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Alderman Brian Hopkins
2nd Ward Service Office
1400 N. Ashland Ave.
Chicago, IL 60622
Email: office@aldermanhopkins.com

Re: Fern Hill Development – Traffic Concerns

Dear Alderman Hopkins:

As you know, I represent Old Town Friends for Responsible Development (“OTFRD”). OTFRD is a grassroots coalition comprised of concerned property owners, merchants, and residents who are focused on preserving the character and charm of one of Chicago’s most historic and iconic communities.

From the OTFRD perspective, the proposed tower at Wells and North has many issues, including traffic, density, upzoning, gas stations, and many others; this email will specifically address only the issues related to Traffic.

As summarized at the May Latin meeting, the Developer’s “traffic expert” purportedly created an analysis of the existing traffic and then concluded that the development wouldn’t significantly impact the existing traffic. However, the traffic study has *NOT* been shared even though there have been many requests for that traffic study. The community has no idea if the study was done properly pursuant to applicable standards, and we don’t know the actual results and conclusions. Why is Fern Hill not sharing the complete traffic study? The likely answer is that the developer knows Old Town would be outraged by it.

As you state, the normal process of reviewing a Planned Development and relying on the Developer’s Traffic study will not be sufficient in this case because the existing traffic conditions in Old Town, particularly around North and LaSalle and Clark Street, are unacceptable. It’s our understanding that your goal is to leverage this proposed Tower to get answers and funds from the Chicago Department of Transportation to fix this current traffic problem, and find ways that the traffic created from a development at Wells and North could be done appropriately from a traffic perspective.

It is our hope that you will hold to your promise of a second meeting on CDOT issues and its report regarding a “Traffic Mitigation and Safety Plan.”

OTFRD believes you are correct in examining these two critical factors because a typical traffic study only focuses on counting cars and uses outdated models and assumptions that don’t work well for a neighborhood like Old Town.

Here are a few items we hope CDOT will answer in their report. This list is not in any particular order, as each item is interconnected.

1) *We only have so much land.*

Some traffic in the suburbs, for example, can be easily fixed by adding lanes, widening lanes, and turning lanes. Old Town has been built for many years, and there is no room for expansion. CDOT must devise a solution that moves the current traffic away from the already congested North and Wells intersection and then solves the additional burdens the massive, proposed tower will create.

While the developer has suggested removing street parking as a solution, that would hurt residents and businesses that rely on those few but valuable parking spots. The Developer, who has no real concern for the neighborhood, is trying to push the traffic problem on the community to ensure his goal of 500 rental units.

2) *Safety of Kids*

Latin, Catherine Cook, LaSalle Language, and many other schools have children constantly crossing the intersections of this proposed tower. With increased car, bike, pedestrian, scooter, and other traffic, our kids must run a gauntlet course to get to the bus, train, or local coffee shop.

The Developer has configured a garage requiring many right turns, making pedestrian safety even more dangerous.

While we all get frustrated that driving from Wells and North to the expressway can take 30 minutes, the kids' safety must be a key focus of any CDOT recommendation.

3) *Uber and Lyft*

The influx of Uber and Lyft must be addressed. The reliance on the ride-hailing companies will be immense in a 500-unit rental building with only 150 parking spots. Traffic studies do not include this data because sufficient data is not available.

As neighbors, we don't need data. If you add conservatively 600-1,000 residents, you will add hundreds of Uber and Lyft rides arriving and departing from the proposed Tower. These rides increase traffic, but CDOT and the Alderman must also consider the idle time as they wait for their riders. How long does Uber wait before the rider comes down the elevator? How many Ubers will be double-parked while waiting for rides to appear? While the data may not exist, everyone knows the problem is real.

4) *Food Delivery*

Like ride-hailing, food delivery has dramatically changed in the last few years. Chicago has many active companies, but the familiar players are DoorDash, Grubhub, Postmates, and Uber Eats. While data on how these services affect traffic is not plentiful, that does not stop us as neighbors from using common sense.

The Tower being proposed would conservatively add 600-1,000 residents. We don't know how many pizza, sushi, and other deliveries will occur daily, but it will be a lot. Like Uber and Lyft, the problem is more than just the traffic; you have to consider the time it takes for the driver to

organize the food and bring it to the doorman or tenant. How many food delivery vehicles will be blocking traffic while they deliver meals?

5) *Bikes and Scooters – Love them, Hate them – they are here.*

We will not take a position on whether bikes are a saving grace to the environment and traffic congestion, but what most Old Town residents know is that it is increasingly unsafe to cross the street as these bike and scooter riders routinely ignore traffic stops and lights as well as pedestrians and cars. While there are some bike lanes, they are often overlooked, or in the morning, there are so many bikers and scooters that they don't fit within their designated lane.

6) *Side Streets*

If this Tower is built, the side streets of Old Town will also see substantial traffic increases. Sedgwick, Larrabee, and others will see increased traffic. These neighborhood streets have already seen a steady rise in cars speeding through them, and with increased traffic, there will be an even greater reliance on small side streets to avoid North Avenue and other busier streets.


7) *Eugenie*

The Tower is being constructed so that anyone wanting to get to the parking or loading dock will likely have to turn right onto Eugenie and then right onto LaSalle. This small street is heavily relied upon, and the Developer's poorly designed project seems to overload this small street to jam as many cars into their building as possible. For residents that use Eugenie and for residents walking to the park, the number of right-hand turns will cause serious safety issues that CDOT and the Alderman must consider.

As we wait for CDOT to come out with their report and recommendations, many neighbors are rightfully skeptical of the process. Traffic engineers and traffic studies are generally not produced to help the community but to support a developer's plans. If CDOT proposes minor tweaks to the current traffic nightmare, we believe you, Alderman Hopkins, must side with Old Town and say no to this and any other massive developments in the neighborhood until real traffic solutions are found.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this request, please contact me at 312-968-9600 or jordan@1818legal.com.

Sincerely



Jordan Matyas