August 15, 2016

Re: Fisher Development, 119-121 North Butler & 120-124 North Hancock Streets

To: Urban Design Commission, Plan Commission, Alder Zellers and City Staff

The James-Madison Park District (JMP) of Capital Neighbors Inc. (CNI), along with several members of the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association (TNLA) formed a steering committee to consider the proposal by Fisher Development. Steering committee membership and attendance was variable, hence the committee chooses not to take an official vote or stance on the proposal, instead offering this summary report.

Note that this report supersedes the February 20, 2016, committee letter that addressed earlier versions of the proposal.

We appreciate the willingness of the development team to meet multiple times with the steering committee as the proposal evolved. Their willingness to listen to and address neighborhood input was helpful. Throughout the process, they produced detailed building renderings, perspectives and additional information as requested by those involved in the conversations.

Detailed below are aspects of the proposal that were found to be favorable to the neighborhood and several items of concern. The steering committee hopes readers will investigate and appreciate the opinions of all involved and the range of opinions expressed.

Aspects of the current proposal that the steering committee find <u>favorable</u> to the neighborhood (generally, all committee members agreed on these items):

- Follows two key recommendations for the JMP neighborhood in the Downtown Plan:

  > Recommendation 104: Allow relatively higher-density development that conforms to the Maximum Building Heights Map along North Hamilton, Butler and Gorham Streets.
  >
  > Recommendation 105: Allow infill and redevelopment along Hancock, Franklin and Blair Streets generally compatible in scale and design with the predominantly "house like" neighborhood character.

  The new apartment building on Butler generally follows Recommendation 104, while the preservation and renovation of the two Hancock Street multi-flat homes strongly supports Recommendation 105.

- Meets city zoning regulations concerning setbacks on all sides of the building, providing good green space and separation with adjacent buildings.

- Reductions in both the building's rear footprint and the number of apartments at the rear of the building in the recently revised proposal were considered beneficial due to reducing the building's rear footprint and the accompanying increase in truly useable green space.

- Development team favorably altered exterior features in response to City and committee members' concerns, including adding red brick exterior cladding, darker window frames, and vertical cladding aspects on the sides that provide visual interest and better break up the mass.

- Replacement of standard doors on side balconies with sliding glass was very well received. The recent redesign of the side balconies provided improvements in appearance.

- Front facade was improved from earlier proposal versions, including the brick exterior, fourth-floor step-back and middle section differentiation that provides some sense of break in building mass.

- Units with showers rather than bathtubs provide increased accessibility and more useable square footage for those units.

- Plan for exterior bicycle parking was viewed favorably, as was the bike parking in the underground level.

- Underground and exterior car parking, while limited, should help relieve some of street parking pressure in the neighborhood that could be caused by the development. Most committee members are comfortable with the proposal's low parking spot to unit count ratio and are supportive of discouraging car ownership and promoting bicycle and bus use, as well as walking.

- Development team indicates that rents for the units will be somewhat below market rate for new, similarly sized units, perhaps providing housing opportunities for middle income tenants.

Aspects of the proposal that are <u>potentially unfavorable</u> to the neighborhood (unless otherwise noted, a range of opinions were expressed on these aspects with some committee members concerned and others unconcerned):

- Some committee members feel that the height of the new building is larger than adjacent housing and the overall scale and depth are significantly larger than nearby housing units, looking out of proportion with the nearby housing stock. The depth of the building is seen as most problematic to some committee members.

- Some committee members would prefer additional multi-bedroom units and fewer studios and 1-bedrooms to increase the housing opportunities for families. A proposal modification to address this issue could bring it more in line with Downtown Plan JMP Recommendation 101:

  "Promote the construction and rehabilitation of family-supportive housing…"

  and JMP Recommendation 103:

  Encourage family-supportive workforce housing design in new multi-family developments, including more modern, larger units (2-3 bedrooms) and true useable on-site open space.

Other committee members feel that JMP Recommendations 101 and 103 no longer reflect the reality of JMP's housing needs, hence the proposed unit mix is reasonable.

- Some committee members believe that while this development itself replaces two older multi-unit buildings of little aesthetic value, the size and density of the proposed building will potentially raise land prices in the surrounding area, provide incentive and precedent for developers to take on similar replacements of older, affordable housing stock, and potentially create a cascade of similar demolition and replacement of affordable, vernacular housing stock. This pressure could be exerted not only the JMP neighborhood, but also in adjacent Tenney-Lapham, Mansion Hill and sections of downtown and other near-downtown neighborhoods that are not part of local historic districts.

- While anticipated to have somewhat lower rents than market rate, the units are likely to have higher rents per square foot than the existing apartments they are replacing, which provides more momentum to escalating rents in this part of the City.

- All committee members are concerned about the proposed development needing additional bike parking due to the relatively low number of off-street parking stalls for tenants, even though it meets city requirements. The committee encourages the City to explore updating its space requirements for bike stalls so that developers can take advantage of multi-level, denser and/or staggered bike storage options.