



To: City of Milwaukee Historic Preservation Committee
Fr: Historic Brewers Hills Association Board of Directors
Date: October 5, 2016
Re: Fortress Building

THE HISTORIC BREWERS HILL ASSOCIATION

Milwaukee's Historic Brewers Hill is a socially, economically, and culturally diverse neighborhood just north of downtown Milwaukee. The Brewers Hill neighborhood is bounded by Holton to the east, Pleasant to the South, Dr. Martin Luther King Drive to the West, and North Avenue to the north. Our neighborhood is one of two residential areas from the City of Milwaukee's original settlement period in the mid-1800s. Today, Brewers Hill is an urban, residential neighborhood comprised of over 900 household units. Our residents are equally proud of our rich history and diversity. We also pride ourselves as being incredibly involved in our neighborhood and City affairs.

The Historic Brewers Hill Association is a voluntary association, a 501c3 not-for-profit that was established over 30 years ago. We are a member and volunteer-driven organization, comprised of anyone who is committed to our goals as stated in our bylaws. These goals include promoting property rehabilitation, eliminating blight, improving the family environment, developing an increased sense of community concern, advancing racial harmony, providing an effective voice in governmental affairs, and encouraging local home ownership. To accomplish these lofty goals, HBHA's members devote an incredible amount of time to advancing our goals and cultivating a safe, prosperous, and beautiful neighborhood for all.

Members of the Historic Brewers Hill Association elect a board of directors to guide our organization. The Board of Directors volunteer their time and resources to serve our neighborhood. Our nine-member Board of Directors includes a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and five at-large directors. We meet regularly throughout the year, in addition to the general member meetings and social events.

VISION

The charm and character of Historic Brewers Hill is exemplified in the architectural diversity and variety of the existing building stock, which dates back to the 1870's. The architectural significance of this building stock was recognized in 1983 with the creation of both local and national historic districts for portions of the neighborhood. The rehabilitation of our existing building stock is central to our neighborhood's goals, and the opportunity presented by the preservation of the six-story warehouse building at 100 E Pleasant St, widely known as the "Fortress", is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

The Fortress building exemplifies the architectural diversity and history of the neighborhood, having been built in 1892 and originally occupied by F. Mayer Booth and Shoe Company, which



peaked production at 9,000 shoes per day. Composed of Cream city and Chicago pink brick, this massive 193,000 square foot building truly anchors the south end of the neighborhood.

The Historic Brewers Hill Association has a vision for the parcels of land that are before the Committee today. The preservation and rehabilitation of the Fortress building is part of the vision.

This vision, under perfect circumstances, would include owner-occupied units. As our goals suggest, we believe that owner-occupied homes are good for the neighborhood and good for the City. For the vacant lots located at 1751 N Palmer St, our vision is for single-family homes or townhomes with yards designed to complement the historic nature of our neighborhood. Also, under a perfect scenario, the Historic Brewers Hill Community would like to see a small portion of these parcels turned into a pocket park, allowing residents to have a vibrant green space in which we can build neighborhood relationships and enjoy fresh air and sunshine in close proximity to our residences. Within our four borders, we have no community space to enjoy.

The truth is, though, the Historic Brewers Hill Association understands the market demand to live close to downtown, generally, and in our neighborhood, more specifically, and to live in apartments - not single-family homes. While we will not give up on advocating for local home ownership, we understand the dynamics of the current market place. At the same time, we understand the need for parking associated with this multi-family dwelling unit and, as such, recognize that opportunity to meet the parking requirements lies with Parcels 3 and 4 at 1751 N Palmer.

FACTS

The Board of Directors facilitated several meetings with The Alexander Co. – participation at the neighborhood block party in August, one neighborhood meeting in September and one meeting held with the Board of Directors. The latest proposal reflects revisions addressing concerns expressed by both the Board of Directors and its membership relating to the proposed surface parking lot at 1751 N Palmer. The original proposal showed the entire Parcels 3 and 4 as surface parking, with minimal green space. To address this expanse of pavement, the latest proposal reflects a reduction of pavement on Parcel 3 and maintaining a 60-foot green space with extensive landscaping along Vine Street.

The Historic Brewers Hill Association Board of Directors reviewed the Milwaukee Fortress LLC development plan for the Fortress Building and voted to conditionally support the development, subject to the following facts:

- Fortress Building maintains a market rate unit mix of 5% studios, 60% one-bedrooms, and 35% two-bedrooms.
- The plans for the principal use parking lot at 1751 N Palmer St provided to the Historic Brewers Hill Association on September 27, 2016 be maintained and during the course of development, Milwaukee Fortress LLC will notify the Historic Brewers Hills Association



HISTORIC BREWERS HILL NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Board of Directors of any change requests submitted to Department of City Development.

- Installation and maintenance of adequate lighting and security cameras in the green space at N Palmer and E Vine.
- Meeting with the Historic Brewers Hill Association about the use of landscaping plants and materials for the planned green space at N Palmer and E Vine.
- Historic Brewers Hill Association be provided direct contact information for the Fortress Building on-site manager
- Milwaukee Fortress LLC, be engaged with the Historic Brewers Hill neighborhood and Association.

Moving forward, the Historic Brewers Hill Association looks forward to continued engagement with the City of Milwaukee to advance initiatives in our neighborhood to make the proposed redevelopment – and future developments, better. The Board of Directors calls upon the City (Department of Public Works and City Development) to work with the neighborhood in good faith on various street calming initiatives, as recommended in the attached Traffic and Streetscape Improvement study the Historic Brewers Hill Association commissioned in 2015. The study suggests a variety of traffic calming measures; however, simple measures can be implemented that will yield big impacts, particularly with the increase in density of the Fortress building and potential future redevelopment projects. These measures are discussed in more detail in the attached study but ones the Board of Directors would like considered include traffic circles, curb bump outs, and pedestrian striping at intersections.

CONCLUSION

After having met with Milwaukee Fortress, LLC and neighbors over the past three months relative to this development, the Historic Brewers Hill Association offers its support of the Fortress building, subject to the facts articulated by Alexander and Co. We look forward to a healthy relationship with the developers and with the City to strengthen, beautify, and improve safety in our neighborhood. We anticipate working with the developers and the City in ways to improve safety for the influx of new neighbors to our neighborhood and identify the boundaries of the neighborhood through gateway signage. Last, we hope to continue dialogue with the City and area developers in ways that we can utilize future development opportunities in the Historic Brewers Hill for local home ownership.