



December 14, 2020

Councilwoman Amanda Sandoval
1810 Platte Street
Denver, CO 80202

Via Email

Dear Councilwoman Sandoval:

We understand that redevelopment of four properties along the east side of Tennyson from West 46th Ave to Mas Kaos is likely. However, we urge your office to do whatever is possible to ensure the integration of this development with historic architecture and current building uses, environmental amenities, sustainable development, and the spirit of a traditional “Main Street” along the thoroughfare. As this treasured area has suffered substantial losses, it is more important than ever to recognize the value of what remains.

Tennyson Street has become the poster child for bad urban development. If built, the proposed structure will continue that trend, but on a scale more massive than anything we have seen before. It is our opinion that thoughtful redevelopment of these properties should be seen by developers as a privilege, not a right.

The corner of 46th and Tennyson is one of the most important in our neighborhood:

- Sweeping views of the northern Front Range and urban green space,
- Historic West 46th Avenue Parkway
- Gateway and northern anchor of the Tennyson Business District
- Berkeley Park Chapel (a Denver Landmark)
- Berkeley Park and its historic Bathhouse (on the National Register of Historic Places)
- Historic Smiley Library (a Denver Landmark)

The proposed structure does not belong. The Kansas City-based architect designed a monolithic apartment block, more than a football field in length, which could be “dropped” into any urban setting. There is no recognition of the unique history of our neighborhood, sense of place, or integration with the surrounding environment. The design is unimaginative, insensitive, and heavy-handed. Of special concern is the absence of any kind of pedestrian experience. Instead of interesting and engaging windows at street level, the architect forces visitors to navigate a narrow sidewalk bordered by an unbroken six-foot-high concrete wall.

Human Scale: The 130-unit monolithic structure in no way reflects the historic nature, or even the current unpopular “slot-home” development along Tennyson. There are numerous ways to break up the 375-foot-long façade along Tennyson including:

- Design an “anchor” restaurant wrapping the northwest corner of the property
- Develop several properties at a smaller scale
- Include balconies, doorways, courtyards, and other structural features
- Incorporate variable setbacks of more than two feet
- Create individual retail spaces that are smaller, less homogeneous, and more inviting to pedestrian traffic
- Include actual grade level (versus concrete walls and elevated entrances) doors and windows

Sensitive Design: A terraced (or stepped back) structure along the 46th Avenue side might be more sympathetic to the existing environmental and historic amenities. A rooftop (or third-floor) restaurant or other public space would provide a connection with the historic and environmental amenities to the north and give neighbors an opportunity to share in the redevelopment.

Include Local 46. This building has been a community asset for decades, and the “biergarten” and music venue concepts could be relocated along 46th Avenue. All or parts of the existing structure could be incorporated into new development to the south. This lower, less intense development adjacent to the parkway would provide a transition/buffer to more intensive development to the south.

In response to a demolition permit application for Local 46, Historic Berkeley Regis sent a letter to the property owner in April 2020, noting the historic importance of the building and requesting that they consider incorporating the current structure into redevelopment. The owner indicated to us he would be in touch, but was not. Our request was not unprecedented – an example of incorporation of an historic building elsewhere in Denver is the Uptown Tavern at 17th Ave and Pearl Street (photo attached).

Historic Berkeley Regis appreciated the support of more than 800 neighbors and community members in our successful effort to find a sensitive developer for the Berkeley Park Chapel and secure Landmark status. We will once again be reaching out to our constituents and presenting the concept plan and this letter of concern and asking for their feedback and support. The original concept plan for the Berkeley Park Chapel property was discarded – we will work to see that this current concept plan meets the same fate.

We understand that you are considering a temporary permit moratorium along Tennyson Street. Considering recent work on a zone district overlay and the disappointing concept plan, we support your moratorium in order to give the developers/property owner an opportunity to improve the design and allow the neighbors and public the chance to respond.

In closing, we note that one of the current property owners has publicly stated: "I will do my very best to see that the redevelopment at 46th is a positive addition." We urge the owners to work with your office and honor this commitment.

Sincerely,

Laurie Simmons *Marie Giedraitis Edgar*

Historic Berkeley Regis Co-Chairs
historicberkeleyregis@gmail.com

Cc: Berkeley Park Partners, LLC; Steven Teitelbaum, President, Berkeley Regis United Neighbors



E. 17th Avenue and Pearl Street--Uptown Tavern