



July 10, 2017

Open Letter on 923 Locust Street Proposal and Downtown Planning

To Whom It May Concern:

The Downtown Neighborhood Association is excited about TWG's entrance to the St. Louis real estate market, but we have serious concerns over one segment of their proposal in Downtown St. Louis.

The latest plans we have seen account for 88 market rate apartments to be constructed in 2 existing buildings at 917-921 Locust St. along with 5 new construction for-sale town homes to be built where 923 Locust currently stands.

Downtown St. Louis can benefit from additional multifamily units as rental rates and occupancy have remained strong; however, we have concerns about the plan for the 923 Building. We recognize the building, though one of the oldest standing structures in Downtown St. Louis, is in poor structural condition and demolition may be the most appropriate action. This leads our attention towards what is proposed to replace it. Town homes are a missing and desired segment of residential real estate absent in our neighborhood, but we oppose their construction on this particular site for 3 main factors:

Central Business District – This proposal lies within the City of St. Louis' Central Business District (CBD), which contains the densest area of employment in the St. Louis region. The residential that has burgeoned over the last 15 years in this district has consisted of high-density, multi-story, multi-unit developments. It is important to preserve this density throughout the CBD and 5 single-family, street-level residences do not contribute.

Commercial/Retail – This is one of the few corners in Downtown St. Louis that possesses the possibility of having commercial/retail tenants open to the public on all 4 corners without any setbacks from the sidewalk and street. Activating the street is important for the vibrancy of Downtown by attracting investment and improving safety. If first-floor residences are built here, they will reduce vibrancy by creating a cold, quiet corner in the middle of a major metropolitan's downtown that will inhibit street-level business development for upwards of 30 years.

Selling/Leasing – It will be difficult to sell or lease first-floor residential units at this location due to the high volume of foot and car traffic at this corner. Merchandise Mart and OPO Lofts have already experienced difficulties leasing their first-floor residential units near this proposed location plus their first-floor residential units have caused harm to the vibrancy of Downtown St. Louis as outlined above.



DOWNTOWN
NEIGHBORHOOD
ASSOCIATION

This proposal is the latest example of why Downtown St. Louis needs a new comprehensive plan adopted by the City of St. Louis that is crafted with the input of community stakeholders to guide future development. If there were such a plan in place, then TWG would have invested their resources into a proposal for 923 Locust that would be more profitable for their investors while also protecting the future vibrancy of the neighborhood.

It is the Downtown Neighborhood Association's stance that a neighborhood plan with an updated zoning overlay adopted by the City of St. Louis is critical to ensuring a successful future for Downtown St. Louis, and we hope to see movement towards its implementation from our city leaders as soon as possible to prevent troublesome proposals such as the one for 923 Locust.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jared Opsal', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jared Opsal
Executive Director
Downtown Neighborhood Association