

August 9, 2017

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RE: Goll Mansion/ 1550 Prospect Ave. File #170406

A PROPOSAL THAT FAILS TO ADDRESS GEOLOGICAL ISSUES

To Those Referenced:

I am writing to object to Goll Mansion LLC's request to re zone the property at 1550 N. Prospect Ave, Milwaukee 53202. My concern is informed by the fact that I have taught university-level geology for some 34 years before retiring to Milwaukee; I have had discussions about the subsurface geology along Prospect Avenue with a colleague in the Geoscience Department UWM who is a State Certified Professional Geologist (CPG); and I have reports from a licensed property inspector and from a structural engineer whom I employed when I made an offer on a nearby home that turned out to have foundation problems which both parties ascribed to southeast Wisconsin's underlying geology. Moreover, I have read reports in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and have observed costly efforts to remediate the consequences of substrate/ water flow problems at Milwaukee's City Hall and I have observed stability problems along the base of the bluff along the Oak Leaf Trail (retaining walls pinned to the substrate beneath the apartments at 1570 N. Prospect two doors proximal to 1550, ongoing remediation efforts beneath the Jewish Home and High Point, and deteriorating retaining walls nearby all along the Trail).

But first I must note that I live in the "02 stack" on the southwest corner of 1522 N. Prospect where obstruction of a lake view by the proposed building is not an issue, thus belying Mr. Houden's prejudicial claim that remonstrators at 1522 are merely rich people who don't want their view spoiled.

Mr. Houden refers to his proposed building as a 27-story apartment tower + 3 floors of overlying penthouses and a machine floor. Frankly, that's an obfuscation: It's a 30-story tower. Further, the "Notice of Public Hearing of August 2, 2017" states that the building has been reduced in the east-west direction by 10 feet, presumably implying that the building's extension over the bluff is 10 feet less than previously proposed. However, Mr. Houden's design agent, Kahler Slater, presents the north elevation of the building ("Detailed Planned Development Submission") that shows a reduction of 10 feet up to approximately the 7th floor ONLY, and a reduction of less than 5 feet upwards from the 8th floor.

Therefore, the proposal should properly be described as resubmission of the two previously submitted requests that were denied and should be denied again.

The discrepancies between the claimed vs actual dimensions are significant in view of the geology of the substrate on which the tower is to be built. The size and weight of the building still present issues that neither Mr. Houden nor Kahler Slater Design have addressed, despite my calling attention to them in my letters of July 15 and June 12, 2016 to the parties referenced above-- notwithstanding Kahler Slater's intimations to the contrary in their letter to the Plan Commission of July 24, 2017 wherein they admit "significant input from the neighbors..." that they claim "...resulted in positive changes to the project."

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I submit that these changes are not substantive. The developer and his design agent have submitted no evidence of due diligence to mitigate risks from a 30-story building, 40% of which is proposed to extend beyond the edge of the bluff composed of soft sediment. The soil underlying the property is 100-150 feet thick and is composed of unconsolidated, soft sediments that are glacial and fluvial (river and stream) clays, silts, sands, gravels etc sitting atop bedrock of shale and argillaceous (clay-rich) dolomite (a limey rock) that are not much harder than overlying sediment. These characteristics cause the soils of southeast Wisconsin to expand and contract far more than other soils and consequently buildings in the area are prone to foundation movement and moisture.

It is common in the Milwaukee area to advance piles either to bedrock or until refusal where the piles no longer advance into the subsurface. The effects of soil movement and subsurface water flow need to be carefully assessed and steps taken to mitigate consequences, not to mention that pounding of pilings for a building situated within 4 feet of our property line presents risk of damage to our building.

Clearly substrate problems are generalized throughout the Milwaukee area and are manifest along the base of the bluff atop which Prospect Avenue buildings sit. Why has Mr. Houden not addressed them?

They are especially pertinent here because an unprecedented 40% of the building will extend beyond the edge of the bluff, from the 79-foot contour interval down to the 48-foot contour interval which is approximately 22 feet above the Oak Leaf Trail, itself a relatively flat surface at the 26-foot contour interval. The escarpment of the bluff appears to be a wave-cut notch and the Oak Leaf Trail is on a wave-cut terrace (i.e. a previous shoreline of Lake Michigan). Thus, the building will extend into the former bed of Lake Michigan which, as I understand it, is prohibited by State of Wisconsin law. If one insists that the Oak Leaf Trail runs along a graded surface, i.e. not a wave-cut terrace, and that the bluff is not a wave-cut escarpment, the bluff nevertheless has been over steepened and is eroding. Either way, to my knowledge this will be the only apartment or condo along Prospect granting private access from the bluff to the taxpayer-maintained Trail, restricted for sole benefit of Mr. Houden's leaseholders (and his company).

No other building along this area of the Oak Leaf Trail extends 60 feet beyond the edge of the bluff and any structure that is close to the edge is simply a recreational platform or a parking structure of 1-3 levels. The Jewish Home and High Point are arguable exceptions (neither more than 12 stories high) but the relief (slope angle and height) there is lower (but still requiring remediation--see above). The risks of slope instability are even greater for a 30-story building extended over the edge of the bluff where its relief is high.

The Milwaukee Zoning Code of Ordinances, Zoning 295, states that its mission is to encourage development that is compatible with its surroundings, and to "...prevent and control erosion, sedimentation, and other pollution...and maintain a compatible scale of development..."

In declining to scrutinize these important issues, have the relevant City of Milwaukee officials abandoned this mission?

Sincerely yours,

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