

9 November, 2013

Alder Mike Verveer
614 W Doty St # 407
Madison , WI 53703
Phone: 608-255-6498

Dear Alder Verveer:

We are owners and residents at the Marina condo (137 E. Wilson St.). Like most of our Marina neighbors, we are stunned and outraged at Lance McGrath's proposed development of an incredibly dense rental tower at 149 E. Wilson St. For the reasons spelled out below, we stand in firm opposition to the building's current concept and design.

The key issue--one that touches on and determines all others--is that Mr. McGrath is trying to squeeze a massive building with too many units in between two condos on a very small footprint.

One of those condo buildings is the Marina. The city approved its design in the early 2000s, when a much-touted goal of our leaders was to attract new residents to the downtown area with high-rise condo projects. At the time, the siren call to revitalize downtown sounded loud and clear from City Hall. Madison was wary of a decades-long decay in housing stock in its downtown core and building stable condo communities was one way to reverse the problem.

We heeded the call. We sold our houses in the suburbs and communities near and far to settle in the isthmus. We invested in a dream concocted by urban planners and real-estate developers, and cheered on by city leaders. That dream was no fantasy, as we can now see in Madison's revitalized downtown. Many other factors went into reviving the area, but it is impossible to deny that the arrival of hundreds of new condo residents like us contributed greatly to it.

Now, a decade later, we are left wondering if Madison is still on the same course or if there's been an unheralded U-turn. We hope city leaders will still affirm what they believed and said then. If they do and you do, you will reject the McGrath project outright.

Our position is simple. If this ill-conceived proposal goes forward--one that's been prompted by a (no doubt short-term) construction frenzy for rental units--the consequences for our community's well-being will be multiple and catastrophic.

The blockage of light and views, and the breach of privacy, are part of it, but the negative effects don't stop there. Car headlights and noise will be an ever-present problem along the current fire lane a mere few feet from units on the Marina's eastern end, which is designed as the entrance to the proposed building's garage holding more than 130 cars. Traffic on East Wilson Street

(between King and Pinckney), where the highest concentration of garage outlets in the city core is currently found, will be complicated and disrupted. Pet waste will go from serious but manageable to critical. Noise from a proposed terrace overlooking Lake Monona will disrupt neighbors' peace and tranquility. In short, an overcrowded neighborhood will cross the threshold between a fun and wholesome place to live and a constant headache.

The list of harmful consequences is much longer; rest assured we will convey it to all interested parties in due course. The sum total of their impact will be to cripple our community and debase the equity upon which many of us are counting for retirement.

Mr. McGrath argues that he would be removing an eyesore (the old Department of Corrections building), and he is right. We know that the 149 E. Wilson lot must be developed sometime and the eyesore demolished. This is the wrong way to accomplish it, however. A building whose size and density are in proportion to the lot and whose architecture blends in with its surroundings would be a better solution. Alternatively, the site would also be an ideal place in which to situate a pedestrian bridge over John Nolen Drive, much as the recently approved Downtown Plan suggests we should have.

More fundamentally, Mr. McGrath's proposal threatens the well-being of our condo community and the East Wilson neighborhood's character. No project in Madison's history has negatively impacted as many residents as this one, potentially disrupting an entire community at its core.

It is easy to see how this will happen. In addition to the consequences mentioned above, units to the east will lose a large proportion of their light and views, and will lack all manner of privacy; those to the west will be deprived of sunlight as well.¹ Property values will sink accordingly. Having lost much of their equity or seen it diminish substantially, many of our neighbors will rather rent out their units than sell them at a loss. This will launch a race-to-rental that might not only affect the Marina but also the Union Transfer condo and, eventually, one of the most attractive and vibrant new neighborhoods in Madison. It should be noted that the high quality of life of the neighborhood rests on a diverse combination of condos and rental buildings that complement each other in demography, architecture, cost, and many other ways. That diversity would be jeopardized if a poorly conceived development like McGrath's were to make it difficult for the only two condominium communities in this part of the South Capitol district to subsist and thrive.

We understand that the zoning code does not take into account the blockage of light and views to neighboring properties, nor does it address the decline in property values. Perhaps there is no consideration of privacy either,

¹ Mr. McGrath's illustrations of the buildings are deceiving. They do not show the Marina's windows, which will face directly into units in the proposed tower less than twenty feet away. Mr. McGrath should be required to submit more realistic illustrations to the city.

although that is unlikely to have come up in a city with so few high-rise structures.

Yet, drafters of the code could only have envisioned modest declines on these three fronts. Our losses would be, by contrast, fairly substantial, enough to change the character of the community and the neighborhood, as we've said. The building design of the Marina that the city approved a decade ago clearly depended on abundant light, privacy, and expansive views. These were never guaranteed, but at least there was a presumption that any development on the eastern side would try to be diminish its impact on these signal features of the building's architecture. It would also remain coherent in scale and design with the neighboring condos.

