



May 19, 2014

The Honorable Danny Solis  
25th Ward Alderman  
1800 S. Blue Island Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60608

Re: Proposed development at 1061 W. Van Buren

Dear Alderman Solis,

Neighbors of West Loop (NOWL) has kept open communications with Bob Baziuk from Pizzuti about the proposal for 1061 W. Van Buren ("the Project"). Mr. Baziuk responded to questions and provided updates of Pizzuti's plans. Mr. Baziuk has also agreed to meet with at least Principal Clark and a parent leader of Skinner West School's fundraising committee on Tuesday morning, May 20, 2014 at 9:30AM in hopes of identifying areas in which Pizzuti can financially assist the school and possibly – as Mr. Baziuk characterized it – forge an ongoing partnership between Pizzuti and the school for identified projects. Should Pizzuti 1) support Skinner West through an arrangement it deems appropriate, and if Pizzuti can provide assurances to each of the items listed below as 2) through 6), then NOWL can support the Project. Because of the size, scope, vacation of public right-of-way, and precedent setting nature of the height of the building along the Eisenhower and to the south of Van Buren street, if Pizzuti cannot adequately address these six items, NOWL cannot support the Project.

Items 2), 3), and 4) below were detailed in our March 24, 2014 letter to your office. That letter is attached hereto, and items are summarized herein for convenience. While Pizzuti responded and explained its (or the current land owner, Blue Plate's) position on these matters, NOWL has not received concrete written assurances on these issues. This is not to say that we distrust Pizzuti or Blue Plate – quite the contrary we believe they have been rather forthcoming and direct – but we believe concrete written assurances or information can and should be provided at the very least to your office to maintain whatever confidentiality as to 2) final floor plans; 3) governmental negotiations for the requested and needed vacation of the public right-of-way; and 4) the future plans for Blue Plate's relocation. Lastly, NOWL believes 5) the revised and enlarged dog area is critical to serve the many anticipated pet owners in an area sorely lacking green space immediately adjacent to the Project; and 6) the overall height of the building should be reduced by some number of floors.

Prior to any final approval of the Project, NOWL seeks specific assurances to the following:



2) **Promote longer-term tenants by increasing the overall size and % of the larger number of rooms and decreasing the % number of studios units (from March 24, 2014 letter).** Pizzuti responded this concern by stating it intended to maintain current ratios of rooms, but that its more recent market studies (approximately April 2014 or before) showed demand for 3-bedroom units. Mr. Baziuk reported Pizzuti was looking into possibly adding 3-bedroom units to the mix. As of this letter, NOWL has not received any revised floor plans, updated room break-downs or ratios. NOWL therefore requests written confirmation of the final breakdown of types of rooms (studio, convertible, 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom) and the average square footage of the rooms for the Project.

3) **Insure the community receives adequate compensation for vacation of the public right-of-way to a private entity (from March 24, 2014 letter) and include upgrades to Tilden within the scope of the Project.** The Project is ONLY possible if the City vacates a portion of the public right-of-way to Pizzuti. Regardless of the fact that the portion of Aberdeen to be vacated may only be regularly utilized by the businesses and patrons in the immediate proximity, it is nonetheless public space. (Though NOWL is unaware of the owners or of its availability, NOWL notes the private land immediately to the east of and adjacent to the Project is a vacant lot.) If Aberdeen is vacated, we ask that the developer pay for upgrading Tilden, specifically the alley-like portion to the west of the Project, so that Tilden can allow for and function as a replacement for the through-traffic route from Tilden to Van Buren that Aberdeen provided. As an alternative, we would request that the developer modify either the footprint of the first floor or of the area around Tilden to allow for the CDOT-preferred cul-de-sac at what would become the end of Tilden.

To these items Mr. Baziuk responded that negotiations with CDOT as to the price paid for the vacation of the right-of-way and for the configuration of Tilden would occur only after Pizzuti's meetings with community groups and with your office; Pizzuti therefore could not provide any specifics as to these items. NOWL requests that whatever plans necessary for improving Tilden are made in conjunction with the Project so that any vacation is contingent upon the improvements. NOWL also requests that your office is notified of all CDOT's negotiations and that the ultimate price paid for the vacated right-of-way space may be published to the public.

4) **Insure that Jim Horan and Blue Plate Catering stay in the City of Chicago and specifically the West Loop (from March 24, 2014 letter).** We recognize that Mr. Horan as a downtown Chicago resident, long-term West Loop business owner, and employer of numerous employees is very much the type of person, business owner and employer that our local and greater community needs to flourish. While we hope and anticipate he has shared this in greater detail with you (and possibly Alderman Burnett), he told us that he has out grown his current space, needs a bigger space, and due in part to the increasing value of properties in the west loop, that he needs the proceeds of the sale of his land for this larger proposed property to purchase (and presumably retrofit/update/equip) a new facility



in the West Loop. We understand that negotiations for his new facility may need to be kept private, but do not see why such negotiations and final details could not be shared with you or your office. For the reasons stated in our March 24, 2014 letter, we would hate to lose Mr. Horan as a local business and employer, especially if he were to first obtain the public right-of-way in Aberdeen only to then cash out and move out of the neighborhood or City.

