

halstedneighbors.org

An ad-hoc committee of concerned neighbors

Broad Coalition of Angry, East Lakeview Residents Clashes with Freshman Alderman Cappleman Over Proposed 46TH Ward Rezoning, Mega-Development

Alderman James Cappleman beleaguered for non-inclusive process of pushing for massive, 270-unit apartment and retail development of Halsted-Bradley Place Wrigleyville site.

(CHICAGO, May 8, 2012) There is a major storm brewing in Chicago's dense and diverse 46th ward over a twin-tower "mega development" that a broad array of residents and businesses oppose. The proposed plan for 15- and 12-story towers calls for 270 apartments and nearly 14,000 sq. ft. of commercial space – making it the largest building on Halsted from the Loop to the north of the city.

Despite widespread and vocal opposition, freshman Alderman James Cappleman insists, "It's a done deal" as he seeks approval for rezoning from five stories to the development's proposed 15 stories. Opponents cite unwanted density and traffic, and a negative impact to affordable housing and property values.

The 46th ward includes popular residential and commercial neighborhoods like Lakeview and Wrigleyville, Uptown and Sheridan Park, parts of Lincoln Park and Ravenswood.

Alderman Cappleman has evoked the ire of several hundred of ward voters because of his staunch support for this mega development at the northwest corner of Halsted and Bradley Place. Many residents and business owners believe the development would greatly conflict with the character of the community and the preferences of a majority of area residents.

The proposed development site, a huge parking lot, has an interesting history. According to Attorney Thomas Pikarski, of the law firm Gordon and Pikarski, who has been retained as counsel for Halsted Neighbors: the proposed development site is an approximately 59,000 square-foot lot that is currently used as parking for the Open Arms Worship Center. The property had previously been a source of controversy, as it was illegally leased for baseball parking in violation of City of Chicago ordinances. While the lot continues to be owned by the Center, the proposed developer, JDL, holds the note on the property. The Center entered into a development agreement with JDL.

"The neighborhood is faced with a situation where a sophisticated developer acquired rights to a distressed property at a price below market rate and now seeks an even greater windfall by proposing an unjustified level of zoning designation that will result in significant damage to the community," Pikarski stated.

The Community Fights Back

A broad, diverse and invested coalition of residents has gone to great lengths to try and convince Alderman Cappleman and JDL that the development as proposed would have a devastating impact on the immediate neighborhood and the ward as a whole. They feel they're not being heard.

The Alderman's opponents include at least **12 area condominium** boards representing more than 800 residents; [East Lake View Neighbors](#) (ELVN), a member-driven group of local residents; the [Northalsted Business Alliance](#), a local business organization comprising more than 80 businesses along the popular corridor; and [Halsted Neighbors](#), a grassroots organization that was formed specifically to challenge the allegedly rigged process and the potentially devastating, proposed mega development.

ELVN wrote and issued a letter to Alderman Cappleman on April 30, 2012, strongly stating its opposition to the proposed development. The full letter can be read [here](#).

According to opponents like Mark Usiak, board president of his building's condo association and a member of HalstedNeighbors.org, residents in the surrounding blocks would suffer from reduced property values and a compromised quality of life if the new development were to happen. Halsted Neighbors.org members even invested their own money to hire architects to develop and share with Alderman Cappleman alternative designs and impact studies to no avail. The impact studies concluded that current residents would suffer from momentous increases in density and congestion; see city water, sewerage and electrical infrastructure greatly taxed at their expense; and lose natural light.

At a standing-room-only meeting at Gill Park Field house on March 26, with more than 150 local residents in attendance, Usiak asked all those who opposed the JDL development to raise their hands. With Alderman Cappleman and Jim Letchinger of JDL Development in attendance, Usiak states that nearly every attendee raised his or her hand.

Halsted Neighbors has launched a petition drive and has already obtained nearly 800 signatures aimed at demonstrating to the alderman and city officials that the proposed project is unwanted and that community members want adherence to current zoning.

