



## Office of the Common Council

Ald. Sara Eskrich, District 13

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To: Members of the Plan Commission

From: Sara Eskrich, District 13 Alder

RE: HotelRED

Date: March 19, 2017

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Thank you for your attention to the request for a conditional use at 1501 Monroe Street. As you saw in the submitted public comments before you, this application has both support and opposition from neighbors. We held a public neighborhood meeting, with mailed postcard and electronic invitations to residents, on November 9, 2016, to discuss this application and I have been in contact with neighbors via email and listserv conversation over the past few months.

There are a few key issues you should consider when reviewing this application:

- *Good Neighbor:* I believe much of the support for this application is due to the general support for HotelRED as a neighbor. This building was highly controversial when first developed, and the management has worked tirelessly to be a positively contributing neighborhood asset. They are well-achieving that mission. We regularly hold neighborhood and wider community meetings and events in their space, where they are incredibly accommodating. HotelRED has become a neighborhood gathering place and an economic driver for the wider area by sending guests up Monroe or down Regent to support our local businesses.
- *Zoning:* The concerns raised focus on height. This proposed 8-story building is much taller than the approved zoning for this site. The lack of conformity to this zoning policy is concerning.
- *Adopted Plans:* The staff report provides a good overview of the adopted plans, which, while recognizing the uniqueness of the corner of Regent and Monroe being appropriate for a projecting or tower element at the intersection, does not conform to the 8-story proposal.
- *Unique Site:* Though this site is within the Monroe Street Corridor plan, it does relate to Regent Street and the large intersection with the UW Field House most directly. Proposed redevelopments surrounding this parcel, at The Regent, 1605 Monroe, and the proposed placemaking work at Crazylegs Triangle, will further define this space as different from the rest of Monroe Street. Therefore I am sympathetic to the argument that some additional height at this building will not be precedent setting for Monroe Street.

These issues point out the potential to consider specific sites in this area for rezoning or plan amendments, due to their unique nature (i.e., on corners, at intersections, with surrounding scale) that will likely garner development proposals out of compliance with zoning and plans. This policy decision, rather than response to each individual proposal, seems like a more appropriate path.

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As to the request before you this evening, I do not take a position either supporting or opposing. There is too much of a split opinion in my neighborhoods, and the policy does not provide for clear reason to approve this project. I am frankly quite surprised by the level of support for this proposal from neighbors, but I think it speaks to the nature of this unique use being an asset to the neighborhood. I hope you will consider both the arguments for economic realities driving development proposals out of scale with our plans, and the concerns with making decisions so out of conformance with our current policy.

Thank you for your attention and thorough review. I intend to join you tomorrow evening to answer questions in-person, but please do not hesitate to reach out to me in advance.