The McGrath proposal takes none of these factors into consideration. It would erect concrete and glass as far as the law allows. The result is that most of the units in the projected building would have straight views into Marina units (less than 20 feet away), with perhaps peek-a-boo views of the Lake Monona. Others would be dark; they will look through a rear window into a blank wall (the western side of Union Transfer). Only a small minority of the units would have uninterrupted views onto Lake Monona. There is a potential for the smallest and least desirable units to be overcrowded by people sharing apartments to keep costs down even if it's technically illegal. These units will likely do the most damage to the Marina's value.

At this point it's necessary to introduce some nuance into our argument. In rejecting the McGrath design, a key distinction for us is that light (one of the main reasons we bought our units), privacy, and views are different elements and should be considered separately. One can have some blockage of views without severely curtailing light and privacy.

In fact, several years ago architect Kenton Peters designed a building for the 149 E. Wilson lot that would have exploited the air rights (and blocked some views) without hindering the Marina units' light nor sacrificing privacy. It was designed specifically to slant the ends of the new building away from the Marina, thus enhancing desirable features in both structures.

We hope and trust that city leaders will consult that plan and compare it with Mr. McGrath's. You will see how a tall building next to the Marina could coexist with it and even enhance its value, all the while blocking some views but respecting the influx of light as well as the tranquility of neighbors.

Were Mr. McGrath to develop a building along those lines, we would applaud the effort. We are sorely disappointed that he is actually proposing exactly the opposite. For all of the above, we fiercely and unwaveringly oppose this proposal.

Sincerely,
The Community of Marina Neighbors

NAME

UNIT #

SIGNATURE

1. Olga and Francisco Escamero 1212

Francisco Escamero

2. Maria Anna Paulsen 211

Maria Anna Paulsen

3. Art Paulsen 311

Art Paulsen

4. Janet and Steve Lesgold 1111

J. & S. Lesgold (FS)

5. Candi and David Anderson 403

C. & D. Anderson (FS)

6. Vi and Bob Teghorn 1011

V. & B. Teghorn (FS)

7. Mary Wautovich 912

Mary Wautovich

8. ROBERT A. CALDER 512
+ Debra Z. CalderRobert Calder
Debra Z. Calder

9. SCOTT + JOAN HENDERSON 810

Scott Henderson

10. Richard McComick 711

Janice M. McComick 711

11. David U. Lee 412

12. DEREK + FANNY DORLEY 813

Derek + Fanny Dorley

13. Mike + Anita Peters 1013

Mike + Anita Peters

14. Parvin Norzastel 1310

Parvin Norzastel 1310

Heidi Lynch 310

Tom Lynch 310

NAME

UNIT #

SIGNATURE

15. Lauren Costello 312 L. Costello
16. Bruce and Nancy Rounds #811 Nancy Rounds
17. MIKE : Lori Bonara #713 Mike Bonara
18. Timor & Kimberly Yarnall ~~#1013~~ #1213 Timor & Kimberly Yarnall
19. Abbie Hill #912 Abbie Hill
20. Lee Christensen #613 Lee Christensen
21. Austin Schultz #612 Austin Schultz
22. Anne and Lee Edwards #610 Anne & Lee Edwards (FS/proxy)
23. Levent Yurtbiler #1112 Levent Yurtbiler (FS/proxy)
24. Jay & Julie Van Cleave #611 Jay & Julie Van Cleave (FS/proxy)
25. Rob Taylor #913 Rob Taylor (FS/proxy)
26. Paul & Florence Deluca #1012 Paul & Florence Deluca
27. Steven Indra #1410 Steven Indra
28. Kimberly Yarnall #1213 Kimberly Yarnall

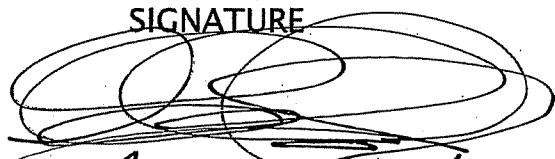
NAME

UNIT #

SIGNATURE

29. Greg Shuttleff

54

30. Ronald ^{Debra} Hunt

1412

Ronald & Hunt

31. Lorraine Mienner 510+511

Lorraine Mienner

32. Robert Whitlock 1211

Robert

33. Steve Morris #1113

34. Janine Sytsma #1113

Same unit

35. Marsha Malik 410

36. Terry Spumman #102

Terry Spumman

37. Ron & Debra Krantz 1412/13

Ron & Debra

38.

39.

40.