At Alderman Cappleman's own planning meeting on Monday, April 30, many in attendance heard him state that he wasn't interested in compromise or in building consensus. This has greatly frustrated residents, reinforcing the view many hold that Cappleman is not fulfilling his obligations as a public servant.

"It's my opinion that the Alderman is confusing the facts," claimed Justin Westcott, resident and board member of his homeowner's association on W. Bradley Place, directly across the street from the planned development. "He began this process by saying he was neutral and would do what the community wanted. His actions seem to demonstrate otherwise. We believe his failure to adequately notify the community about public meetings is a tactic to limit input and help JDL push through this rotten deal.

"I know this is how Chicago politics *can* work; but we hoped our new mayor, administration and city council would signal a new era," added Westcott. "I thought we lived in a democracy. I don't think Alderman Cappleman got that memo."

Gill Park Coop Residents at Risk

Longtime residents at the Gill Park Cooperative (GPC) at 810 West Grace stand to suffer more than most if JDL and Alderman Cappleman get their way. Directly north of the site, the building is a rental co-op with many lower-income and minority residents. According to GPC residents, the proposed mega development would decrease GPC property values enough to derail long-term plans for the bank to finance a total rehab conversion of the co-op to affordable condos for current and future residents.

Loretta Cobb, president and long-term resident of the GPC released the following statement from her board. "Gill Park Coop is a culturally diverse melting pot. This proposed development

jeopardizes the GPC community's continual efforts to improve the quality of life for our members – and realize a long-held dream to have greater control of our destiny. We're not anti-development; we wanted to compromise with JDL, but they weren't interested."

As for Alderman Cappleman, his response to GPC residents and their allies entails a suggestion that the city's Low-Income Housing Trust Fund program (LIHTF) will reap a much-needed \$2.4 million for citywide low-income rentals from JDL. It's not being made clear that these funds can't be earmarked for the 46th ward.

Local Business Community Ups the Ante

Another influential group of opponents is the local business community – especially those with businesses along the North Halsted corridor. Jim Ludwig, the 25-year owner of Roscoe's Tavern and vice president of the Northalsted Business Alliance, says rezoning the area to accommodate JDL would hurt already-struggling local businesses. Ludwig helped secure passage of the current five-story zoning laws.

In an April 26, 2012 letter to Alderman Cappleman from the board of directors of the Northalsted Business Alliance, the group stated: "The current commercial zoning on Halsted (specific to the west side of the block between Bradley and Grace) is precious to our organization. It was deliberately created through tremendous effort and through many years of collaboration and agreement by the many organizations that make up and share our commercial street, including the City of Chicago." (The full letter can be read [here](#).)

The letter adds: "We fear that the premature and apparent approval of the proposed development, creating a predominantly residential building with a minimal commercial presence, violates the intent and nature of the protections this zoning provides our district. Our organization has successfully supported this zoning in the past because it facilitates a harmonious balance of building height, residential density, commercial vibrancy and an appropriate structural mass on our street. We feel that the proposed structure does not honor the promotion of these successes."

On May 24th, the project moves to the Chicago Planning Commission for review and potential approval. Should planning officials side with the developer and green light the project, it would be a devastating loss to the residents and businesses opposed to the project. It would also set a precedent for future exceptions to the five-story zoning law.

"People from all walks of life are very angry about the way this has been done," added Usiak. "We'll keep fighting right up to the wire with the goal of making a solid case to the planning commissioners that would require Alderman Cappleman and JDL back to the table for more community input and compromise. Should that fail, we'll explore other options – including litigation," Usiak concluded.

About HalstedNeighbors.org

Halsted Neighbors is an ad-hoc committee of concerned citizens working on behalf of the community with an emphasis on the neighborhood impacted by the proposed development.

Local residents who would like to learn more about the proposed project or who may be interested in signing a petition against the development can visit www.halstedneighbors.org.

#