



Office of the Common Council

Ald. Sara Eskrich, District 13

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To: Members of the Plan Commission
From: Sara Eskrich, District 13 Alder
RE: 1702 Monroe Street & 625 Spooner Street
Date: January 21, 2018

Thank you in advance for your thorough review of the planned development proposal before you on Monday, January 21. I held a neighborhood meeting on the project and met with near-neighbors to view the site together, and the Dudgeon Monroe Neighborhood Association (DMNA) held further neighborhood meetings. Generally, neighborhood feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. There are a few significant concerns remaining with the development.

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) development team, led by Anne Morrison, has done a great job outreaching and engaging with the neighborhood. They have been responsive to concerns, clear about their requirements for the project, and consistently working on a high-quality building that generally fits with the Monroe Street Corridor Plan. The building diverges from the general plan in one key way – the proposed height. This is the one significant remaining concern of the neighbors regarding this project.

There are two other key concerns that need to be mitigated through final approvals of this project, and I ask the Plan Commission to include them in your conditions of approval. As the neighborhood has learned with past projects, it is important to ensure there is a workable plan for commercial deliveries to infill site, traffic concerns are mitigated, and exhaust outputs are directed out the roof, or otherwise away from the abutting neighborhood properties. The ULI team has been responsive to these concerns verbally, but the final plans to be approved by the Planning Division need to show these concerns have been addressed. If you choose to approve this project, please condition your approval on the staff conditions and the following:

- Applicant shall submit for review a Commercial Delivery Plan. This plan will include times, vehicle size, use of loading zones and all related turning movements.
- Development shall direct traffic exiting onto Stockton Court to turn right, with a no left turn / right turn only sign.
 - Note: The applicant has agreed to include this in the project.
- Wording being determined with staff, and will be presented at the Plan Commission meeting – Final plans reviewed by staff shall account for HVAC venting away from abutting properties, to mitigate noise impact on the neighborhood. This roof venting shall be shielded from view.

Neighbors debating this project have specifically noted the benefit of this developer for this project – suggesting another project could be proposed should this one fail, following a traditional zoning district with a clear path to approval, but with a use and design less compatible with the character of the neighborhood. They were willing to accept the height tradeoff to receive the benefits of this particular proposal. I personally agree with this assessment.

There are various reasons I believe this project should be approved and is appropriate at this site, and does not set a precedent for all future developments along Monroe:

1. The site itself. The site is already zoned Planned Development, and not TSS (as most of Monroe Street is zoned). The five-story building fits in the context of the other buildings, is on a corner, and is a challenging shaped site to step back in the way we would generally wish to see in developments along Monroe Street. Future development along Monroe Street would not be already zoned PD, and would need to conform to traditional zoning district requirements. It would not be appropriate to acquire adjacent homes and rezone to a PD.
2. The neighborhood plan. The plan did not propose specific requirements for the Associated Bank site, besides maintaining commercial use. There is much deference to specific site considerations and overall positives and negatives of development proposals.
3. The proposed building. The project is well designed, as acknowledged by the Urban Design Commission and many neighbor comments. As noted in the DMNA comments, ULI has been a fantastic developer to work with on this project. They are proposing a high-quality building which will contribute to the residential and commercial character of the neighborhood, and intend to be long-term and active property managers. Their reputation and track record with managing other properties will well-serve the neighborhood and adjoining single-family homeowners.
4. Resident support. The neighborhood association is not taking a formal position supporting or opposing this project, and even near-neighbor feedback is nuanced. From the first neighborhood meeting, it was clear residents saw and appreciated the consideration ULI had put into their plans. There is minimal opposition to this proposal.

There is a real fear of “canyonization” of Monroe Street, with tall buildings along the corridor and insignificant transition to abutting homeowners. I understand this concern, but also see a reality of only a few remaining natural development site along the corridor. The development of remaining sites would not be enough to create a canyon along Monroe. Further, there are great benefits to living in a mixed-use neighborhood like the Monroe Street area. Development along the corridor must transition appropriately, and some sites geographic shape make this transition more challenging than others. Future sites will need to show benefit to the neighborhood and appropriate consideration of transitions.

Overall, I believe that this project will contribute positively to the neighborhood. It continues to provide needed rental housing in a well-resourced part of our city, encourages sustainable urban living, and provides for Monroe Street small-storefront tenants, contributing to a more walkable neighborhood on the north-side of the street. The design proposed fits in with the surrounding properties and potential uses of the building, both in function and aesthetics.

I **support** this project provided the conditions noted above, as well as those in the staff report, are met. Thank you again for your thorough review of this project. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly with any questions. I will be joining you at the Plan Commission as soon as possible tomorrow evening, but will first be at the Finance Committee meeting.

