

Koster, Vanessa

From: Sandra Hays [sjphays@wi.rr.com]
Sent: Friday, April 20, 2007 11:16 PM
To: planadmin
Subject: Re:#070034

To Whom It Concerns:

I am writing to oppose the sale of land on the SW corner of Downer Avenue and Belleview Avenue to New Land Enterprises and the five story structure that is planned for the corner. I have lived on the Eastside for many years, so I am aware that parking on Downer Avenue is and has been a perennial problem. Also, I know that the deterioration of the Downer Avenue commercial district did not begin when Danny Katz sold his buildings to Boris Gohkman. The decline began 10 – 15 years ago when Katz bought the buildings. When the Coffee Trader went out of business that huge commercial building sat idle for years. Empty, hulking edifices create blight; blight is contagious. Moreover, the empty buildings on the south end of the Downer Avenue commercial strip add further to the current blighted condition even though there are plans to remodel those structures.

The design and scale of the proposed building for the SW corner of Downer and Belleview are out of character for the historic neighborhood in which it will exist, especially since it will create a concrete barrier between the commercial district and the residential neighborhood. Given the technology that is available to builders and developers, it would seem wiser to place the parking garage underground, a la the new construction at the NE corner of Prospect and Lafayette, development that is also in Alderman DAMato's district. Who wants to look at parking garages? They are ugly, dirty, concrete eyesores any way one looks at them. Water and sewer lines could be re-routed to accommodate a garage four/even five stories below ground. Then if the developer insists upon commercial property at the corner, it could be a one story structure above ground. Or better yet, an urban park could replace the current parking lot. An urban park could continue to house the popcorn wagon (an Eastside fixture for many years), provide curving walkways and gardens, might have benches where people converse or people-watch or eat a LIXX ice cream cone, and create a respite from the glass and concrete that would surround it. A park is inviting; it asks the visitor to enter the space. A five story parking garage screams, GO AWAY, not exactly the message the "revitalization" project expects to create.

The Plan Commission needs to support the views of the people who live in the area and those who shop there. There must be other developers who can present appropriately scaled projects for this precious corner of real estate. The City and the neighborhood are not so desperate that the only plan presented is the one to accept. Do not sell New Land Enterprises the land. Do not allow New Land Enterprises to build an ugly, five-story, concrete behemoth on land the size of a postage stamp.

I and other Eastside citizens are watching.

Sincerely,

Sandra Hays