

Lee, Chris

From: Kay Wosewick <kwosewick@wi.rr.com>
Sent: Monday, September 12, 2022 1:00 PM
To: Lee, Chris
Subject: Opposition to DCD Presentation

Chris,

One last email sent to Alderman I neglected to copy you on.

A document titled “DCD Presentation” was recently posted on the Legistar site used for postings for the August 22 meeting. Apparently, this Legistar site remains the place to post information prepared AFTER that 8/22 meeting was held. I assume DCD plans to present it at the September 13 meeting? Accordingly, please review the following and take my opposition into account prior to the committee meeting tomorrow.

I take issue with almost every point made in the DCD Presentation.

- The document contains three photos of the proposed apartment lot from Hackett Avenue. **Permission should have been obtained from one of the residents on Summit Avenue to take a photo from their backyard to provide a “full picture” of the lot.** The photo would show a large, open view from residents’ private back yards. This view will largely be replaced with a view of a huge white brick wall. The wall will block much of the residents’ afternoon sun. The wall, with its many windows and balconies, will offer apartment residents clear views into what had once been entirely private back yards. **The impact of the apartment on Summit residents’ lives will be highly negative.**
- Page 4 quotes the Northeast Side Area Plan, Overall land use strategies: “Consider historic buildings, sites and districts as valuable irreplaceable assets...and channel new development to vacant and underutilized land (p. 87-88).”
 - The proposals sailed through the Historic Preservation Commission despite the property’s location in the Downer Avenue Historic District. The District has specific guidelines for new construction that were all but ignored. The addition and apartment were repeatedly described as “modern” and “contemporary” by the architect. The word “historic” was used ONLY in the context of justifying the apartment’s size and white brick. However, those aspects match **only** “historical apartments” **outside** the

Downer Historic District, all on **larger streets** such as Downer, Lake, Prospect etc. **Those buildings are in no way comparable to the 2600 block of Hackett.**

- **Neighbors support new development on the vacant land and unused parking lot.** However, new construction should follow the Downer Historic District guidelines for new construction and should comply with current zoning requirements.
- Page 4 continues quoting the Northeast Side Area Plan “Minimize parking as a component of the overall use or mix of uses. Reduce or eliminate parking requirements where good transit options are available (p. 88).”
 - **Despite all good intentions, public transit cannot be forced** on residents, or local business patrons, or St Mark’s congregation, etc. Many neighborhood residents are older. Few use bikes, and even those who do still need a car (think rain, winter, biking with bags of groceries, etc.). Virtually everyone living here has doctors, dentists, specialists, friends, family, etc. who cannot be reached by public transit. Local government ideals about public transit cannot be forced on people! Car owners cannot be turned into non-car owners/users overnight! These kinds of changes happen slowly, especially when transit offerings are stagnant.
 - People outside our immediate neighborhood tell us we should simply park in the deck down the street and quit complaining. Do these flippant opinions come with \$1400+ a year for each of us who park legally for free on our street because we lack off-street parking? It is all-too-easy for people outside this immediate neighborhood to expect us to change our lives, and spend more money doing so, while their living situation is safe from similar development and disruption.
- Page 4 continues “Preserve traditional neighborhood use patterns and update to fit changes in households, markets, lifestyles, etc. Design development and construction to blend in with the existing context. (p. 89).”
 - **As explained earlier, the proposed construction does not, in any way, blend in with the existing historic buildings.** The apartment will visually dominate the block and virtually erase any sense of 2600 Hackett as an historically intact block.
 - **How does one preserve traditional neighborhood use patterns while updating them to fit changes in households, markets, and lifestyles? This is both vague and self-contradictory.** Households, markets, and lifestyles change slowly. One might argue COVID has changed some aspects of society—working from home, putting off having kids, a possible glut of office real estate coming—but long-term changes from COVID still can’t be predicted. Likewise, a recession may shift spending and consolidate households, but those changes are usually temporary. As

someone who professionally studied consumer behavior for over 18 years, accurate predictions about factors the NSAP mentions above are almost nonexistent. Consider Bayshore—the next-big-thing when it was rebuilt was mixed-use development. Look at the empty storefronts today.

