



April 18, 2007

City of Milwaukee Plan Commission
809 N. Broadway
Milwaukee, WI 53202

RE: Downer Avenue Redevelopment Zoning Change, Phase I

Dear City Plan Commissioners:

I am writing you on behalf of the National Trust for Historic Preservation to express our strong opposition to the Detailed Plan Development proposed at 2574-90 North Downer Avenue. The National Trust for Historic Preservation, the country's largest non-profit preservation organization, was founded in 1949 and provides leadership, education and advocacy to save America's diverse historic places and revitalize communities. Its Washington, D.C. headquarters staff, eight regional offices and 28 historic sites work with the Trust's 270,000 members and thousands of local community groups in all 50 states.

Historic sites such as the Downer Avenue Commercial District and the North Point Historic District play an important role in the understanding of our collective history, and can enrich our appreciation of historic neighborhoods. We are concerned that the 5-story parking garage proposed for the City of Milwaukee property at 2574-90 North Downer Avenue will have an adverse impact on both of these historic districts. The design and materials of the proposed development are entirely inappropriate for a historic district and its size is vastly out of scale for the pedestrian-friendly commercial area and residential neighborhoods on which it will intrude.

Simply put, a 5-story parking garage is not the right use for this site. The Downer Avenue Historic Commercial District, mostly comprised of two- and three-story commercial buildings built from 1903-1936, and the small scale residential homes closest to the Downer Avenue commercial district in the nearby North Point Historic District, will be overwhelmed by this development. One of the residences will be within 3 feet of the rear of the proposed new garage and will be dwarfed by this behemoth structure, drastically reducing its livability as sunlight is blocked and window views obscured.

Protecting the Irreplaceable

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We have reviewed several of the other submissions put forward in response to an RFP issued for the parcel, many of which are more appropriate for the site and would have much less of a negative impact on the surrounding neighborhoods.

In light of these facts and at the request of several members of the community who asked us to intervene, we respectfully request that you, as members of the Plan Commission, turn down the parking garage proposal for this site and demand new construction of higher quality design and compatibility that befits two of Milwaukee's finest historic neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Royce A. Yeater". The signature is stylized and cursive, written over the word "Sincerely,".

Royce A. Yeater, AIA
Midwest Director

Cc: Mayor Tom Barrett, City of Milwaukee
Chip H. Brown, III, Wisconsin Historical Society
Mr. James Draeger, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Denise Hice, President, Milwaukee Preservation Alliance
Mrs. Thea Kovac, 2623 E. Belleview Place, Milwaukee
Ms. Dawn McCarthy and Mr. Jeff Los, 2589 N. Lake Drive, Milwaukee
Ms. Donna Schlieman, Secretary, Milwaukee Preservation Alliance