

Mid-North Association

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MID-NORTH ASSOCIATION POSITION STATEMENT RE: CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL HOSPITAL REDEVELOPMENT (February 14, 2014)

On Tuesday, February 4, 2014 the Mid-North Association ("MNA") held an open community meeting to air community members' views about the plan ("Plan") released in January 2014 (and as supplemented on February 3, 2014) for the redevelopment of the Children's Memorial Hospital ("CMH") site. All attendees were asked to disclose their addresses, and any connection to the developer or CMH. All attendees were offered the opportunity to speak, and, of the several hundred immediate community members present, many chose to do so. The near unanimous position of all who spoke was to reject the Plan as being too high and too dense,¹ and as posing troubling traffic and safety concerns. For these and other reasons the Plan violated the criteria the community's alderman had articulated in August 2012 as required to gain hers and the community's support.

MNA is the non-profit community association for that section of Lincoln Park which includes the CMH site, and whose residents will be most directly affected by redevelopment of the site. MNA, founded in 1950, has as its core mission the enhancement of the quality of life in, and the preservation of the historical character of, the Lincoln Park community, including assuring that improvements will be compatible with and promotive of that character. To that end MNA has continuously and regularly, throughout its existence, been consulted by the community's aldermen about proposed developments, ranging from those of individual homeowners to large scale public or commercial developments. In keeping with its mission MNA firmly opposes the Plan and urges that no action be taken on required zoning and development approvals by the City of Chicago at this time. Instead, the process should return to that embraced by Alderman Smith and the community before the 18 month silence that nonetheless culminated in the current Plan.

To fully understand MNA's position, it is essential to recount some key background matters and details about community support for redevelopment of the CMH site, although not for the overdevelopment entailed in the current Plan. Among those are:

- CMH's decision to leave its Lincoln Park site was its own, not the neighborhood's.
- In the aftermath of CMH's decision, a process began, convened by the then-sitting alderman, to engage the public about redevelopment of the site. Various meetings were held and studies undertaken, resulting in the HOK Guidelines, which were published by the City and which requested that any development be consistent with the existing neighborhood. By August of 2012 an initial proposal, and then an amendment thereto, had emerged. However, the City's Department of Housing and Economic Development (August 15, 2012) opposed that Plan, citing its high-rises

¹ CMH, as it stands now, has a narrow profile even at its highest elevation. However, the current Plan not only seeks to build significantly higher than the highest CMH elevation but also to do so on a broadscale basis, the collective mass of which is markedly different relative to the neighborhood. (See attached elevation studies).

as being out of character with the neighborhood. Shortly thereafter, and echoing the City's negative comments, Alderman Smith outlined her opposition, on behalf of the community, in an August 27, 2012 letter to the developer. In requesting that the developer come forward with a new plan, Alderman Smith outlined the process, and types of proposals, that were required before she and the community would consider supporting any specific plan. She said that:

“I would like you to look at this project from two different lenses for the purpose of satisfying the community’s concerns and moving this project forward without spending time on future debate on plans that neither Lincoln Park residents nor I can support. First, I ask that you prepare a proposal with an FAR of 3.0 and height restrictions that do not exceed the heights of the structures that sit on the Site today, and preferably are lower. Second, I ask that you prepare a proposal with a 2.5 FAR and a height limit of 65'. As noted above, many individuals would like to see the FAR and heights limited to as low as practically possible. Without understanding the impact of a 2.5 FAR or 3.0 FAR on the overall project, and ultimately coming to an agreement on the same, we cannot make meaningful choices over other design issues, such as the nature of the open space, the location of truck loading, the traffic impact, and the benefits that this project may afford the community.”

- Between August 2012 and the present **NO** proposals utilizing those “two different lenses” have ever been presented and publicly discussed. Instead, between August 2012 and January 2014, the redevelopment project **disappeared** from public view. **NO** public meetings or releases of new proposals occurred. The current Plan’s emergence is a complete repudiation of the Alderman’s previously-expressed fundamental conditions to her support and for the Lincoln Park community’s support. The Plan has nevertheless been approved by the Alderman and is being touted by her as needing to be fast tracked for action by the City as early as February 20, 2014.

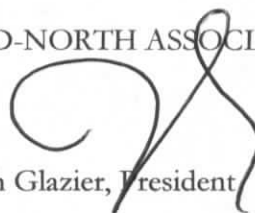
MNA believes that this stunning reversal significantly harms the interests of its membership and the Lincoln Park community. MNA also believes that some key aspects of the community’s views, arising from its February 4, 2014 meeting, should be noted, including the following:

- The community supports and encourages a responsible development of the CMH site, both to help enhance vitality in the community and support the City’s tax base.
- The community did not create the 18 month hiatus in public discussion from August 2012 until the present.
- The community objects to a process that tailors development to a predetermined sales price -- which here is a reported \$51M. That process operates in reverse of what makes sense and is an injustice to the community. What should be done, and what was the consensus in August 2012, is to develop reasonable development criteria, acceptable to the community, before there is any aldermanic and City support for granting the necessary approvals required to build.

- The current Plan continues to include twin high-rise towers that are starkly out of character with the surrounding neighborhood and that create unreasonable and unnecessary traffic burdens. While the planned high-rises may be appropriate along the Chicago lakefront, where high-rises have traditionally been built, they are not appropriate for the CMH site and are starkly at odds with current adjacent zoning. Many other projects could be profitably built, by the current developer or another one, which would be welcome additions to the community. However, those projects would result in a lower sales price for the property, though one still higher than were the property developed in accordance with height and density applicable to zoning on surrounding properties.
- The current Plan includes a loading dock accessed from Fullerton Avenue (Children's was accessed from Lincoln Ave.), which is already beset with enormous traffic problems. This will only be exacerbated by truck traffic, which will require additional stop lights for its management.
- If this broadscale "for-profit" high-rise development is approved for the site, then there will be a dramatic precedent set for other high-rise developments in Lincoln Park, be it along Lincoln Avenue or elsewhere. To date, both "for profit" developers and "non-profit" institutions (e.g., DePaul) have not been permitted to build high-rises, nor have developers replacing other former hospitals (e.g. Augustana). Going forward they will have every incentive to do so and will seek to rely upon this precedent. Consequently, for those who think this development does not affect them personally today, future developments will.
- The assumption underlying the current Plan -- i.e., that the Plan be built to fit a desired sale price, and that the community's views about how the Plan ignores adjacent zoning be relegated to a subservient status -- is in striking contrast to the requirements that complicate a common homeowner's effort to change even a window in the façade of their historic district home. That the assumption underlying the current Plan is being proffered by an institution leaving the community, at its own behest, is all the more troubling.

As a wise statesman, in a segue into architecture, once observed: "We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us." (Winston Churchill) The legacy of the CMH site's redevelopment will reverberate through the Lincoln Park community for hundreds of years. Surely, that reality compels a return to a rational planning and community engagement process. The "two different lenses" course outlined in August 2012 was, and still is, the correct approach. Anything else, including the current Plan, is simply "backwards" and an injustice to the community. MNA urges a return to that process and **NOT** any move forward for the current plan.

MID-NORTH ASSOCIATION



Josh Glazier, President



McCaffrey 2014 proposal compared to existing CMH
(Lincoln Ave. elevation - street level view)



McCaffrey 2014 proposal compared to existing CMH
(Orchard St. elevation - street level view)