- Historic areas weather beautifully in the long-term. Look at the value of homes on the upper east side, Shorewood east of Oakland, most of Whitefish Bay, etc. Well cared for, historic-era homes retain their value; in fact, they were built to! Construction since ~1970/80s has been shoddy at best. Apartment buildings and condos are even more poorly constructed than homes. Ask me about the condo complex built at the southern edge of Shorewood in the late 1990s; I have a horror story or two to tell. Similar stories surely abound.
- **Milwaukee risks destroying the character of an important edge of an otherwise intact neighborhood, virtually unchanged for over 100 years.** Draw a line down the middle of Belleview, Downer, Kenwood and along Lake Park; inside these lines is a spectacularly intact, historic neighborhood; only a couple of buildings have been constructed since the late 1920s. **The three condo buildings on 2600 Hackett retain their value just as old homes do.** Who knows how the neighborhood will weather the addition of a new, huge apartment building adjacent to historic, resident-owned condos, and beautiful homes on the backside of the apartment? We don't know. **I find it nearly impossible to imagine how an apartment building can possibly contribute to neighborhood stability.** Large apartment buildings by nature have steady inflow and outflow, especially when there are plenty of similar offerings nearby. **Does Milwaukee really want to risk potentially destabilizing a perfectly intact neighborhood?**
- Page 4 continues: “Return vacant lots to productive uses as soon as possible. (p. 91).”
 - **Residents couldn't agree more.** We would be happy to have new construction on the empty lot. But NOT the proposed construction which requires 3 jumps in zoning. **New construction should visually fit with the historic buildings on the block, and be zoned no higher than the next level, RM4.**
- Page 5, under “Commercial Standards” “Introduce high-density multi-family housing to commercial districts (in keeping with the scale of those districts) (p.92)”
 - The architect had to go outside the Downer Historic District to find buildings of the size and character of the proposed apartment. And those “comparable” buildings are on large streets such as Downer (outside the Historic District), Lake, Prospect, etc. The proposed apartment “is (**NOT AT ALL**) in keeping with the scale of (the commercial) district.”

- Page 5 continues, under “Upper East Side sub-area” “Intensify commercial areas, but do not encroach or expand into residential areas. Provide commercial-to-residential transitions where possible. (p. 204)”
 - **The apartment grossly encroaches on residential homes on Summit Avenue.** And by the way, three condominium units on the 2600 block of Hackett are also owner-occupied “homes.”
 - **The 2600 block of Hackett is already a commercial-to-residential transition area.** St Mark’s is on the block. Next to St. Regis is a barber. The next building up from St Regis is Café Hollander with its huge patio. Café Hollander patrons are constantly walking down the block, often with kids in tow.
 - St Regis’ backyard includes the back wall of Downer Avenue businesses such as the dry cleaner and Breadsmith. A fence blocks us visually, but not audibly, from the liquor store’s backdoor ice machine and dumpsters.
 - Georgetown’s back wall adjoins a driveway where Downer Avenue businesses keep their trash bins. On the other side of the driveway is Stone Creek and a couple other businesses.
 - **I challenge you to find another block of beautifully kept, historic, owner-occupied residences (i.e., St Regis and Georgetown) so intimately entwined with the backside of a block of businesses (i.e., businesses on the east side of 2600 block Downer).** Yep, this is a dynamite transition area.

- Page 5 continues under “Upper East Side Area” “Repair the urban fabric (p. 204).
 - **Let me tell you a secret: the urban fabric is not broken here.**

- Again, page 5: “The proposed rezoning from RM3 to RM6 for a portion of the property at 2604-44 North Hackett is consistent with the Northeast Side Area Plan.”
 - **NO, the proposed apartment is NOT consistent with NSAP for all the reasons just described.**

The modern, out-sized, inappropriate-for-the-site apartment has been designed and pushed forward for one reason only: to give St Mark’s the funds to build a new addition. St Mark’s has been highly

secretive and has used every opportunity to keep their neighbors as hog-tied as possible to push through this proposal during summer when everyone's attention is scattered, and during a time in which the residents don't have representation through an alderman. The current opinions of our future alderman, Brostoff, cannot, in any way, be considered to represent the people he will one day be compelled to represent. **Brostoff's voice must not be construed as the voice of an acting alderman.** His opinions are personal, not those of a sitting alderman.

I implore you to give St Mark's neighbors a voice and reject the zoning change. Perhaps St Mark's will return to the drawing board and invite participation by their neighbors, and everyone will end up winning.

With utmost and urgent sincerity,

Kay Wosewick

2633 N Hackett Unit E