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April 22, 2007

Mayor Thomas Barrett  
City Hall  
200 East Wells St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Mayor Barrett:

We are two physicians (psychiatrists) who seriously question the approval and building of a four story retail and parking structure at the corner of Downer and Belleview. We are also twenty year residents of the neighborhood who appreciate and shop on Downer.

Our current office is at 2577 N. Downer Avenue, on the second floor, across from the proposed structure. Our landlord has told us we will have to move in the next few months when our building is razed to clear land for a boutique hotel. Pentagon Properties has offered us new offices in the space above Schwartz's Bookstore, which we are considering along with other options. Our patients come from all over the city. Whether they park in a surface lot or in a four story building is not in itself a big factor for us.

Our reasons to question the retail and parking structure are these: a surface lot looks nicer. We ourselves enjoy parking on a surface lot more than in a dim and crowded interior. Assaults are more frequent in an indoor parking structure, and we instinctively shrink from that. (We feel the same for the sake of our patients.) We also value the tiny triangle of "green space" behind the present surface lot and the magnificent elm tree in the middle of it. Going to look at the other buildings erected by New Land Enterprises does not inspire us with confidence that this building will be better than the grass and tree.

But the main reason we question a decision at this time on the building of the four story parking structure is that the opinions of the neighbors and merchants have not been thoughtfully considered. We have just seen the letters to you of Joseph DeRosa, John Sendik, Peter Kovac, Dale Borneman, and John Szatkowski. Their thoughts and concerns should be heard and carefully weighed. That has not happened yet. One of us (William) is the secretary of the Downer Avenue Merchants Association (DAMA). We have sat through the long monthly meetings of the DAMA for the last year, and we can verify that *the ideas of the individuals named were not mentioned once*. Instead we were told that "all the merchants favor the New Land Enterprise master plan." *The Downer Avenue Merchants Association does not represent the*

*views of the people named, and perhaps many others, but DAMA does represent the wishes of the regular attendees. As Mr. Bourneman says, "there are tenants of the dominant landlord who are afraid to voice opposition to some aspects of the development for fear of retaliation."* In fact, a number of tenants have left recently, and we fear that more will do so.

How can a community with any good will be built, if the wishes and values of individuals like this are brushed aside at the outset?

(What we have proposed to the DAMA is outlined in the attached sheet.)

We urge you to pause on the matter of the parking garage at the corner of Downer and Belleview. Neighborhoods can be taken down but can not be raised up as easily as modern modular construction.

Sincerely,

  
Mary Alice Houghton, M.D.

William Houghton, M.D.

