

November 1st, 2016

Mayor Barrett
Common Council Members
City Hall
200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Mayor Barrett and Common Council Members

First, let me say that I commend Mr. Hammes for his willingness to invest in the city of Milwaukee by moving his company downtown. We need more business leaders willing to make those kinds of choices. That being said, when the renderings for the Hammes office building were released last week, I was surprised and saddened by the neo-classical design, the lack of integration into the neighborhood, the sheer monumentality of the building and its isolation from the street.

Buildings give visual cues not only about their function and quality, but also about their approachability. Consciously or subconsciously they are welcoming and inclusive or they are not. This proposed neo-classical design is completely inappropriate for the site in that it totally ignores the context and history of this area, not to mention the people who currently live there and their culture. It perpetuates an idealized view of a more than 200-year-old agrarian society led by a small educated elite. Inserting this outmoded architecture into a 21st century city with a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic population displays an insensitivity of developers looking to build monuments to bygone eras and ideals. In fact, it disrespects the very reasons why corporations are attracted to our cities; our youth, our vitality and our diversity.

Investments in our city with the addition of much needed jobs are great, but I believe there is a larger good, a larger context that needs to be considered when we build structures that will be with us for the next 50-60 years. Clearly Milwaukee has much to offer that attracts corporations and developers to our urban area; our political and civic leaders need to use these attractions to their advantage and demand buildings that are welcoming to all and represent the diversity of our people and the multi-cultural history of our population.

Sincerely



Ursula Twombly, AIA