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STAFF

Roderick Burch – Executive Director

Alex Graaff – Business Liaison Assistant



January 22, 2020

SENT VIA EMAIL WBURNETT@CITYOFCHICAGO.ORG AND U.S. MAIL

The Honorable Alderman Walter Burnett Jr.
City Hall, Room 203
121 N. LaSalle St.
Chicago, IL 60602

RE: Proposed development located at 800 W. Lake Street

Dear Alderman Burnett,

The West Central Association has been proud to work with your office, the Department of Planning and Development, area property owners, residents, and other stakeholders to develop the West Loop and bring sustainable economic development. As a long-standing community organization and a delegate agency of the city of Chicago, we know we have a duty to our community to devote adequate time and due diligence before finalizing our position on every project.

Below is a summary of our vetting process and position for this project:

- On August 21, 2019, the WCA Economic Development Committee met with the developer, further several of our development committee members and directors attended the community meeting at Catalyst Ranch on October 2, 2019, where the project was presented. At both meetings, concerns were raised regarding the challenging intersection of Lake and Halsted and the scale of the proposed hotel.
- Following the October community meeting, Developer's counsel provided written updates on traffic solutions proposed and agreed to by the Developer and CDOT. However, the WCA Economic Development Committee continued to have concerns regarding traffic, ride service drop off, parking and service vehicle staging in the alley and, as a result, issued a letter of opposition on December 13, 2019.
- On January 15, 2020, the developer again met with the WCA Economic Development Committee and provided additional data and information on the proposed traffic solutions, details about parking and service vehicle staging. At that meeting, the Developer, its architect, its traffic engineers and proposed valet operator explained the updated traffic solutions and answered questions from Committee members. The

Mailing Address: 917 West Washington Blvd #173 Chicago, IL 60607 **Office Location:** 406 N Aberdeen Street
Ph: 312.902.4922 **Email:** info@wccachicago.org **Website:** www.wccachicago.org | www.greektownchicago.org

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proposed traffic improvements included installation of a motorized gate with audible/visual pedestrian warnings at the intersection of the alley and Halsted; installation of “no left turn” and “do not enter” signs on the gate; upgrades to the Lake and Halsted traffic signal to provide north- and southbound left-turn arrows*, countdown timers and leading pedestrian intervals; installation of removable bollards in the vacated alley to mitigate vehicular congestion towards Green Street; providing adequate stacking in a widened vehicle access drive for 4 overflow laundry/service vehicles (above the two dedicated loading berths) and installation of directional signage at the entrance on Lake Street to direct cars on-site. Further, both the developer, on behalf of the Hotel operator and the Valet provider (SP+) committed to providing traffic management assistance to motorists, specifically ride share drivers*. The Developer has also agreed to provide lighting along both Lake Street and Halsted to help improve the pedestrian safety in the area.

As a result of the above review and additional information provided, we support the development for the following reasons:

- Architecture and design – The proposed development provides a high-quality building at a key entrance point to the neighborhood.
- Traffic and circulation – As detailed above, the Developer and its consultants have taken care to study and address the traffic and circulation issues raised by the community. Additionally, the proposal is an assemblage of properties owned by three separate property owners and, as such, presents a rare opportunity to develop all three sites together and take the traffic off the street as opposed to developing the sites separately with pick-ups and drop-offs occurring on the adjacent streets.
- Because the Developer committed that the restaurant and hotel and any resultant retail will be solely operated and under the control of the singular Hotel operator, we believe, based upon the new data provided by the traffic engineers, that the traffic congestion will be better than what would result from 3 ‘as of right’ developments on the site as the current ownership structure and zoning regulations would permit.
- Economic benefit – The proposed hotel use will bring new patrons of surrounding retail and restaurants to the neighborhood. Additionally, existing hotels in the neighborhood are experiencing incredibly high levels of demand, which the proposed hotel will help to meet.

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*Please note that the WCA EDC believes that the Developer has complied with community wishes to abate the potentially negative traffic impact of the proposed development to the extent it can control external elements outside of the subject site. However, the committee remains concerned about this and all other intersections along the very congested West Lake Street Corridor and encourages the City and CDOT to continue to explore congestion mitigation strategies along Lake. While the Halted / Lake intersection is too narrow to accommodate left turn lanes on Lake, other intersections might have other methods available to abate the bottleneck. The committee encourages further exploration of traffic congestion mitigation techniques in the entire West Loop, but particularly along West Lake Street.

In conclusion, based on the findings of the WCA Economic Development Committee, the WCA supports the project and the requested zoning change. WCA reserves the right to change its position at any time during the approval process if any changes or amendments are made by the applicant.

If you have any questions regarding our findings or recommendations, please contact me.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads 'Armando Chacon' in a cursive script.

Armando Chacon, WCA President

Cc: Maurice Cox, commissioner, city of Chicago DPD | via email & U.S. Mail
Noah Szafranec, supervising zoning plan examiner, city of Chicago DPD | via email
Katie Jahnke Dale, attorney, DLA Piper | via email

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