

April 23, 2007

City of Milwaukee
Department of City Development
Plan Commission
809 N. Broadway
Milwaukee, WI 53202
planadmin@mkedcd.org

Re: Proposed Parking Structure, 2574-90 N. Downer Avenue (City file #070034)

Dear Plan Commission Members:

I live at 2608 N. Summit Avenue in the William T. Brennan house in the Northpoint Historical District. My house faces the proposed parking garage at 2574 N. Downer Avenue as proposed in the Downer Avenue master plan submitted by New Land Enterprises. The 2500 and 2600 blocks of N. Summit Avenue, being short and angulated so they are not exactly continuous with the rest of Summit Avenue, have been a quieter street to raise children because the traffic is lighter than on N. Lake Drive or on N. Downer Avenue. In fact, when my children were growing up, there were 38 children within one block of the corner of Summit and Bellevue. Currently there are about 10 children, including some with special needs, and many people have grandchildren who visit regularly and use the sidewalks. There are also many adult pedestrians from the neighborhood who walk to the stores on Downer Avenue, the park, or the bus stop.

The proposed parking garage and bank drive through at 2574 N. Downer will enter and exit onto E. Bellevue, which is barely wide enough for two lanes of traffic when cars are parked on both sides of the street. During the winter when there is snow, it is really not functionally wide enough for snow, parking, and two lanes of freely moving traffic. It could not be widened when the street was last regraded and repaved because of the proximity of the houses to the street. This added volume of traffic on an already congested street will adversely affect the safety and quality of life for families and people trying to walk in the neighborhood.

Furthermore, the Downer Avenue commercial buildings have facades and a scale similar in architectural character to the rest of the neighborhood. The proposed changes by New Land Enterprises are not in character with the rest of the neighborhood. They are too large for the scale of the neighborhood, will dwarf the rest of the neighborhood, and diminish, not enhance, the light reaching the houses of the residents living adjacent to the commercial strip.

I know that historic preservation renovation is not the cheapest way to build. Recently, my listing porch was restored at a cost of over \$36,000 to be historically accurate and faithful to the original plans of my federally protected home. I had three other estimates to do the work for \$9,000, but none of the contractors would guarantee that the final

product would meet the requirement to look exactly like the original plans for the house. The new porch is perfect, and all of the concrete matches. I am not excited about the prospect of sitting on my new porch and looking at a 5-story blank concrete wall from the parking garage abutting against the adjacent home and blotting out the sun and the view of the shops on Downer. A two- or three- story building with windows set back from the house on Belleview would be much more in keeping with the neighborhood. Chopping down the mature tree and the green space is another loss of the peacefulness of the neighborhood. It seems that if New Land Development wants Downer Avenue to be a boutique commercial area taking advantage of the surrounding beautiful, safe neighborhood that the scale and style of the renovations should harmonize with this environment. I urge you to put a hold on the current plans until a more appropriate plan for commercial development can be presented.

Sincerely,
Ellen Blank

Cc: Mayor Tom Barrett, Ald. Mike D'Amato