



Chairperson Teresa Córdova
Chicago Plan Commission
121 N. LaSalle St., Room 1000
Chicago, IL 60602

Via email: CPC@cityofchicago.org

August 13, 2021

Dear Chairperson Córdova and Members of the Chicago Plan Commission,

I write to you regarding the development planned for 1201-1229 W. Washington Blvd in the West Loop. At a community meeting held on July 19 for the project, the developer first presented the project as having 288 residential units that would include both moderately priced and affordable units.¹ We think more affordable housing options in the West Loop would be wonderful, as UNITE HERE Local 1 represents hospitality workers who work in the West Loop and Downtown. The quality of life of the working families we represent could benefit greatly if they could afford to live in the West Loop, closer to where they work.

However, upon inspection of Zoning Reclassification Ordinance O2021-2456 for a Residential Business Planned Development for 1201-1229 W. Washington, we were troubled to find that up to 154 of the planned 288 residential units could be converted into hotel rooms.² This creates a disturbing loophole that could change the entire character of the building in the future, from moderately priced and affordable housing for working families into majority hotel rooms. When asked at the community meeting about the possibility of turning the residential units into hotel rooms, representative for the development team, Mr. Ezgur, stated:³ “There are some of these operators that like to take a block of units, like let’s say they take a floor of units, and do more of an extended stay. We don’t have any, we’re not in any discussions with that and you could imagine since COVID that that’s not much of something that is financeable at this point, so it’s not really intended.”⁴

If that is true, then the development team should have no objection to amending the Planned Development to close the hotel loophole. Keeping this loophole would put the working families living in the building in the years to come in danger of being uprooted from their homes. The surrounding community could be forced to deal with an unwanted hotel down the road. If the development team truly seeks provide

¹ Minute 9:42 of West Loop Community Organization Community Meeting for Proposed Development at 1201-29 W. Washington, July 19, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=2007752339373270&ref=watch_permalink

² Page 8 of O2021-2456, “Zoning Reclassification Map No. 1-G at 1201-1235 W Washington Blvd/22-42 N Racine Ave - App No. 20742,” <https://chicago.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4991860&GUID=34D89B43-2D89-4120-BABF-5BF44FB3EB01&Options=Advanced&Search=>

³ Minute 41:05 of West Loop Community Organization Community Meeting for Proposed Development at 1201-29 W. Washington, July 19, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=2007752339373270&ref=watch_permalink

⁴ Minute 41:29 of West Loop Community Organization Community Meeting for Proposed Development at 1201-29 W. Washington, July 19, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=2007752339373270&ref=watch_permalink

“workforce housing”⁵ and serve an “overlooked” demographic⁶, then they should not need or want an escape hatch via this hotel loophole. If the developer one days decides they would like to convert the building into a hotel, they should have to go through the public review process for that change. It is unfair to the future residents of the building and the surrounding community to include this loophole that could change the character of the building and the neighborhood unexpectedly and without a thorough public review process.

We urge you to close this hotel loophole by amending the Planned Development 1201-1229 W. Washington Blvd and striking the language that allows for the conversion of residential units to hotel rooms.

Thank you,



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CC: Alderman Walter Burnett; Commissioner Maurice Cox, Chicago Department of Planning and Development

⁵ Minute 50:10 of West Loop Community Organization Community Meeting for Proposed Development at 1201-29 W. Washington, July 19, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=2007752339373270&ref=watch_permalink

⁶ Minute 34:20 of West Loop Community Organization Community Meeting for Proposed Development at 1201-29 W. Washington, July 19, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=2007752339373270&ref=watch_permalink

Public Comment before the Chicago Plan Commission

August 19, 2021

Submitted by Lorraine Jackson

Good morning. My name is Lorraine Jackson. I'm here to speak to you about the development at 1201 West Washington Boulevard in the West Loop. We need more housing affordable options for working families like mine, especially in neighborhoods like the West Loop which are so accessible to downtown hospitality jobs. I urge you to protect the moderate and affordable housing, and say NO to the hotel loophole that the developer is seeking today.

I've worked for 24 years as a room attendant at the Monaco hotel in Downtown Chicago. All my life, I have lived on Chicago's South Side. When I started working at the hotel, I lived in West Englewood and my two youngest children were in grade school. Every day, I spend about two hours getting to and from work - that adds up to about 12,000 hours I missed spending with my children over the years. I had to rely on family to look after my sons to make sure they stayed out of trouble after school, and that they got their homework done.

I wish I could have been there with them, but I had to make sure we could make the rent and put food on the table. I know other working moms are not as lucky as I am to have support and people they trust to look after their children while they travel far to work. But moms should not have to choose between providing for our children and spending time with them.

We need more housing options that are close to where the jobs are – Downtown and the West Loop. It would have improved my and my children's life greatly if we could have lived closer to my work. The developers of 1201 W. Washington told the community they want to provide moderate and affordable housing in the West Loop. If that is true, why do they also want the option to turn over half of those housing units into hotel rooms? We need more affordable housing options for working families in neighborhoods like the West Loop, not a hotel loophole.

Thank you.

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Lorraine (right) with her daughter and granddaughters

Public Comment before the Chicago Plan Commission

August 19, 2021

Submitted by Marvin Noriega

Good morning. My name is Marvin Noriega. I'm here today to speak about the proposed development at 1201 West Washington in the West Loop neighborhood.

Until recently, I lived in Hermosa where I grew up. My commute to my hotel job at the Westin Michigan Avenue hotel was about an hour each way because I couldn't afford the places close to the train. I worked hard to save up so I could spend a little more on rent and live closer to my job. I got lucky and recently found a place in Buena Park, about a 15 minute commute. This has improved my quality of life a lot. But it was really hard to find a place I could afford. We need more housing options for working people in Chicago, especially in areas like the West Loop which are close to downtown jobs.

So, why does the developer of 1201 W. Washington say they want to build moderate and affordable housing but also want the ability to turn over half of the housing units into hotel rooms?

Earlier this week, I had an experience that made me think of the future families at 1201 W. Washington. I took my first airplane trip since the pandemic. On the way home, my flight was cancelled, and after many hours of delays, I was finally rebooked and was told I would be upgraded to first class. I've never flown first class. Ever. But mostly I was just happy to finally go home.

On the flight, I took my assigned seat in first class and buckled up. A few minutes later, the flight attendant approached me and said loudly, "There's been a mistake, you can't sit here in first class. You need to move back to economy." Everyone around me turned to look. I felt so ashamed. Even though I hadn't done anything wrong, I felt so small as I scrambled to get my belongings and walked to the back of the plane. This may seem like a small incident, but I would never wish that feeling on anyone.

I can now imagine what the 154 working people and families who will be living at 1201 W. Washington will experience the day the building owner says to them, "We're turning your home into a hotel. You'll need to get out." Can you imagine what that would feel like? I hope you will consider this as you take your vote. Please protect housing for working families and close the hotel loophole at 1201 W. Washington.



Thank you.

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