



Old Town Merchants and Residents Association

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Oct 22, 2024

Re: Fern Hill Project Feedback

Dear Alderman Hopkins and the 2nd Ward office

Old Town Merchants & Residents Association has been focused on disseminating information, considering pros and cons, and waiting for the release of results from the CDOT traffic study and another public meeting regarding the impact of the proposed Fern Hill "Planned Development" that would permanently change the zoning of three sub-parcels of land: the Piper's Alley parcel, the Walgreens and parking lot parcel and the Moody Church and gas stations parcel.

OTMRA conducted a survey of our membership over the summer. This survey was intended to find out how OTMRA members feel about the proposed Fern Hill Development, what factors influence their opinions, and what factors could change their opinions.

Overall, 14.81% indicated support for the project, 64.81% indicated opposition, 16.67% indicated they were neutral, and 3.7% indicated they are not familiar or do not have an opinion. The response rate was higher among residents than among organizations and a higher percentage of residents than businesses indicated opposition.

Concerns of those against (tower position, density, traffic congestion, pedestrian/bike safety) were generally as predicted. Concern about crime and disruption during construction were also selected as reasons for concern by most of those against, although they were generally not one of the top 3 reasons.

Here is a summary of the top concerns / desired changes that OTMRA Staff, Zoning and Government Relations, and the OTMRA board has heard from our constituents from this survey and during many conversations and interactions:

- Piper’s alley structure and garage long-term zoning & concern for the current lack of maintenance.
 - Importance of The Second City remaining in Old Town for the long-term.
- Tower position
 - A majority feel that a tower right on Wells would distract from the charming feel of Old Town and movement east towards LaSalle would be an improvement.
- Number of units
 - While input varied, generally 100-units would be seen as an improvement to the project.
- Number of Floors
 - While input varied, generally 10-15 floors in height would be seen as an improvement to the project.
- Traffic Concerns
 - Concern for ability to live, work, and shop throughout the area safely and without worsening gridlock, whether it by car, public transport, bicycle, or on foot.
- Community contribution
 - Grocery Retailer
 - Space to support artisans and small businesses – both of which have helped make Old Town the unique neighborhood that it is.

In addition, community members are monitoring the advancement of other large proposed developments, including the 37-story mixed-use high-rise development at 1565 N Clybourn in the 2nd Ward, recently approved by City Council and proposed Cabrini Green redevelopments in the 27th ward. Constituents have expressed concern about impact on infrastructure (sewer, water, electric, streets) and would like insight on related plans.

Overall, OTMRA is hearing that Nick Anderson and Fern Hill have not established any level of trust with the community. We also hear that the community would expect that Fern Hill partner with the community and compromise on some of the concerns stated above. While there has been limited number of feet of set-back on Wells Street added and an ask for feedback on the color of the glass building, community perception is that these “gives” are trivial and that there has been no compromise to-date.

If the project were to move forward in any form, it would be helpful to establish a committee made up of representatives of key community organizations that Fern Hill would be required to consult with and communicate with on an ongoing basis, to minimize community impact and maximize community benefit before, during, and after construction.

Thank you again for your partnership and for listening.

Old Town Merchants and Residents Association

Marcy Huttas, Executive Director



Pam Farley, Board President

