

To: Eskrich, Sara

Cc: David Gevers

Subject: Comments on new restaurant proposal being discussed
May 12

Dear Alder Eskrich (and please feel free to forward to others if appropriate):

Due to a prior commitment, I will unfortunately not be able to attend the Vilas neighborhood meeting on May 12, 2015, regarding the proposal for a new barbecue restaurant in the 1800 block of Monroe Street.

However, as a resident of the 1800 block of Madison Street who has been directly impacted by the proliferation of restaurants and bars in this area over the last 6 years or so, and who will be further impacted by the proposed new business, I feel the need to submit my concerns in writing and hope they will merit some consideration by city officials.

There are several ways in which the restaurant growth concentrated in the 1800 and 1900 blocks of Monroe Street has negative impacts on the residents of the adjacent streets. This includes constant hassles related to parking, noise, odors, and nighttime disturbances; as well as lesser side effects such as a seeming increase in trash and cigarette butts dropped along nearby yards and sidewalks, children being exposed to loud and vulgar language at times when boisterous patrons are heading to or leaving one of the establishments, etc.

When my husband and I bought our house in 2006, the nearby businesses were retail stores that were closed at night. There was one restaurant, the Dardanelles, which did not have a bar or late-night hours. We decided that we could live with the amount of daytime parking by retail shoppers, as the street was generally quiet at night.

But the conversion of so many nearby storefronts to restaurant operations has caused drastic changes. The street parking near our house is often completely full, especially around the dinner hours,

with a continuous flow of vehicles driving around trying to look for a convenient parking spot. Associated with all these parked cars, at all hours until late at night, are slamming doors, loud beeps from electronic keys, at least one car alarm a day, some loud stereos, and all the people's voices. These noises come right in our windows and make it hard to go to sleep at night. It's also a hassle when we occasionally need to park our car on the street and there isn't a nearby spot available, or when we invite friends over to visit and they can't find convenient parking. There are safety concerns for pedestrians and bicyclists, especially smaller children such as mine, when drivers are so focused on searching for parking that they don't pay enough attention to others around them.

Frankly it seems irresponsible for the city to allow yet another restaurant and alcohol license into this area without requiring provision of some substantial amount of additional off-street parking. Our streets are full! I've read in the newspaper that Oliver's on University Avenue and the coming German-themed gastropub on Monroe Street have both made arrangements with nearby businesses to use their parking lots for restaurant customers at night. I can't imagine why this wouldn't be insisted on here, as a minimum requirement of operation.

In addition to the steady traffic noise around our block, there is the continuing unresolved irritation from the very loud Pasqual's vent fan that operates 24 hours a day and projects a constant mechanical thrumming noise directly into my children's bedroom windows that also makes sleeping more difficult. There have been attempts by the neighborhood and a previous Alder to engage with the owner to encourage repairs or replacement of the fan, but no success. We're stuck listening to the noise all the time: in our yard, and in any room of our house with a window facing toward the alley.

Cooking odors from the restaurant kitchens are also very unpleasant at times. Brochach's fish fry is notable in my mind for the strength of the odor and the way it seems to hang greasily in the air without dissipating readily. (I enjoy eating an occasional fish fry, sure, but having to smell it being cooked for several hours, around my home, is a different matter!) Hearing that the new restaurant owners are excited about being able to offer a fish fry at their place, and plan

to do their meat smoking on site, does NOT sit will with those of us who live behind it and will be subjected to the output.

And before this all gets dismissed as the writing of a lone crank, and before it gets voted on at the city level, I would ask officials and committee members involved with the proposal to PLEASE spend some time at the site. If your reaction is to brush off resident concerns about noise and odors, spend some time experiencing what we have to live with. Come and sit in the alley of the 1800 block for a half hour or more, especially around dinner time. Close your eyes and imagine that your home and yard were subjected to the noises and odors all the time. Would you feel enthusiastic about inviting friends over for a backyard cookout? Might the noise levels from the buildings and traffic make it harder to sleep at night? What if you wanted to sell a house in this location in order to move away -- would potential buyers likely be turned off by all of these factors? (Yet another concern we have, after having put a lot of money into improvements on our house, that will never be recouped.) I would like to think that the city has an interest in maintaining quality of life in its urban neighborhoods to ensure that they remain desirable places to live. There are many nice things about the neighborhood we live in but our immediate street-level location within it has sadly degraded.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Schultz