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Historic Preservation Commission
City of Milwaukee
200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

RE: 2381 N. Terrace Avenue – Certificate of Appropriateness

July 6, 2019

Dear Members of the Historic Preservation Commission,

The Historic Water Tower Neighborhood (HWTN) welcomes the addition of new families in our neighborhood, and new homes that maintain or even enhance the historic character of the North Point North and North Point South district. Therefore, we are writing a letter in reference to File #190387, a resolution relating to a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a new house at 2381 N. Terrace Avenue, in the North Point North Historic District. After review and discussion, the HWTN Buildings and Institutions Committee requests that this COA be denied by the City of Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission.

As the guidelines for the historic district indicate, it is important that new construction be designed so as to harmonize with the character of the district. We believe this home as designed would clash with the district's historic nature. Furthermore, the renderings and the application lack information showing how the design would be appropriate to this neighborhood. There are no renderings that show the design in context, making it impossible to demonstrate that harmony exists.

We ask that you understand that our conclusion that the COA should be denied is based in part on our knowledge of previous conversations and negotiations over the years between HWTN and Columbia St Mary's (CSM) determining how to develop a hospital and medical campus in the heart of a historic residential neighborhood. In order to minimize the adverse effect of the large parking ramp garage on residential property owners, CSM agreed to reserve property on Terrace Avenue for residential homes. The homes were to be a buffer between the neighborhood and the institutional utilitarian buildings.

More recently the City of Milwaukee supported a resolution that expands the historic district to include the property on Terrace Avenue. The resolution provides for new construction to be reviewed by HPC and to give neighbors and HWTN an opportunity to review and comment on submissions for new construction.

Our evaluation of the way in which the COA does not meet criteria for new construction follows:

Siting

The guidelines indicate that new construction must reflect the traditional siting of buildings in North Point North Historic District. As stated previously, the elevations lack the information to make a true determination, so we must object until an application is presented with thorough siting details.

Scale

Guidelines indicate that building height and bulk, expression of major building divisions, and individual building components must be compatible. The sketches contain very limited detail and lack information. We must object until an application with thorough details and elevations in context are submitted.

Form

Guidelines indicate the massing of new construction must be compatible with the surrounding buildings. **The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from the main block must express the same continuity established by the historic structures.** The Historic Designation Study Report describes exterior decoration as rich, but restrained in nature, giving the buildings a dignified character. As portrayed in renderings, we do not believe that from the public right-of-way the application design meets these criteria. The design seems far more compatible with the very institutional building (parking ramp garage) that requires a buffer.

Materials

The application lacks sufficient information; however, materials do not appear to be consistent with proportions and combinations of cladding materials traditionally used in North Point North.

Thank you for considering our request that the Commission deny a Certificate of Appropriateness for the current application.

Best wishes,

Thomas S. Reynolds II

President

Historic Water Tower Neighborhood

Founded in 1973 (originally under the name Water Tower Landmark Trust) to promote “the preservation and enhancement of the unique residential character of the neighborhood.”