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June 16, 2021

Teresa Córdova, Chair Chicago Plan Commission
City Hall
121 N LaSalle St, Room 1000
Chicago, IL 60602

Re: Proposed Zoning Change at 1838-1842 N. Elston Avenue

Dear Chairperson, Córdova:

Thank you for keeping the community informed and accepting feedback about the proposed zoning change at 1838 -1842 N. Elston Avenue. After a thorough review of the proposal followed by discussions with our members and partners, North Branch Works opposes the proposed zoning change at 1838 N. Elston Avenue from heavy manufacturing (M3-3) to neighborhood mixed-use (B3-3) and Residential Planned Development to allow for the building of a 74'-foot building with 34 residential units.

Changing the zoning here would break up a block of properties zoned for manufacturing, which is an incredibly valuable resource that supports manufacturing jobs which pay family-sustaining wages without requiring advanced degrees. Approval of this zoning change would send a signal to the other industrial businesses along Elston that the city is actively encouraging relocation which has the potential to exacerbate environmental inequities in the city. This zoning change proposal is not consistent with the goals of the North Branch Framework Plan whose primary goal is to "Maximize the North Branch as an Economic and Vital Job Center."

In addition, many industrial businesses near 1838 N. Elston Avenue like SIPI Metals, Howe Corporation, Vin Chicago, O'Brien Metal, and Chicago Roof Deck and Garden have worked hard for many years to create a successful business environment along the Elston Avenue. The area has experienced great success in large part because companies could plan for and rely upon compatible surrounding land uses. A change in the zoning would introduce residential units in an area with heavy truck traffic which has a number of industrial businesses in operation.

We would prefer to see 1838 N Elston used in a manner consistent with the current zoning and the North Branch Framework Plan, which would create many benefits including strengthening local economic development and adding high-quality neighborhood jobs.

NBW is a membership-based nonprofit neighborhood organization that for nearly forty years has promoted balanced, job-creating economic development along the North Branch of the Chicago River. We are also a City of Chicago "delegate agency" providing an array of support services to local businesses. As the business environment along the North Branch has shifted, so has our agenda. NBW defines its business constituency as the whole spectrum of enterprises be found within its service area.

NBW is happy to work with 32nd Ward Ald. Scott Waguespack and the property owner to attract a business to this land parcel that complies with the current zoning. Please contact me if we can be of any assistance moving forward.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Simmons", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Steve Simmons
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Cc: Ald. Scott Waguespack, 32nd Ward
Tim Tuten, President, The Hideout
Kelly Coyle, Vice President, SIPI Metals
Darren Flynn, Managing Principal, Chicago Roof Deck and Garden
Tammy Phillips, President, Howe Corporation
Pete Schwarzbach, Owner, Vin Chicago
Keith Skogstrom, Geodesic Designs
John O'Brien, O'Brien Metal