

## **LCA/RANCH/HOB Objection to 1633 N. Halsted**

We thank Alderman Hopkins for including us in discussions about this project. We are disappointed by the end product — meetings from which we were excluded — because the proposed building is too big, too tall and out of context with its surroundings. It also lacks on-site green or open space.

### **Current Zoning: Halsted Pedestrian Corridor**

Halsted Street, from North Avenue to Belmont Ave, is a pedestrian corridor zoned B 3-2. As the noted architect Peter Landon has written in his statement to you: The proposed project “is a change from 2.2 to 5.0 FAR, which is more than double, and it changes the required site area of 1,000 sqft, (700 sqft for efficiency) per unit to 200 sqft, (135 sqft for efficiency) per unit. These both will result in a significant change to the overall character of our neighborhood.” Again this project doubles the allowable square footage. It will tower over the three-story townhomes on Burling St, and cast that area in shade.

We are very afraid of a domino effect, once developers are allowed such notable and excessive variances our neighborhood’s protected pedestrian way will become part of Chicago’s loss history.

### **History of Steppenwolf Theater**

The Steppenwolf Theater is the only building which significantly exceeds the B3-2 zoning within our corridor. There is a deep history to this exception. The community’s support of the Steppenwolf theater buildings and the large concrete parking lot *only occurred* because of our community’s commitment to Chicago theater and the Steppenwolf Theater Group in particular. Steppenwolf has a long history within the north side. The development of our city’s cultural and theater community is important to us. The Steppenwolf theater is the only glass facade on Halsted Street. It sits across the street from the proposed site. Again, significant variances were approved because we as a community believe Chicago needs vital neighborhood theater centers. The proposed building is replacing another theater compound, The Royal George. COVID took a heavy toll on our city’s theater community and we mourn the loss of the Royal George. The proposed building which replaces the Royal George is not adding to our theater or cultural heritage.

### **Affordable Units**

We understand Steppenwolf’s need for affordable units for their visiting actors and staff. Lincoln Central Association and RANCH whole heartedly support affordability within Lincoln Park and have a strong history of working with developers to assure on-site affordable units are built in our community. Lincoln Commons is one of the examples of just such a commitment. We worked closely with the McCaffery Interests. We are proud of the 55 affordable units which were built on-site. Developers such as McCaffery are models for all. Steppenwolf needs to know we will support their needs. We fully back on-site affordable units.

### **Other Developments on Halsted**

We are *not* opposed to a modern design but this project fails to even “nod” to the context of our neighborhood and its immediate neighbors which include the federally landmarked Yondorff Block and Hall, built in 1877 and the city’s landmarked Halsted-Willow Gateway, a collection of buildings from the Victorian era. Both the current 2nd ward alderman and Michele Smith of the 43rd Ward diligently supported the landmarking of the Willow Halsted intersection. We are and will be forever grateful for that Landmarking. Years earlier a large suburban type mall development was voted down by the community at the Willow Halsted site. A new developer

entered the scene, protected two of the proposed landmarked buildings and built apartment complexes on the West side of Halsted which were fully approved by both RANCH and Lincoln Central Association. The developers of the project demonstrated a sensitivity to the community. And, the neighborhood associations approval of the residential buildings demonstrated a commitment to sensitive development. Such partnerships are mutually beneficial

We must strongly assert, LCA and RANCH are not anti-development. LCA has worked closely with multiple developers including approving the plans for two permitted buildings on Halsted which will hug Yondorff Hall. Both of those projects are modern, both are brick and glass, and even, generously, included elements from the Yondoff in their design. Such respect for the context of the pedestrian way and its history was and is greatly appreciated. This project would be more palatable if it was less imposing and more respectful of the community's context.

### **Neighbors to The East**

We are very concerned about the neighbors to the east of this project. This project looms over them and their voices have been silenced with the proposed negotiated deal. HOB is not a NIMBY group. They are sophisticated city dwellers who are only asking that the impact upon their residential units be addressed, including traffic within their alley. They have over 200 supportive neighbors who have signed their petition. Their voice should not be ignored.

### **\$300,000 Contribution to Alderman Hopkins**

The \$300,000 last minute contribution to the 2nd Ward is a disturbing development. As of June 2023, we were assured the proposed project would not have the Alderman's support. Communication with the community from the Alderman's office offered us assurances again when the developer asked to appear before the July Dept of Planning Meeting without notifying the Alderman's office or the community. Regarding the developer's unexpected request to appear at the Planning Dept, July meeting, the Alderman's office notified our community: *"We were also surprised. It appears that Draper and Kramer submitted their zoning change application to be heard at July's Committee on Zoning, which is **NOT** something that Alderman Hopkins approved with the current design."*

We sincerely worry that \$300,000 contribution tipped the scale toward approval by our Alderman with no input from the community. Furthermore, there was no discussion as to how the donation came to be and how the monies would be distributed. Applying the monies to the site under the el near North Avenue had no public input. A large southeast park space is currently being developed by Chicago Park District as part of the city's community agreement with the neighborhood after the demolition of Cabrini Green. The under the EI space at North Avenue should be included within the Chicago Park District's budget. Any greening provided for by the unexpected donation logically should be used in the immediate area surrounding the projected development. The site is now barren of any green provided by the developer. The lack of permeability and green is not conducive to current urban planning which recognizes the need for greening within such urban sites. The Halsted pedestrian corridor should benefit from the green initiative not a site a mile away.

### **Sudden Lack of Support by Alderman's Office**

Lincoln Central Association, RANCH Triangle Association and HOB firmly oppose this development and how the process for approval was recently advanced.

As James Sherwood of HOB noted our alderman has supported neighborhood concerns in the past. A project at 1320 W Fullerton had many similarities to the Halsted site but our alderman stood firm. The alderman wrote to his constituents: "Last summer, after much deliberation and

concerns from neighbors, it was determined that the zoning change request for 1320 W Fullerton had to be denied. The 14 story, 158-foot building proposed by Lakeshore Sport and Fitness was much too large for the location and would have significantly altered the character of the neighborhood in a way that local residents clearly expressed was undesirable. Additional issues of insufficient parking and increased traffic on an already very busy Fullerton were also factors in my decision. As your alderman, I highly value your feedback. In this case, the feedback was clear. The neighborhood does not desire a building of this size, so I did not and will not be supporting this zoning change.”

Mr. Sherwood subsequently wrote to our Alderman: *“The parallels here are self-explanatory, and in this case, the preservation of a historic corridor is involved. The precedent for a denial clearly exists. And the standards that apply to a local health club should also apply to an influential group of developers.”*

We ask this project not receive approval without further discussion with the local community. Again we are not opposed to development, but the way this project has advanced is a travesty to the community and its relationship with its Alderman.

Sincerely,  
Lincoln Central Association and Ranch Triangle Association

Deirdre Graziano  
LCA Zoning Committee