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## Executive Committee\*

# Near Southside, Inc.

December 12, 2016

City of Fort Worth Zoning Commission  
1000 Throckmorton  
Fort Worth, TX 76102

Re: ZC-16-221 Magnolia/Henderson Hotel

Dear Zoning Commissioners,

Over the last two months, Near Southside, Inc. (NSI) has helped facilitate discussions regarding the proposed mixed-use project proposed by Bond Partners and designed by Bennett Benner Partners (BBP). The project is located at the intersection of Magnolia and Henderson, a central and important site within Magnolia Village.

The project has been the focus of four meetings facilitated by NSI. Those meetings allowed detailed discussions with surrounding homeowners, surrounding business owners, immediately adjacent building owners, and the Fairmount Neighborhood Association's Preservation Committee and Board of Directors.

In addition, our NSI Design Review Committee reviewed the project thoroughly to evaluate consistency with long-term planning goals for the district as well as design compatibility with its surroundings. Our review has also taken into account current market conditions and other contextual factors such as parking management.

Based on this review and the discussions with other stakeholders, NSI supports the requested PD zoning change. Specifically, we feel that the discussion has provided a thorough review of several significant issues, and our conclusions regarding each are outlined below:

1. Hotel use – When we worked with the City to create the Near Southside Development Standards and Guidelines, hotels were intentionally excluded from the list of uses allowed by right in NS-T4 zones. The intent was to prevent the type of generic prototype hotels favored by many of the national chains, as these wouldn't be complementary in many of the T4 areas adjacent to established neighborhoods. We still support that exclusion of hotels from the by right list for T4 and welcome case-by-case review of any hotel proposals. Based on our contextual review of this proposed hotel



# Near Southside, Inc.

project, we feel the developer's approach is the opposite of what we'd typically expect. Rather than looking to install a prototype without regard to site context, this proposal features a unique, unaffiliated boutique hotel that avoids a generic design approach and instead pays close attention its surroundings. Furthermore, the hotel use will ensure additional pedestrian activity and support for local businesses, two fundamental goals for Magnolia Village. (More on contextual design considerations below.)

2. Building heights – The PD request conforms to the site's split zoning of T4 and T4N with respect to maximum building heights of six stories and four stories, respectively. Those heights are achieved through compliance with two of three potential height bonus criteria. In this case the parking garage and mix of use provisions are met. Related to the interpretation of mix of uses, NSI is working with City staff on a text amendment to clarify that for the purposes of the height bonuses, hotels should be classified as residential, as the intent with the bonus is to promote a combination of uses that generates activity throughout the day, not just limited to daytime business hours. The vibrancy of a live/work/play district is a primary goal for Magnolia Village. The proposed combination of hotel, restaurant and residential uses advances that goal.
3. Compatibility with surrounding historic structures – We're aware of concerns and the full spectrum of opinions – favorable and against – related to the project's compatibility, particularly focusing on differences in building heights between the proposed hotel and the adjacent historic Mehl (west) and Schaefer (east) buildings. We agree with many of the adjacent stakeholders who have expressed their appreciation for BBP's efforts to minimize impacts. Specifically, BBP has set back the sixth story along Magnolia to roughly match the precedent-setting height of the historic Magnolia Marquis building on the block to the west. We also appreciate setbacks from the front property line along Magnolia that preserve pedestrians' views of the Mehl and Schaefer buildings. Finally, the architectural approach strikes a commendable balance, incorporating numerous elements and material selections that pay a tasteful tribute to the historic neighbors while also reflecting a clearly contemporary design aesthetic that will establish a new landmark that complements its older neighbors along Magnolia.
4. Traffic, circulation, and parking – The Near Southside still benefits from the traditional street grid put in place in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The grid's ability to disperse traffic efficiently is the reason that major traffic generators – even including large hospital campuses – are able to accommodate traffic demand on roadways sized the same as those surrounding this project site. A boutique hotel will not generate near the level of traffic as intensive commercial uses, and the project's site plan has taken many potential issues into account, such as locations for garage driveways and drop-off/pick-up facilities. Perhaps most significantly, in order to alleviate parking demand throughout the area, the project proposes a four-story, six-level (counting underground and roof) shared parking structure that meets all of the projects' requirements and also provides roughly 150-200 publicly available spaces. This is a



tremendous neighborhood benefit and a big step in the long-term parking management plan for Magnolia Village and the Near Southside.

5. Consistency with long-term planning goals – Beginning with the 1994 Southside Medical District Strategic Plan, and later through the City's mixed-use growth center policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan, this section of the Near Southside has been identified for many years as a desirable location for urban-style, highly walkable, higher density development. The Near Southside's redevelopment goals also prioritize a mix of uses throughout the district, so that sub-districts such as Magnolia Village are able to provide a balance of opportunities for residents, workers, and visitors. This project will help complete that mix for this section of Magnolia Village.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with the development team, BBP, and the neighborhood on this important project. NSI recommends approval of the requested zoning change with elevation drawings referenced as part of the approval.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Brennan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mike" being more prominent.

Mike Brennan  
Planning Director