

March 3, 2008

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

Dear Committee Members:

File No. 071292 relates to the change in zoning from Park (PK) and Industrial Heavy (IH) to General Planned Development (GPD) on land located on the East Side of South 6th Street and North and South of West Rosedale Avenue in the 14th Aldermanic District.

This file will allow for the construction of up to 48 affordable housing units, office and retail space. The project will include apartments for low- and very-low income individuals and community serving uses intended for all residents of the neighborhood. The services will be designed to support residents' self-sufficiency. Both the American Red Cross and Our Space will locate here and service needs to the residents and others. As part of the Our Space programming, it is anticipated that a coffee shop will go on the first floor to train participants of their program and offer a service to the neighborhood.

The project will include a 4 story structure with covered and surface parking. Office space for case workers and space to serve residents (community room, fitness center, library, technology center, laundry and storage) will be located on the 1st floor. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors will have a total of 48 one-bedroom units. The project will also include a bike path and other landscaping amenities that will benefit the entire neighborhood. Cardinal has been working with DPW and the planners of the Kinnickinnic River Trail to make sure the property is connected to the trail and fulfills the vision of the corridor.

Cardinal Capital Management has met with individuals and organizations that have expressed environmental concerns in relation to the proposed project. As a result, the building footprint has been reduced and the surface parking lot has decreased in size.

On February 11, 2008, a public hearing was held. At that time, several people spoke both in favor and in opposition to the proposal. Nearly everybody who spoke agreed that there is a need for dignified affordable housing and that this project would be very beneficial. However, some argued that the site is not appropriate for the development of the supportive housing. Specifically, they stated that the site is isolated from other neighborhoods and that it is located too close to the Kinnickinnic River. Testimony heard at also included discussion about the comprehensive planning process and not having this site identified for development.

The Southeast Side area planning process is just underway, with initial public input through community surveys and workshop sessions. The plan is not approved and there are no specific land use recommendations for the subject site. Based on community input to date, staff is aware of the importance of the KK River and the river group's efforts to construct a bike trail system along the entire river corridor. Ultimately, the Commissioners recommended that this item be held so that the City could work with the developers on any possible alternative locations, and so that the developers could reevaluate their site plan given the finding of the MMSD sewer below a portion of the proposed site.

At the recommendation of the CPC, the Real Estate section shared information about properties owned by the City and Redevelopment Authority with the developer. Thus, the Real Estate division has reviewed the listing of available City owned properties with Cardinal Capital. Cardinal investigated these properties as recommended by the Plan Commission, but none provides a suitable site. Per Cardinal, the site south of Rosedale is not useable because 75% of it is covered by sewer facilities, the grade is too steep and they can not get enough square footage to build the units needed. The other sites were considered but are not in locations that meet the requirements for supportive housing use.

Cardinal already has a supportive housing facility under construction on the north side of Milwaukee, at 25th/Center. The developer has determined that Empowerment Village, which also would include office space for Our Space, currently located on Lincoln Avenue, should be located on the south side. However, the City and Redevelopment Authority own very little property on the south side. So our staff had very little to offer for review. Cardinal also indicated to staff that they will continue to work with the environmental groups on the trail head issue.

On March 3, 2008, public testimony was heard and at that time several people were in support and a few people were opposed to the proposed change. Those opposed, including the local Alderman, stated that while there is a need for supportive housing, this location may not be the most appropriate. Since the proposed change provides a needed use in this area, the building location has been shifted further away from the river to address concerns, the City and developer explored other site options, and the bike trail will be constructed as stipulated in the CMAQ grant, the City Plan Commission at its regular meeting on March 3, 2008 recommended approval of the subject file.

Sincerely,

Rocky Marcoux
Executive Secretary
City Plan Commission of Milwaukee

cc: Ald. Tony Zielinski