NOWL asks that as a condition of ultimately receiving approval for the proposed building (though vacation of the public space and/or approval of the zoning) he disclose to you and make whatever assurances necessary to affirm his intentions *and* keep Blue Plate, if not in the immediate West Loop, in the City of Chicago.

5) ***Confirm revisions and enlargement of a dedicated dog run/area of at least 1,600 square feet.*** Because the area immediately adjacent to the Project lacks any substantial green space (Pizzuti's own presentation materials show both Skinner and Mary Bartelme Parks are outside of a ¼ mile / five-minute walking radius of the Project), the Project must include a revised and enlarged dog area to serve residents of the Project and prevent soiling of public sidewalks in the area around the Project.

Mr. Baziuk indicated current plans dedicate 1,600 square feet to a dog run/area (300-500 square feet can safely accommodate only 2-3 dogs). NOWL requests written confirmation of at least 1,600 square feet, if not more, for a dedicated and maintained dog run/area within the Project.

6) ***Reduce the overall height of the Project.*** Our initial letter of March 24, 2014, acknowledged the City Plans that call for taller buildings immediately adjacent to the Kennedy and Eisenhower expressways, and did not oppose the planned height. However at the community meeting held on April 9, 2014 and through additional individual communications, NOWL since learned that many long-term West Loop residents oppose the overall height of the Project. Residents' requested height reductions ranged from several to more than 13-15 floors. Because the Project very likely will set a precedent for other vacant lots or potential lower-rise teardowns along the south side of Van Buren, and because Pizzuti announced at the April 9 community meeting that the currently planned height of the Project "is not set in stone," NOWL believes some reduction in height – even if only several floors – is a reasonable compromise for all.

\*\*\* As a general statement applicable to all potential/future West Loop projects, the height of buildings west of Halsted Street is a fiercely-important development aspect and admittedly touchy subject for the West Loop community. Justified or not, countless residents were told of various height restrictions for West Loop buildings when buying into the neighborhood. New developments consistent with certain heights, statements by leaders and developers at community meetings, and even the City's Plans calling for heights that step down from the proscribed taller buildings immediately adjacent to the



expressways support such beliefs for building height restrictions. NOWL is fully aware that West Loop residents do not wish to fight the perpetual push toward higher buildings in the area west of Halsted on a piecemeal basis. Instead, West Loop residents request a more holistic, broader-ranged and longer-term plan for the West Loop that embraces and maintains the lower building heights and loft characteristics, which have made the West Loop a desired neighborhood for families, professionals, businesses and developers alike. \*\*\*

We are copying Pizzuti on this letter and again reaffirm our mutually stated desires to keep communications open and work toward an ultimate proposal that our residents will support and embrace. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Adam Powers  
Chairperson, 25th Ward Committee  
NEIGHBORS OF WEST LOOP

cc: Bob Baziuk, Pizzuti (rbaziuk@pizzuti.com)  
Bob Aiken & Larry Gage, Neighbors of West Loop



March 24, 2014

The Honorable Danny Solis  
25th Ward Alderman  
1800 S. Blue Island Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60608

Re: Proposed development at 1061 W. Van Buren

Dear Alderman Solis,

Following the March 10, 2014 presentation to our group, we have had ongoing discussions with Bob Baziuk from Pizzuti about the proposal for 1061 W. Van Buren, including an hour-long conference call on March 18. This letter has been authorized and approved by our entire Committee; it summarizes our conversations with Pizzuti and restates our Committee's main concerns about the proposed building.

We shared that as a neighborhood group we understood that the height of the proposed building was consistent with the City's plans for higher buildings along the expressways. Therefore, because the proposed building was on the south side of Van Buren (or likewise if it were on the east side of Halsted), we did not oppose the height of the proposed building. Because Pizzuti is addressing and finalizing plans for green space and dog areas, our concerns and respective requests fall under three categories:

**1) *Promote longer-term tenants by increasing the overall size and % of the larger number of rooms and decreasing the % number of studios units.*** As you and your staff, our current residents, and new and long-term businesses have all recognized, our West Loop area has become a family-focused area with many families moving into our neighborhood, enrolling in our schools, and loving city living. This is a desired demographic and trend that most all wish to maintain and encourage. While we understand this proposed building is almost exclusively *not* targeting families, we agree that i) more 2BR units, ii) less studio units, and iii) larger-sized units in general encourage tenants who are more likely to stay in the neighborhood longer and, therefore, become positively engaged and hold a higher appreciation or respect for the character of the neighborhood.

