

**From:** Robin Palm <email.robin.palm@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 22, 2022 4:04 PM  
**To:** cityplancommission <cityplancommission@milwaukee.gov>  
**Subject:** Written Testimony for Hackett rezone

Greetings to all,

My name is Robin Palm. I'm a Milwaukee resident and live in a duplex in Washington Heights where I'm also a board member on the WHNA. Prior to that I lived in Riverwest for about 3 years, so I know Downer well. The former Pancake House and Hollander were frequent brunch visits of ours, and my wife and I had our wedding rehearsal dinner at Pizza Man. It truly is a lovely spot enjoyed by all Milwaukeeans.

I'm also an urban planner with 7 years experience and an AICP certification. I received my Master's Degree from Virginia Commonwealth University, and currently am the representative for Southeast Wisconsin to the American Planning Association's Wisconsin chapter.

As a resident, I support the decision to rezone this parcel because it is a logical follow through on the comprehensive plan and a common sense decision to allow for additional density where there is additional capacity, sufficient infrastructure, and sufficient demand. Plus it is supportive of the public investments the entire region has made into this area:

To The Downer bid  
To MCTS and the Gold Line  
To Nearby parks such as Lake Park, and  
even to UWM.

Considering all that, I support the recommendation of staff and the Historic Preservation Commission.

As a planner, and specifically to represent Planners of Southeast Wisconsin as a whole, that this is even a contentious issue is worthy of concern. If Downer Ave isn't a place that could support new homes, what would?

I work for the Village of Mount Pleasant in Racine county. It's a suburban community with a population of 27k. In our zoning code, the lot area per dwelling unit is 2400 per unit in RM-1, 1500 sf per unit in RM-2, and 1000 per unit in RH-1 the next step up.

Does it make sense that a density that is allowed in the lowest density RM zone in the suburbs somehow isn't ok in one of the densest areas of Milwaukee?

Consider that Milwaukee only has a handful of "hot" neighborhoods that are getting market rate housing developments without public subsidy, the city should do everything in its power to approve those developments and reverse the population loss that's been occurring in our city for years now. The fact that this development will also make a tax-exempt parcel taxable \*AND\*

save a venerable religious institution that's vital to the social fabric of the neighborhood is a win/win/win.

Let me also take a moment to identify a trend that has been taking hold of the region. It's the roadblocking and chilling of needed development through round after round of appeals of public processes and frivolous lawsuits.

Pardon me a couple of anecdotes.

1st anecdote:

In a lawsuit against the locality I work for, an adjacent large lot single family neighborhood association sued the village over a rezone issued in December of 2016 allowing a senior living facility.

The lawsuit was filed in March of 2017. The circuit court dismissed the case in December of 2018 in summary judgement with prejudice on the merits. I.e., they lost very bad.

Still, they appealed, and the appeals court affirmed the circuit courts judgement, in January of 2021, nearly four years after the initial lawsuit. In the interim, the owner/developer of the senior living center had died. So, maybe they didn't lose after all?

2nd anecdote:

In the Philadelphia neighborhood of Fishtown, a church was closed in 2014 when repairs to make it safe exceeded \$1 million. The Archdiocese moved to have it demolished, but the neighborhood got it historically designated, preventing that scenario. In 2016, the city granted a variance to turn the church into 28 apartments while preserving the exterior. Residents opposed this and filed a suit that lasted years.

This process had taken upwards of 6 years, and by 2019 the structural damage was beyond repair, and the building was set to be demolished. The same neighbors started a "Save the Church campaign" but was ultimately unsuccessful. A spot zoning to RM-4 was granted in 2019 to allow any multifamily project by right, but the church was too far gone.

In 2022, plans were approved for an 8 story, 49 unit building on the parcel.

The churches demolition began two days ago.

I understand \*why\* people would oppose these projects. What's to gain from change from their perspective? They have fairly easy unobstructed access to publicly funded parking, and they are walking distance from one of the nicest walkable commercial districts in town. That's a pretty good setup! I would strongly urge those residents to consider that that commercial district has been struggling for years because of declining customer bases, and why those same businesses support this proposal.

The opposition would like "to have their voices heard". Well, to be frank, their voices, usually do get represented in the process. Perhaps they are an attorney who can file a lawsuit against the rezoning before the rezoning happens, or maybe they are an alderperson from the Norquist era. You know, back when Congressman Tom Barrett had brown hair and a big bushy mustache? Those voices somehow \*always\* get heard, and that's fine.

You want to know whose voices \*never\* get heard? Those of future Milwaukeeans who will live in this building after it gets built. Future Milwaukeeans who will number more than twice that of everyone living on this street currently. As you consider this item, imagine all of those folks here in this meeting, and what they would say. Would they prioritize on street parking over their homes? Would they have problems with the businesses within walking distance being slightly busier? I don't think they will.

Consider all voices, but consider \*those\* unheard voices when considering your vote of "yes" for this rezone and project.

Thank you for your time

Robin Palm, AICP

APA-WI SE District Representative

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