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Planning Commission Members  
City of Milwaukee

Attn: JENANN OLSON

Here is a copy of a letter to Alderman D'Amato regarding the proposed condo at Stowell & Webster and the attendant zoning changes required for its construction.

Changing the zoning in this neighborhood is a deathknell, tantamount to changing it into Prospect Avenue without the benefit of a view to Lake Michigan. It will raise more headaches than it cures.

**PLEASE UPHOLD THE CURRENT ZONING LAWS.**

Dear Alderman D'Amato,

I am sure you are quite convinced that you are doing the right thing by introducing the new 11 story condominium to the existing neighborhood of Stowell & Webster, but the negative concerns of the project far outweigh the good on many levels.

First, any deviation from the current zoning will open the area to high rise condo development. While this may seem like a positive to you, I (and others like me) have chosen to live in this neighborhood because we appreciate its intimate feel, a feeling that does not exist on Prospect Avenue. Prospect Avenue is synonymous with noise pollution, light pollution, gas fume pollution, and high-density housing conditions. Our present density is quite enough for us, thank you very much.

There is a famous psychology study involving a large rat cage to which one new rat was introduced every day. For a while, all went well and the rats co-existed peaceably, but one day the Critical Rat was introduced – quite literally, one rat too many – and all the rats went ballistic and fell on one another in a rage. In the Stowell/Webster neighborhood we are already nearing “Critical Rat” density because, while we are primarily single home or small apartment units now, we are currently dealing with insufficient parking/substandard snow removal/leaf pickup/garbage pickup. The proposed condo will introduce 76 new units (times X number of residents) to this already burdened area.

Second, the proposed condo comes with a *quid pro quo* string attached: the renovation of Downer Avenue whose deterioration should never have been permitted. Why weren't you and others like you monitoring the disgraceful neglect going on in one of Milwaukee's heritage districts? Why were blind eyes turned repeatedly away from Katz? Why wasn't he called to task? And why aren't you looking to restore this area independent of New Land Enterprises? It's a significant piece of Milwaukee's history.

Third, while the area welcomes revitalization, the sheer size and design of the condo, as well as the plans for the Downer renovations have led most of us to conclude that either

New Land Enterprises has terrible taste, or its architects should be shot. The proposed ultra-modern condo is an architectural tumor on the neighborhood -- as incongruous as clapping Dolly Parton's wig on Queen Elizabeth's head -- while the proposed Downer shopping corridor forms a hideous out-cross between a flamingo and a robin with its ultra-modern architectural "lanterns" at each end tacked onto the plain brick buildings. These "lanterns" are nothing more than an attempt to right a wrong with another wrong -- an effort to integrate the already incongruous condo into the existing neighborhood -- with the end effect, instead, of screwing up the continuity of the entire area.

The condo should conform to the current zoning regulations and be relevant to the existing structures, while the Downer corridor should look less like a strip mall and more like either a charming European market area with plenty of benches and flowers or a New York Greenwich Village block. The East Side of town has always had its own unique historic profile. (The key is to attract high-end unique specialty stores that will encourage shoppers to dine and see a movie in a kind of mini-Third Ward preservation atmosphere.) If it does indeed need "lanterns," the start and end of the shopping area should be signaled with limestone endcaps to echo the Water Tower and enhance the continuity of the lake bluff area.

Fourth, marketing the office space primarily to physicians is counter-intuitive to the renovation of the Downer Avenue shopping area. Just ask yourself, when did you last go shopping right after a doctor's appointment? Most of us are just too sick or else our general attitude is: "Get me the hell out of here!" The office space should be marketed to small legal firms or architectural firms, among other types of businesses.

Lastly, parking logistics for medical offices are nightmares. Each physician employs a **minimum** of 1-2 office workers, plus 1 nurse. Say the physician had three exam rooms. They would all be loaded, and three more sets of patients (and their companions) would be on deck in the waiting room. We're talking a **minimum** of ten parking slots for each physician. Between the physicians and the shopping, the gigantic garage proposed in the basement of the condo would mean increased traffic circling the block in every direction, further muddying the significant congestion presently existing on Stowell. Downer Avenue is already difficult to cross at some times during the day because Wisconsin drivers do not understand the meaning of a crosswalk. If you install another stop light, drivers will be darting to the secondary streets on either side of Downer to avoid the lights. I'm starting to hyperventilate just thinking about it.

Okay, all of these are the LOGICAL arguments opposing this project, but the truth always boils down to cash. Cold, hard cash. New Land Enterprises has shown you the money. There's something about cash, big moolah, portraits of past Presidents, that makes a politician, any politician, hug himself at the thought of the benefits to himself. And I'm guessing New Land is not an altruistic enterprise either, developing the Downer area out of a deep abiding love of the city of Milwaukee. I'm guessing this is the first of their many projects in the area once the current zoning ordinance collapses. Even a variance for this one building will establish a precedent and kick off a series of legal battles between the city and future developments, battles the city will have neither the

stomach, nor the purse, to sustain. The residents in this area simply get screwed in the process.

Here's a lesson: this past summer I was in Grand Marais, MN, where the incumbent mayor was a Realtor in league with the head of the zoning committee as well as some big property owners and newcomer land sharks. Over the past three years the mayor had been an ardent proponent of major development in this pristine area by actively seeking and encouraging big money to invest in what was/is a small town in a scenic wilderness area. He wanted to change a pristine harbor into a mega-marina, sell off prime wooded land with drop-dead views to vacation condo developers and second home McMansions, all in the name of bringing "prosperity" to the town. What he really meant was he and his cronies would reap huge profits while driving the taxes and living circumstances of the rank and file citizenry into the stratosphere, despite their numerous vocal opposition. This November, he lost to his conservative opponent, 650 to 235. Good riddance.

As our elected official, Mr. D'Amato, your responsibility is to listen to and act on the wishes of your constituency -- not act on your own private agenda. We know what's best for ourselves, not you. You're not our Daddy. Hear me now:


**\*We don't want the existing zoning laws to change, nor do we want the condo to be a variant.**

**\*We welcome a tasteful renovation of Downer Avenue, not the architectural travesty currently proposed.**

**\*We need better traffic control on Downer Avenue now, and especially if renovation takes place.**

**\*We are not interested in any present or future development that will elevate our already high taxes in this area. We get minimal service for our tax dollar as it is.**

Sincerely,

  
Pamela Dorris  
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Milwaukee, Wisconsin