



June 2, 2017

The Honorable Walter Burnett
27th Ward Alderman
4 N. Western Ave.
Chicago, IL 60612

Re: Zoning Change for 845 W. Madison (former H2O site)

Dear Alderman Burnett,

On March 14, 2016 and again on September 18, 2016 and on February 13, 2017, Chad Broderick (John Buck Company) and representatives of Lendlease Development and GREC Architects presented their plans for 845 W. Madison, the former headquarters of H2O. Representatives of Neighbors of West Loop were also present at the July 26, 2016 community meeting for this development where you directed the development team to overhaul their concept. We were again present on February 1, 2017, when the team presented their revised design to the community.

Originally proposed as a four-building complex, the concept has been refined to include two buildings ranging in height from six stories (on Monroe) to seventeen stories (along Madison and Green Streets). The two L-shaped buildings would sit on a two-story pedestal/parking garage and enclose an inner landscaped area that is not publicly accessible. The site would include 586 residential rental units with a 0.5 parking ratio. John Buck Company is seeking a zoning change from DX-5 (5.0 FAR)/DS-3 (3.0 FAR) to DX-5 Planned Development with a 6.0 FAR.

Based on feedback received from residents and from our committee members, there are strong concerns about the proposed density of the property and its expected impacts:

- The proposed buildings heights along Monroe Street and Peoria Street are **significantly higher than nearby buildings**, seven stories higher in the case of 901 W. Madison (a ten-story building) and twelve stories higher than Monroe Manor (a five-story building).
- The traffic study generated for the project predicts that it will create **delays of up to 92 seconds for eastbound Madison Street traffic in the morning rush hour (a 50% increase to current conditions) and significant strain on the capacity of Monroe Street.**
- Already scarce, **parking on nearby city streets would become nearly impossible for local residents and business patrons.**
- In addition, the site design **does not adequately account for increased activity by taxis.**
- The **overcrowding of #20 route CTA buses** would also increase from the introduction of this project.



Since the most recent presentation to our committee about this project, the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD) has initiated a study to create development guidelines for new construction projects in the West Loop. Through this process, DPD has advocated for increased density in the West Loop, which we support – to a point. In this case, the developer has not demonstrated to our committee or to the community why upzoning is needed. Instead, **our committee will only support extending the existing zoning (DX-5 with a 5.0 FAR) to cover the entire property.** To meet this zoning level, the two 17-story towers should be reduced to a height more in line with existing adjacent buildings and the neighborhood character of the area.

Even with reductions in density, we feel that the resident concerns listed above need to be addressed to avoid overwhelming local infrastructure. Here are the improvements that we feel will need to be included before NoWL can support this project:

- Gain a commitment from the developer and CDOT that **all of the recommendations in the developer's traffic study, including the installation of a traffic signal at Madison and Peoria Streets** are made to improve capacity and safety, and that the costs for these improvements are borne by the developer.
- Initiate a traffic study to **assess the need for traffic signals at Monroe and Peoria Streets and at Monroe and Green Streets** (these items were excluded from the developer's traffic study).
- Noting that one of the traffic study recommendations is the implementation of parking restrictions on Madison, **increase the parking ratio from 0.5 to 0.6** (preferably through a reduction in the number of proposed units).
- Gain a commitment from the CTA for **ten more eastbound #20 bus trips each hour during the morning (7-9 am) and evening (4-6 pm) peak periods.**
- Work with CDOT to modify the site design to **account for taxi activity.**

The community has shown support for the proposed retail space that is included in the site concept, which we hope will include a café on the southwest corner of the site (facing Mary Bartelme Park). Additionally, we would like to see retail space added along Green Street to activate this section of the site, some of the proposed green space made accessible to the public, and the required affordable housing provided on-site.

Our committee appreciates the developer's willingness to meet with local condominium associations, including 901 W. Madison, to discuss the project and address the concerns they raised. We feel this is an important part of the development review process.

If it moves forward, this project may result in contributions to the Neighborhood Opportunity Bonus. We look forward to working with you to identify priorities for the expenditure of these funds.



Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Matthew Letourneau
Chairperson, Development Committee
NEIGHBORS OF WEST LOOP

cc: Chad Broderick, John Buck Company (cbroderick@tjbc.com)
NoWL Development Committee (full members)