

Committee for Balanced Development

Presentation 12-18-06

St. Marks

Edward jj Olson

The East Side has grown over time as a pedestrian friendly, **unique urban village** of two story homes, with a mix of duplexes, single-family houses, 3 ½ story apartment buildings and, more recently, town-house condos. The structures range in size and appearance from opulent to modest. The Committee for Balanced Development believes that the **scale** of the existing community reflects the **values** and **design principles** of **contemporary thinking in urban design**.

The charm of the neighborhood is that it holds the boulevards connecting Lake and Riverside Parks per Frederick Law Olmstead's design. In this primarily residential neighborhood, our children were born, our elderly cared for, our growing families educated and entertained. We are bordered by the lakefront on the East, the river with its parallel bike trail on the West, UWM between Downer & Cramer in an area that initially held the more modest Downer College, and the larger commercial strips along Farwell and North Avenues. Our Southern commercial strip plus the two-block commercial areas of Downer and Oakland Avenues have served us well.

The existing neighborhood and its citizens are committed to the community because it has maintained its consistency and sense of balance for more than 100 years. The values of the housing stock have increased dramatically compared to other parts of the City. This has been in spite of an ongoing struggle with past and present expansion of the University of Wisconsin, Columbia Hospital, and Columbia / St. Mary's Hospital's new buildings.

Consider the history of the Webster and Stowell site with its 4 buildings on Stowell and a now torn down building on Webster. This site has seen numerous land lords, who did not invest in the properties and some students who were less than ideal tenants. The City, for its part, should have been more vigilant regarding building code enforcement.

The Committee for Balanced Development is committed to Downer Avenue's renewal but also is cognizant that the historically uncared for Webster and Stowell site should not be used as the rationale for the development of an 11 story building.

This building will:

- *destroy the character of the surrounding neighborhood,*
- *add additional traffic congestion on narrow streets which creates danger for pedestrians,*
- *reduce the property value of housing in the surrounding area,,*
- *add to the difficulties of existing residents to find parking in proximity to their homes, and*
- *will create a pronounced shadowing effect on adjacent properties, particularly in Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.*

*Waving existing building codes for this 11 story building is a back door rezoning for the entire neighborhood and will set a precedent for future high rise development. Have no illusions, if this building is built, then **our unique urban village** will look like the high-rise towers built along lower Prospect Avenue.*

The Committee for Balance Development does not rule out the opportunity for mid-rise development 4-6 stories, but *high rise development will destroy this **unique urban village** character and change the composition*, which is the essence of the Downer Avenue neighborhood. Faculty from the Department of Economics have indicated that for no cost they will do a one month survey of the neighborhood, working with the alderman and the Committee, to determine what the neighborhood wants.

We are supportive of the recent *interim Historic designation* of buildings on Kenwood and hope that the spirit of that debate can also influence decisions regarding the Downer Avenue commercial district renewal. We are supportive of correct investment, which honors the Historic Area and the qualities of **our unique urban village** where citizens have invested their lives and creative energies, sent their children to the local schools, prayed in the local churches, and made the Downer Avenue businesses a destination for their commercial transactions.

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Ed Olson . . . "The high-rise is out of scale with our urban village neighborhood."

Gokhman high-rise rankles neighbors

Dear Michal Dawson,

The Committee for Balanced Growth is opposed to New Land Enterprises' proposed 11-story condominium to be built at Webster and Stowell. This building will require a waiver of the City of Milwaukee's ordinance limiting the height of buildings to 60 feet in this area. The proposed structure will be 117 feet high, almost two times the allowable height! This building *ignores the human scale* of this neighborhood and will: *destroy the character of the surrounding area, create traffic congestion, reduce property values, and will create major shadowing* on adjacent properties.

Rushing the development to the Planning Commission on January 8 and the Zoning Committee on January 9 without impact studies and input from local residents reflects a disregard for all the qualities of our unique urban village, where citizens have invested their lives and creative energies, sent their children to the local schools, prayed in the local churches, and made Downer Avenue businesses a destination for their commercial transactions. We need your help to say NO, SEND THE PLAN BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD. I'll call your office to set up a meeting or telephone call.

Ed Olson