

September 6, 2006
2536 North Summit Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53211

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

Re: New Land Enterprises Proposal
Webster & Stowell
File# 060705

Dear Mayor Barrett:

As long time East side residents, we are writing to you to express our concerns about the New Land proposal for 83 condominium units at Stowell and Webster. It calls for an 11 story tower within a block and a half of our single family residential neighborhood.

The site consists of several residential properties which have suffered the neglect of the owner (not New Land) and are now blighted and vacant. We support the idea of removing these structures and building something new. The proposed design does have some attractive architectural features. However, the height and density of the proposed development is out of scale with the surrounding neighborhood. It is oversized. The tallest building on the block is 4 stories. The adjacent streets are narrow (Webster, 30 ft.; Stowell 31 ft). These streets weren't designed or built to accomodate traffic volume generated by 83 new units. The developer has compared this to his current condo project under construction on Farwell just one block north of Brady. A project of this size works well on a main arterial such as Farwell, but not on Webster and Stowell. A 12" snowfall could make the area all but impassable for emergency vehicles.

The Downer Avenue merchants have thrown their support behind the project. Inasmuch as the developer is soon to become their Landlord, it would be impolitic for them to be anything but supportive, any private views to the contrary notwithstanding. We are sympathetic to the Downer merchants' continued viability. We frequent their businesses. Even though traffic and congestion is an occasional problem, the Downer Avenue commercial strip is truly a neighborhood amenity. The mix of stores and the friendly atmosphere make it a great place to shop. But Downer Avenue's problems won't be solved by this project. Other factors are in play.

First, the area is no longer "the only game in town." It enjoyed this primacy for a number of years. We know people from around the metropolitan area who shop on Downer. But other neighborhood shopping districts have enjoyed a recent resurgence. North Avenue, Brady Street and the Third ward come to mind. North Oakland Avenue in Shorewood and East Silver Spring are also easily accessible from here. All of these neighborhood strips compete with Downer Avenue.

Second, Downer Avenue has also suffered from an absentee owner who has never displayed an active interest in the street. Vacant storefronts were the norm. The Coffee Trader building stood vacant for years. Vacant buildings are not a sign of economic vitality and don't attract many shoppers.

The east side has always maintained a delicate balance among competing interests: institutions, Downer Avenue and the single family neighborhood. We have a unique single-family residential area within 10 minutes of downtown. It has been declared an Historic District by the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission. Part of our east residential area has also been designated by the State of Wisconsin and the National Trust. It is a jewel. Few cities our size offer this amenity. This situation can easily change if the balance of the mix changes. The growth of our east side institutions continues unabated. Columbia/St.Mary's, the Protestant Home and UWM are all expanding.

The expansion and use intensification resulting from the New Land Enterprises proposal must be carried out with respect for the surrounding residential neighborhood. There is a need to keep the competing interests in balance. That is why it is important to look at the effects of the New Land project **before** it is approved.

This project is out of scale with the neighborhood. The increased traffic volume will exacerbate traffic and parking problems in the neighborhood. We also fear that the size of this tower and its proximity to our home will interfere with the natural light we presently enjoy.

Also, this project will set a precedent for the area. If New Land can go up 11 stories, other developers will seek to do the same. The Common Council had recently reviewed the zoning for the east side. We understand that there is a 6 story height limit. This limit was set after consideration of the needs of the entire area. Why should this limit be set aside? Your support for this project will threaten the residential character of this area. We are concerned with maintaining the value of our investment.

New Land insists that the project must be of this size in order to be successful. The tower would be almost 3 times taller than anything else on the block. If there is any "hardship" here, it is self-created. New Land is presumed to know the zoning when it bought the property. The special treatment sought for this project will come at the expense of the surrounding neighborhood.

We support the concept of condominium development at this site in conformity with existing zoning requirements. We would appreciate knowing your thoughts on this issue. The courtesy of a reply is requested.

Very Truly Yours,

Mary A. Wasielewski

Francis T. Wasielewski