

15 July 2016

Ald. James Bohl, Chair
Milwaukee Common Council
Zoning, Neighborhoods & Development Committee
200 East Well St. Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Ald. Bohl & Committee Members:

I am writing in reference to the plans submitted by Royal Capital Group for proposed apartment buildings in the area known as Phase VI and Phase VII of the Brewer's Hill Commons Planned Development Area (Item #12 on the Committee Agenda for July 19). The project is being called "The Hills".

I live in Unit 601 of the Cobbler's Loft Condominiums, 234 E. Reservoir Ave, across the street from the Phase VII site. Though I rent this unit, I am speaking on behalf of the owner, Casey Lang, who has sent her proxy for this purpose (copy attached).

The residents of Cobbler's Loft and I have many, many concerns about this project and our board sent a letter to the Plan Commission – where we also appeared - asking that the project be held until we had more time to measure its impact. The Commission paid no attention to us.

I will summarize our concerns as briefly as possible. I am also forwarding a copy of the letter to CPC.

- I can find no evidence that Royal Capital has ever built a building on its own. The records I've found show it co-developed a couple of apartments in Madison, then started one by itself using WHEDA tax credits, but the project was abandoned. As such, it leads to questions as to how it is able to obtain bank financing for a project this size. If there are other developers who are backing Royal I don't know who they are and am troubled by the fact they have not been made public.
- The neighborhood had very little time to evaluate this proposal before it went before the City Plan Commission. While "inspirational" renderings were presented by Royal at a couple of community meetings this spring, we only saw the final drawings on May 24, two weeks ago. Given that the Memorial Day weekend followed, it was difficult to bring people together for discussion.

- This building has 25% more units than the one approved by the Plan Commission and Common Council in late 2004 and early 2005. This approval (68 units) only came after much negotiation between the City, the neighborhood and the developer at the time, and was scaled down from the original plans. In addition, these are apartments, not condominiums, almost all of which are one-bedroom. In this regard the proposal seems to be inconsistent with the Planned Development originally laid out for Brewer's Hill, among other things. It will bring much more traffic to nearby streets which were never designed for such congestion.
- Royal Capital made no effort to reach out to the nearest residents at Cobbler's Loft condos and townhouses. We are 37' from one of their proposed buildings, across the street from another. Many owners knew nothing of the developments until receiving notice of the CPC meeting last month.
- Royal Capital has stated that support from WHEDA is crucial to financing this development. Royal began the application process to WHEDA earlier this year. However, according to communication I received on July 11 from WHEDA, it is no longer moving forward with Royal based on its failure to provide needed financial information.

Based the above I feel strongly that it would be premature for the Committee or the Council to pass judgment on Royal Capital's plans at its July 19 meeting, particularly in light of WHEDA's withdrawal. I urge that the matter be laid over or placed on file until Royal can provide evidence of financing and proof that this is a viable project. These properties are in a prime location amidst much other building activity and should be handled by a proven developer.

Sincerely,



Mark Goff
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Attachment