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Ald. James Bohl, Chair
Milwaukee Common Council
Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee
200 East Wells Street, Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Ald. Bohl and committee members,

I request your assistance tabling an apartment development project proposed by Royal Capital Group (RCG) in an area formerly named Brewers Hill Commons. This topic is scheduled to be discussed at the July 19, 2016, Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee meeting. I will be impacted by this project because proposed Block A will be immediately out my front window and directly across the street from my primary residence. Block B will be out the back door of my condominium complex, Cobblers Lofts.

I have been a Milwaukee resident for about 15 years. I moved to Cobblers Lofts in Brewers Hill in August 2015. I chose to purchase a condo in the historic Brewers Hill neighborhood, over other areas of the city, because I value the architecture of a historic neighborhood, the greenery and vegetation, the amazing view of downtown, and the diversity of the residents. I fear that all I love about my urban serenity in Brewers Hill will be lost with the proposed apartment complex.

My concerns include the following:

1) **Neighborhood density:** This development proposes to increase the number of units approved in 2005 by 25%. While I recognize that neighborhoods change over time, this city block simply cannot sustain an addition of residents to this extent.
   - I value diversity in a neighborhood where all residents, to include all socioeconomic backgrounds and family statuses, are welcome. This apartment complex is designed for young single tenants with over 90% one bedroom units and the apartment size to range from 580-740 square feet. I urge this committee to consider reducing the number proposed units by including more two and three bedroom units and increasing the size of the one bedroom units. Also consider reducing the number of units by lowering the number of stories proposed to four stories, which would mirror what was approved in 2005.
   - Traffic and parking will increase with an estimated 200+ residents moving to our block. Parking is currently a challenge in the neighborhood, especially evening parking in the winter. This project proposes one parking spot per apartment. This doesn't take into account guests or apartments with more than one tenant. Additional traffic and parking will be generated by patrons visiting the proposed café in the complex. This neighborhood simply cannot sustain this volume of traffic with this many residents requiring street parking. I am extremely concerned for traffic accidents immediately out my front windows that could be avoided now, with your vote.
   - The current proposal does not include a driveway or circle drive for loading and unloading. Adding a pick-up and drop-off area to Block A would greatly reduce street congestion during the tenant moving process. In addition, a circle drive would serve as a clearly defined area for taxi services, mail and package delivery, and food delivery. Lastly, the proposed café will likely receive many deliveries and would also benefit from a loading and unloading drive.

2) **Financial support:** WHEDA underwriters have declined tax credits to this project. It is my understanding that this will be RCG's first solo development project. Without demonstrated solid financial backing, I'm concerned this project will not complete in its entirety or will take aesthetic or safety shortcuts to save funds. This neighborhood does not need a partially finished, aesthetically unpleasing, or uninhabitable building.

3) **Lack of support by Cobblers Lofts residents and timing:** Cobblers Lofts is a beautiful historic building built in 1917. The building, a former shoe factory, was converted into 56 condo units in 2001. Block A is immediately across the street from Cobblers Lofts and Block B is only feet from Cobblers' rear loading dock. The majority of Cobblers units are owner occupied. Based on my conversations with Cobblers residents, and as evidenced by 9 units listed for sale within a week of the City Plan Commission meeting on June 13, Cobblers does not support this development in its current state.
   - While Historic Brewers Hill Association (HBHA) has offered their support for this project, all board members reside more than 200 feet from this development. I am an HBHA member and their support of this project does not reflect what I witnessed at the two HBHA meetings this spring. HBHA also does not reflect the majority of the 56 owners at Cobblers Lofts who are impacted the most.
   - RCG has not reached out to the Cobblers Lofts Condo Association Board to dialogue and collaborate regarding the development. RCG did attend two HBHA meetings this spring. At those meetings, RCG did not have many details or a clear mock-up of the buildings to present. They also cut comments and questions short and seemed to disinvite collaboration with Cobblers residents by stating things like, "Not everyone will get their way." RCG held a project unveiling at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, May 20. With only a few days' notice given to neighborhood members and the event being held on a Friday evening, turnout was low. By May 20, the plans were already submitted to the city so no additional changes would be made. In addition, the unveiling of the project plan was less than one month before the City Plan Commission and the Memorial Day holiday followed. This didn't leave much time to share details with Cobblers owners so the full scope of the project would be known to all. Even more Cobblers owners would have shared comments at City Plan Commission if more time was given.

4) **Precedent:** There are currently several vacant lots in the neighborhood for sale, estimated at least 3.5 acres. If this project moves forward with the number of proposed units, it sets a precedent for other developers to propose highly dense apartment buildings within a few city blocks. Many years ago, the city financially supported renovating historic homes which transformed the neighborhood and increased home ownership. I ask this committee and our city leaders to partner with neighborhood residents. We need to collectively and thoughtfully strategize our future vision for Brewers Hill. Do we want a "concrete jungle" with transient residents like areas of the Third and Fifth Wards? Or do we want to continue a vision already invested in by the city to increase home ownership, preserve our green space, and foster a welcoming environment for all residents and families to own and rent?

I absolutely love living in Brewers Hill. It's my hope that any new development will further enrich and add value to the neighborhood. I want to be clear that I am not opposed to all developments in Block A and Block B. I do not support RCG's proposal because it's not right for the neighborhood in its current state. I am especially opposed to the number of units proposed. I ask you to request that RCG and their partnering architects modify building plans to reduce the number of units and add a loading and unloading driveway. I also urge you to request that RCG demonstrates additional financial support to the project. Please vote "NO" on July 19 to table this decision until changes are made to the plans and financial support is demonstrated.

Thank you for your consideration,

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