The current proposal includes 81% of the units as 1BR or smaller. More than one third of the building's units (37%) are studio or convertible units. As proposed, at least 81% of the units do not cater toward, support or seek family-focused tenants. We therefore request that a higher % of 2BR units, a lower % of studio and convertible units, are worked into the plans. We also would like to see larger sized units (in average square footage) across all unit types. As of the presentation to our committee, Pizzuti reported the proposed breakdown of units as follows:

Unit Type	Avg. Square Feet	Units	% of Total
Studio	519	75	18%
Junior 1 BR	668	79	19%
1 BR	754	128	31%
1 BR + Den	779	52	13%
2 BR	1,154	77	19%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>100%</b>

2) ***Insure the community receives adequate compensation for vacation of the public right-of-way to a private entity.*** The entire proposed property is ONLY possible if the City vacates a portion of the public right-of-way to the developer. Without closing and vacating the end of Aberdeen, this proposed property simply cannot be built. Regardless of the fact that the portion of Aberdeen to be vacated may only be regularly utilized by the businesses and patrons in the immediate proximity, it is nonetheless public space.

During our phone call, Mr. Baziuk first informed us that Pizzuti is negotiating with the City (specific department or person(s) not named) to buy that part of Aberdeen that would be vacated. Our committee asks that the community be made aware of the proposed purchase price and that, to whatever extent possible, the amount paid goes directly back into the neighborhood. We feel that whatever amount paid for Aberdeen, should be kept separate and apart from, and be in addition to whatever amount(s) is/are paid for fair-housing or as donations to local schools. We understand that any new project (including those that do not require vacation of public space) provides for new, development and beautification of relatively blighted areas. Because this project requires transferring public space to private property, we feel the community deserves more than just the usual enhancements from new development.



**Aberdeen/Tilden (looking NE) – requested vacation of Aberdeen pictured at left, up to the intersection.**

Moreover vacation of Aberdeen will eliminate any ease to which Tilden is used as a two-way, through street. Once vacated, any westbound traffic on Tilden (including garbage and delivery trucks) will be forced to either turn around or navigate down a 15-foot wide public alley (west of Aberdeen) to gain access to Van Buren. This public alley currently is in poor shape and cannot replace the two-way access that Aberdeen now provides. The developer claims the CDOT preferred treatment of “constructing a circular cul-de-sac at the end of Tilden Street is not feasible.” (Traffic Study at p. 20, ¶12).

If Aberdeen is vacated, we ask that the developer pay for upgrading the alley-like portion of Tilden so that it can allow for and function as a replacement for the through-traffic route from Tilden to Van Buren that Aberdeen provided. As an alternative, we would request that the developer modify either the footprint of the development or the footprint of the first floor to allow for the CDOT-preferred cul-de-sac at the end of Tilden. At this point, we are not convinced that all possible options have been thoroughly examined and pursued.



**Tilden (looking E) from the alley-like portion just west of the entry/intersection with S. Aberdeen.**



**Tilden (looking W) at the alley-like portion extending west from the intersection with S. Aberdeen.**



3) ***Insure that Jim Horan and Blue Plate Catering stay in the City of Chicago and specifically the West Loop.*** At the March 10, 2014, presentation Jim Horan, the owner/founder of Blue Plate Catering and property owner of the lots on the east and west of Aberdeen south of Van Buren, shared his history and love for the West Loop and his desire to remain in the West Loop. We recognize that Mr. Horan as a downtown Chicago resident, long-term West Loop business owner, and employer of numerous employees is very much the type of person, business owner and employer that our local and greater community needs to flourish. While we hope and anticipate he has shared this in greater detail with you (and possibly Alderman Burnett), he told us that he has out grown his current space, needs a bigger space, and due in part to the increasing value of properties in the west loop, that he needs the proceeds of the sale of his land for this larger proposed property to purchase (and presumably retrofit/update/equip) a new facility in the West Loop. When we asked Mr. Horan if he would sign something that would guarantee that he keeps Blue Plate in the West Loop if he ultimately receives approval for the proposed building and he responded “no.” For the reasons stated, we would hate to lose Mr. Horan as a local business and employer, especially if he were to first obtain the public right-of-way in Aberdeen only to then cash out and move out of the neighborhood or City.

We understand that negotiations for his new facility may need to be kept private, but do not see why such negotiations and final details could not be shared with you or your office. We ask that as a condition of ultimately receiving approval for the proposed building (though vacation of the public space and/or approval of the zoning) we ask he disclose to you and make whatever assurances necessary to affirm his intentions *and* keep Blue Plate, if not in the immediate West Loop, in the City of Chicago.

Because Mr. Baziuk mentioned their team was still finalizing revised details and plans for the green space and dog run/area (more specifically that the dog area’s design is currently planned to be around 1,500 ft<sup>2</sup>), we do not include those matters in our above outlined three issues. We are happy with this feature and look forward to receiving and reviewing the finalized plans, revised renderings and completed shade study.

We conveyed all of the above points and rationales to Mr. Baziuk, who stated he would share them with his team and get back to us soon. We reaffirmed our mutually stated desires to keep communications open and work toward an ultimate proposal that our residents will support and embrace. We will likewise keep you apprised of our anticipated progress.

Sincerely,

Adam Powers  
Chairperson, 25th Ward Committee  
NEIGHBORS OF WEST LOOP

cc: Bob Baziuk, Pizzuti (rbaziuk@pizzuti.com)  
Bob Aiken & Larry Gage, Neighbors of West Loop