

February 17, 2007

Dear Zoning and Development Commission,

I am writing with my concern about the proposed Downer Avenue Project. I am not so much opposed to the development of Downer Avenue, as to the size and scale of some of the proposed additions.

As a young 17 year old who grew up in Wauwatosa, I remember fondly my first date at the Coffee Trader on Downer. I had never been to the Eastside of Milwaukee and remember how quaint Downer felt and how special this small section of Milwaukee had been preserved. Soon after that I started college at UWM, living in the Dorms and eventually in apartments on both Farwell and Bellevue near the proposed project. Almost 20 years later I am still an Eastsider and very proud of the neighborhood I have grown to love.

Although Downer businesses have come and gone, it has always had a special home town feeling that few areas of Milwaukee still have. I agree that new life and development would add to the neighborhood, however I am concerned about the scale of a few of the proposed additions.

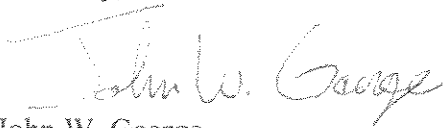
First, to have a huge five story parking structure on the corner of Downer and Bellevue will totally change the 2 block commercial area of Downer and would forever take away the quaintness that it possesses. The current parking lot has always been a distraction for Downer Avenue and an odd use of such valuable space. I believe an alternative would be to explore the use of the land between St. Marks and Church in the City to see if that area could be used for such a structure.

Second, adding medical office to street level retail areas doesn't make good sense of prime real estate. Patients coming and going from a plastic surgeon are not going to stop and shop or eat on Downer. This type of office could easily be located above Schwartz Bookstore in the former Downer Garage space.

Finally and the most concerning is the 11 story condo/boutique hotel that will over shadow and overtake Downer Avenue. We only have to look at what the Sterling Condo complex on the corner of Royall and Farwell has done to change the whole feel of that block. This project is way too large for the quaint residential neighborhood that surrounds Downer. A scaled back project that out would include the boutique hotel but is done on a much more management scale would fit Downer better. Looking slightly to the North we can see a 6 story apartment complex that much more fits the quaintness of the Downer Areas.

Although this project has some wonderful features, what is lacks is a scale that fits the historic residential feel that has made Downer so special. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John W. George". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

John W. George
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Milwaukee, WI 53211

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