

February 13, 2007

To the Honorable Common Council
Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee
City of Milwaukee

Dear Committee Members:

File No. 060705 relates to the change in zoning from Local Business and Multi-Family Residential to General Planned Development, on land located generally on the East Side of North Downer Avenue and South of East Park Place and land located generally on the West Side of North Downer Avenue and the East Side of North Stowell Avenue, North of East Webster Place, in the 3rd Aldermanic District.

This file allows for the redevelopment of existing and vacant commercial uses along North Downer Avenue. The GPD establishes zoning standards and a master plan for redeveloping and revitalizing the 2500 and 2600 blocks of North Downer Avenue, including the rehabilitation of existing buildings and vacant commercial spaces, providing new medical office tenants, and new building development. Overall, the components of the Downer Avenue master plan are consistent with the current Local Business zoning. By changing the zoning to a GPD, there is more control over the use and design for future and existing development, which isn't required under the current zoning designation. Several major components to the proposed development include:

- Improving streetscape along Downer Avenue to create a consistent image and defined sense of place
- A new 3 story and 11 story hotel and condominium development at the northeast corner of Webster and Stowell
- Repair and improve the upper two floors of an existing building, currently vacant, at the northwest corner of Webster and Downer, above Schwartz Bookstore, for additional office space
- Repair the façade of the Downer Theater
- Acquire city-owned parking lot at the southeast corner of Downer and Belleview for retail and parking structure development
- Remove existing drive-through and ramp to the parking garage for a building addition and remodeling of the 2nd floor of the existing building on the southeast corner of Downer and Park, adjacent to Associated Bank, for a surgery center and offices
- Repair the existing façades at the 2600 block of N. Downer

The GPD includes a two-block stretch of Downer Avenue. Gateways would be located on the north and south sides. Overall, approximately 60,000 square feet of commercial space, 120,000 square feet of hotel and residential space, and 288 parking spaces would be developed. In total, the project would add over \$50 million in value to the area.

This project has significant community interest and involvement. Alderman D'Amato has held 3 official neighborhood meetings in addition to 19 other business and merchant meetings. Also, over the past 6-8 months, the developers and architect have met with neighbors several times, and addressed concerns by decreasing the massing of the condo/hotel building by 65% and reducing the density from 76 condominium units to 52.

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On February 12, 2007, a public hearing was held and over 3 hours of testimony was taken, both in support and opposition. Concerns included opposition to a four-story parking structure to be constructed on a current city-owned surface parking lot, the height of the 11-story portion of the proposed hotel and condominium building, and the proposed medical office use.

Since this is a rare opportunity to revitalize Downer Avenue with significant compromise based on neighborhood and staff input and the proposal generally complies with existing commercial zoning requirements; and based on all the testimony heard, the City Plan Commission at its regular meeting on February 12, 2007 unanimously recommended approval of the subject file.

Sincerely,

Rocky Marcoux
Executive Secretary
City Plan Commission of Milwaukee

cc: Ald. Michael D'Amato