

May 16, 2016

**To:** Alderwoman Milele Coggs (*via email*)  
Milwaukee City Planning Commission (*via email*)  
Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee (*via email*)  
Kristin Connelly, AICP – Department of City Development (*via email*)

**Re:** Proposed Brewers Hill development by Royal Capital Group

Dear Alderpersons, City Planning Commission members, and Ms. Connelly:

Together, we own six of the eight townhomes that comprise the Cobblers Townhome Association located at 200 – 228 E Reservoir Avenue in the Historic Brewers Hill neighborhood. We are writing to you to convey our deep concerns regarding Royal Capital Group's proposed apartment developments in our neighborhood. Royal Capital Group is proposing to build two separate apartment developments: Block A, directly across Reservoir Avenue from our homes, and Block B, located to our north, on Brown Street between Palmer Street and Hubbard Street. The developments are wholly inappropriate for the Historic Brewers Hill neighborhood. Our concerns can best be addressed in two parts: First, our concerns with the totality of the development and its impact on our neighborhood, and second, our concerns specifically with the proposed Block A development and its impact on our home values.

### **Concerns Relating to the Total Development**

As you know, Brewers Hill is a historic neighborhood. It is a quiet, quaint neighborhood comprised of tree lined streets, historic homes and brick condominiums. If you take a walk through our neighborhood, the pride in ownership is evident throughout. Unfortunately, Royal Capital Group's proposal – two large apartment developments – simply does not fit with our beloved neighborhood. In addition to the lack of fit with our neighborhood, the sheer size of the developments poses great concerns. First, it will exponentially increase the density of our neighborhood. Infusing a proposed 181 apartment units, 90% of which are 1 bedroom, in a two block span would have significant ramifications to parking, safety, noise, and overall neighborhood feel. Additionally, the size of the proposed buildings will contrast aesthetically compared to the current surroundings. While we have not been provided any specifics from Royal Capital Group on building materials or appearance, it is hard to imagine a scenario where a 4 or 5 story apartment building would blend aesthetically with our historic neighborhood.

As already mentioned, the increased density will cause significant parking issues in our neighborhood that already experiences parking congestion. The streets around both developments already are under parking stress from current residents, guests and patrons of local businesses. If 181 apartment units were to be added, even with 181 new spaces, the added spaces needed for units with more than one inhabitant and all guests would impose a parking burden on our neighborhood that already struggles to handle parking needs.

Perhaps the most important concern to note with these developments is the safety issues it would bring to our community. Apartment developments, especially one such as this, with 90% 1 bedroom units, promote temporary, transient residency, rather than commitment and ownership in a neighborhood. With such a large number of transient residents in a close location, any accountability and pride in ownership is lost. As a neighborhood, we have already experienced higher crime rates, including drug activity, in front of the few apartment buildings we have. This is likely because wrongdoers have the benefit of anonymity when a neighbor cannot easily track down the dwelling owner for accountability. Additionally, the

proposed increased density will greatly increase traffic in our neighborhood. We know the city has already received many concerns about traffic in our neighborhood, and our Alderwoman has requested traffic studies. Such a large volume of new residents would only exacerbate these traffic concerns. Also, both proposed development locations are across the street from the Carver Academy elementary school. The increased traffic and parking impositions will likely put the many children that attend school in our neighborhood at a safety risk. As we make strides to increase the safety and decrease crime in our neighborhood, a development such as this would detract from our progress.

### **Concerns Relating to Block A**

The Cobblers Townhomes are comprised of eight townhome units that sit on the north side of Reservoir Avenue across the street from the proposed Block A. Our homes, built in the early 2000s, were approved by the city to each be built with a rooftop patio overlooking downtown. Although our ownership is mixed between original owners and subsequent purchasers, the skyline view from the rooftop, as approved by the city, was a critical component to each of our purchases. The proposed Block A building, at 4 stories plus potential parking grade and a rooftop deck, would completely eliminate that view for each of us. This view would not only reduce our enjoyment of our homes for those of us who have owner-occupied units, but most importantly, would eliminate a critical component to our homes' market values. Furthermore, the many condo owners in the neighboring Cobblers Lofts Condominiums have also expressed concerns that their views would also be eliminated by Block A. Additionally, many of us chose to purchase our homes in Brewers Hill to take advantage of the quaint neighborhood with a strong pride in ownership, and paid a premium for a home here. Unfortunately, studies show that owning a property across from a large-scale apartment development can instantly decrease a home value by 15-20%.

Also, while the parking, safety and noise issues will negatively impact the entire Brewer's Hill neighborhood, perhaps no residents will be impacted as much as we will due to our direct proximity to Block A.

-----

While we appreciate Royal Capital Group's diligence in attending our neighborhood meetings regarding the developments, they have only recently published a website, and it does not include information on Royal Capital Group's past developments. In addition to the concerns expressed above, we are concerned that a project of this magnitude should not be undertaken by a company without a proven track record of success leading similar size developments.

Finally, we would like to point out that there are currently hundreds of newly-built apartment units or units under construction nearby along Water Street, Commerce Street and other streets adjacent to the Milwaukee River. These development locations seem much more appropriate for a development of the type proposed by Royal Capital Group. Additionally, it would seem that with all of the new apartments and apartments under construction, the added 181 units in our neighborhood are unnecessary and could provide for an excess supply to a heavily saturated new construction market.

While we would welcome the right development to enhance our already flourishing neighborhood, we are confident that the proposed developments by Royal Capital Group are simply not the right addition to Brewers Hill. We urge the City to consider our concerns, and reject the development as proposed. Instead, we request that the City reserve any development approvals of the land in question for smaller-scale, ownership-based projects that would eliminate the majority of issues we have discussed.

Sincerely,

Members of the Cobblers Townhome Association:

*Tim and Mackenzie Johnson*

*Sean Lee*

*John Ristau*

*Summer and Donnel Thompson*

*Nicholas Van Gompel*

*Brian Wroblewski and Joseph Wroblewski*

*For any questions or follow-up communications, please reach out to Brian Wroblewski, Cobblers Townhome Association President, 414.899.4100, or Mackenzie Johnson, Cobblers Townhome Association Treasurer, 414.416.6283*