

TO: Heather Stouder
Alder Sara Eskrich

FROM: Allen A. Arntsen

DATE: November 12, 2015

RE: 820 South Park Street

I am a resident of the Bay Creek Neighborhood and served on the informal steering committee that Alder Eskrich established to provide neighborhood review and comment of the proposed 8Twenty Park affordable housing development. While I appreciate the work that Mr. Klein has put into this proposal, and its substantial benefits to the city and the Park Street corridor, the project as currently proposed has substantial shortcomings, which can hopefully be addressed in the city approval process.

I recognize the benefits of this project. The city needs more affordable housing. The central location, proximity to hospitals, and good public transportation make this an excellent affordable housing location. Replacement of the abandoned Madison Church Supply building with a new five story building on Park Street is a real upgrade. I appreciate the efforts of city staff and Mr. Klein to engage the neighborhood and pull the building back from the adjoining single family neighborhood on Brooks Street and lower it the sides facing Brooks Street and Haywood Drive from 5 to 4 stories.

But the project as currently proposed has problems. First, I question whether there is enough parking. Even considering public transportation, it seems like there should be at least one dedicated underground parking spot per unit, especially since many of the units have multiple bedrooms. The planned surface parking seems necessary for caregivers and guests, and so should not be included in the parking count.

Second, except along Park Street, the building is too tall. Maintaining proper transitions between commercial corridors—like Park Street—and adjoining small scale residential neighborhoods is a significant one for the city. I'm concerned that the five story/essentially no setback building on the south side of Delaplaine Street will make this narrow--but rather heavily traveled by St. Mary's employees and visitors--street dark and icy in the winter. The City should ask the developer to provide a shadow study and consider requiring the removal of a story or additional setback. 4 stories is at least one story too tall on the Brooks Street and Haywood Drive sides, because of the adjoining 1-2 story neighborhood environment. Making these changes may also address the parking shortfall.

Finally, I'm concerned that rezoning is requested for the entire proposed project, but only one phase (the Park and Delaplaine sides) is currently being proposed for affordable housing credits. There is a risk that the as-proposed second building (Brooks and Haywood sides) will revert to market-rate housing, eliminating a substantial public benefit. Rezoning should somehow be conditioned on an affordable housing use.

If the above issues are addressed, I think this will be a much better project. Thank you—and the UDC, Plan Commission and Common Council--for considering my suggestions.