

To: Board of Estimates, City of Madison, Wisconsin

From: Jenny Hayes, Lisie Kitchel, Carrie Rothburd (alt. Steve Davis), Members of JTK Steering Committee

Re: Award of \$1.25 million for Proposed Development along South Park Street

Date: November 23, 2015

In June of this year, the above-listed neighbors from Bay Creek began to serve on a steering committee regarding 8TwentyPark. The committee was convened by the J. T. Klein Company. Mr. Klein hired Urban Assets to facilitate. Urban Asset's mission is "to provide clients with the vision, skills, and expertise to accomplish challenging projects through a customized and collaborative process."

It is important to state up front that neighbors from Bay Creek who served on the committee recognize the need for and support the addition of affordable housing in Madison. The feedback we offer with this memo on 8TwentyPark is *not* to be misconstrued as opposing either more housing along South Park Street or affordable housing in South Madison or, for that matter, elsewhere in Madison.

However, we ask you not to approve the proposed \$1.25 million in loan funds for Mr. Klein's proposed development. It is our understanding that this award, approved by the Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development, would enhance Klein's chances of winning funding from WHEDA and would support 8Twenty's construction in the event WHEDA funding were granted. **We stand strong with our neighbors in Greenbush in opposing the construction of this development as proposed.** Our opposition is grounded in the reasons stated by Greenbush Near Neighbors in their position paper entitle "Preserve Madison's Arboretum Gateway."

We further adamantly oppose what has become routine collaboration on the part of the city and developers to build developments along Park Street whose footprints eat into the existing fabric of neighborhoods adjacent to the South Park corridor. We support the redevelopment of South Park Street; however, we object to the encroachment of that corridor upon our neighborhoods. We are not, as Alder Eskrich was initially quoted in the *Wisconsin State Journal* on August 10, 2015, "'open"' to the rezoning needed to enable this development to proceed by annexing single-family residential properties on the block bounded by Delaplaine, Haywood, Park, and Brooks. As neighbors in next-door Bay Creek, we fear the precedent being set that accepts piecemeal development of South Park Street without regard for the character of our communities and that treats changes in zoning as of no great consequence. With growing dread, we look at potential future development sites between Parr and Spruce along the South Park Street "corridor" and wonder which of these sites will be the next to "require" rezoning so that a development may encroach with inappropriately large buildings upon our residential streets.

Here's why: We love our stable, peaceful, modest-density residential communities that exist close-in to South Park Street to the east and the west. We are dismayed by the readiness of those leading this and prior planning processes to ignore existing plans for South Park Street and South Madison's neighborhoods. Those plans were years in the making, reflect a democratic process that incorporated the interests of a broad range of stakeholders, and were approved by the Common Council. They lay forth a vision for South Madison that would revitalize the corridor and reinvigorate and diversify housing stock, while protecting the integrity and character of existing communities. These plans acknowledge that neighborhoods can be strong or fragile entities, depending on how you treat them. They presume that zoning exists to protect our communities from the whims of short-range planning for development and/or heedless developers.

Significantly the *South Madison Plan* (2004), which calls itself "the primary reference for neighborhood improvements, development, and revitalization efforts within the South Madison Planning Area," has this to say on the subject of development:

"It is important to understand the character of a neighborhood when determining what to preserve, enhance, and change to make the neighborhood livable today and for future generations. The history of the neighborhood, the values of its residents, and the physical, social, and economic components that contribute to the well-being of the neighborhood are all important factors to review in planning for the future."

The *Greenbush Revitalization Plan* (2010), which supplements both the Greenbush and Vilas Neighborhood Plans, is concrete in its recommendations for the area bounded by Regent, Monroe, Park, and Delaplaine and abutting Vilas Park and the zoo. It states that:

“[S]mall-scale investments by individual property owners are critical to creating stability...and will help redefine Greenbush as an affordable, stable, desirable community.”

With regard to the block in question, the Revitalization Strategy put forward by the *Greenbush Revitalization Plan* “encourages and supports owner-occupied opportunities by facilitating single family/duplex reversions and conversions” and even proposes reinforcing the character of the area as a Neighborhood Conservation District. The *Comprehensive Development Plan* for the City of Madison (2012), assigns low-density housing to this whole block.

Significantly existing city plans don’t preclude affordable housing along Park Street. Nor do they rule out development of the density Mr. Klein proposes elsewhere along South Park. However they identify other sites in South Madison as appropriate for building on the scale of 8TwentyPark. **There is no reason to revise existing zoning or plans for South Park Street for new housing development along South Park Street—including affordable housing.** Unfortunately for Mr. Klein he purchased the wrong property. It is wrong to make an exception for his mistake by changing zoning, ignoring plans, and lending him City of Madison money to allow his development to encroach up the neighborhood. There are good examples elsewhere in Madison of the sort of redevelopment Klein might undertake here within current zoning standards and in keeping with neighborhood streetscapes—including affordable housing redevelopment.

We yet further object to awarding Klein’s development the proposed loan because of the inferior quality of the plans. When we were invited to join the steering committee, we arrived with great hopes for working with Jacob Klein, Sara Eskrich, Urban Assets, and other neighbors to come up with a collaborative vision for development that responded to the specific needs and constraints of the community. The concerned such things as height, density, parking, traffic flow, enhancement of Park Street corridor businesses, and streetscape. Alas, the development team deliberately kept neighborhood input out of the conversation. It consulted with city staff behind closed doors to arrive at the parameters of its plan and zoning-defying designs. It heard, but neither listened to, nor incorporated neighbors’ feedback into the proposed plans.

The development process that has been followed with 8TwentyPark is a travesty of the democratic process put in place by the City of Madison to ensure collaboration with neighborhood property owners and the visions put forth in approved plans. Its supporters have quoted selectively from plans to support their case, and condescendingly dismissed the sound input of neighbors in meetings. They have ignored plans and neighbors’ requests to contain redevelopment to the footprint of Park Street where Park Street bisects existing residential streets. We supporting the addition of affordable housing in Greenbush. However we want to see respect for the development recommendations of previously approved plans. We want to see respect for neighborhood input as proposed developments are considered and measured against established plans. Anything less dishonors all the time, effort, and good faith that neighbors, the City, and other stakeholders put into these plans. It dishonors neighbors’ right to the ongoing use and enjoyment of our property into which we have poured our life savings, our hopes for the present, and our dreams for our future here in Madison.

Let neighbors know that the Board of Estimates supports a return to Madison’s fine tradition of democratic neighborhood planning. Let them know that zoning and various plan recommendations mean something to neighbors and to the City of Madison. The arguments marshalled in favor of rezoning—we need housing, we need affordable housing, the buildings to be razed are not worth preserving—are beside the point. The point is that **to ignore the long-range recommendations of the above-mentioned plans to do what is expedient and profitable for now is short-sighted and disrespectful of the planning process and the future of our communities.**