

From: Ned Brown [<mailto:nedbrown15@gmail.com>]

Sent: Sunday, October 02, 2016 10:56 PM

To: Bauman, Robert; Murphy, Michael (Alderman); Perez, Jose; Johnson, Cavalier; Coggs, Milele

Subject: Regarding 1851 N. 2nd St. for the Oct. 3 Hearing

Dear Judiciary & Legislative Committee and Alderwoman Coggs,

I am writing to you as an extremely concerned Brewer's Hill homeowner, husband, very recent father of a delightful four-month-old baby girl, and passionate Milwaukeean. Thank you in advance for taking the time to read my letter.

My wife and I moved to Milwaukee almost two years ago. My work opportunity brought us here. And on first arriving, we really knew very little about this city. My only preconceived notions came from the old sitcom "Laverne and Shirley." Which even on arriving that first day, we realized was way off. We quickly fell in love with the city. It felt like home within the first few months. And after renting in the Third Ward for the first several months, we decided we wanted to settle here and began looking for a home. We looked all over - from Tosa and Brookfield to Shorewood and Whitefish Bay. But nothing felt right. We didn't want to leave the actual city, the place we'd grown so attached to. And when we found our home in Brewer's Hill, we knew we'd found the home we wanted to raise our future family in. We saw Brewer's Hill as such a beautiful, charming pocket of the city, with so much incredible history, character, diversity, and opportunity. We signed the papers and moved in one year ago August. Then promptly found out just a few weeks later that my wife was pregnant. We were starting our future family a lot sooner than we thought! It was an exciting time, for sure!

We live directly across the street from 1851 N. 2nd St. on the corner of W. Reservoir and N. 2nd. While we don't have the lengthy history that many of our neighbors have regarding this property and its previous owners, we do have our own very personal account. To start with, when we first looked at our home, the one thing that almost kept us from buying it was the run-down, un-loved, boarded-up mess across the street. But we believed in what this neighborhood was and could be and felt that in time, something positive would eventually happen with this home.

After moving in, we soon noticed a decent amount of mobile drug dealing activity that would occur on the street directly in front of this house. I quickly surmised that they probably feel more anonymous and discrete in front of an abandoned, run-down home than a well-lit, well-loved, manicured, vibrant home that is full of life. (This by the way, is what I hope for with this home at 1851 N. 2nd.).

To our happy surprise, we learned that the home had been repossessed by the city and restoration would begin on it soon. This was very exciting. Since that time, it's been wonderful to see the home being brought back to life, being transformed back into the proud state that it once was, being one step closer to the well-lit, well-loved, vibrant home I spoke of earlier. This is so important for this immediate neighborhood, for its residents, for all of Brewer's Hill, and for Milwaukee.

This community can't afford to take steps backwards. Allowing the previous owner to retake possession would be a giant step backwards and a loss. He has not demonstrated the basic ingredients necessary to be a homeowner - pay property taxes and maintain the property. As our many neighbors have relayed to us, this property has been in shambles for a very long time. And as evidence of the condition of the house when it was repossessed by the city, the previous owner never had any true intention of doing anything positive with it. And certainly never had any intention of living in it and bringing life and energy to this corner of Brewer's Hill.

I fear that if he is able to take possession of this home again, we are in for a lot more of the same. Sure the house looks better. But, it will likely still sit vacant. And probably for quite some time as he'll try to wait out the market and sell the home at a price that nets him a profit off the high price he purchased it during the housing boom.

So in the meantime, as it sits vacant, will the owner start paying his taxes now? Will he become a contributing member of the community? Will he maintain, or better yet, improve the house and property?

Unfortunately, I know the answer. Sadly, the opposite will happen. As it and he sit waiting for the market to turn up substantially so to significantly improve his bank account, the property will begin to deteriorate again. It will gradually fall back into ruin. The beautiful new paint job on it now will in time start to peel and crack. The railings and deck will over time gradually begin to rot. Weeds will fill up around it. Gutters will begin to sag again. And worst of all, windows will remain dark. There will be no life and vibrancy coming from this home. No people with a passion to contribute to the neighborhood and city. And the mobile drug deals right out in front will continue with the same frequency. This home's darkness will bring more darkness. Because with the drug deals other crime will come.

This neighborhood, the residents of Brewers Hill, my wife and now my new four-month-old baby girl deserve so much better than that. We love Milwaukee and Brewer's Hill and we are passionate about seeing it flourish and thrive. To be the truly great neighborhood it once was, ages ago.

Sincerely,

Ned Brown