



August 18, 2021

Theresa Córdova, Chair Chicago Plan Commission
121 N LaSalle St, Room 1000
Chicago, IL 60602

2545 West Diversey Avenue
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Chicago, IL 60647
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Re: Proposed zoning change at 901 N. Halsted St.

Dear Chairperson Córdova:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the Halsted Pointe project proposed by Onni Group. We have some concerns about the project, most notably about the lack of transportation infrastructure in the area and its potential impact on nearby industrial land uses. If approved by the Plan Commission and City Council, North Branch Works wants the project to succeed.

North Branch Works is a membership-supported, nonprofit neighborhood organization that for almost four decades 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 both industrial and nonindustrial.

The proposed Halsted Pointe project falls within our service area, and we have some significant concerns including the site’s proximity to industrial uses, the proposed density, and limited transportation options other than personal vehicles. The site does not have safe and easy access to CTA train stops and lacks infrastructure that supports alternative modes of transportation such as walking and biking. We are pleased that Onni Group will be required to submit traffic studies at each plan review. If the project is approved, we encourage the Chicago Department of Planning and Development to do a comprehensive transportation plan so that infrastructure improvements can be identified and built that address the needs of new residents and existing industrial businesses.

The current DS-5 zoning accommodates uses that complement the existing Planned Manufacturing Districts (PMDs) to the west. These PMDs include heavy industrial uses identified as “critical services” in the North Branch Framework Plan. We are pleased that the developer has met with the adjacent businesses, community groups, and the Department of Planning and Development. Onni Group’s re-orientation of the site to move residential units to north and east is an improvement. Additionally, the project will be phased such that the last area to be developed is the one closest to the PMDs, and those buildings will consist of hotel and office uses. These adjustments are noteworthy in their attempt to mitigate the impact of the development on neighboring businesses. Nonetheless, the buildings are less than 1,000 feet from industrial uses, and we remain concerned that introducing a residential development in areas adjacent to heavy industry will lead to unwarranted complaints against the existing, properly zoned, and permitted businesses. Without additional protections for the existing businesses, we are wary of residential land use being permitted so close to heavy industry.

For public transit, the closest CTA train stops are the red line at North/Clybourn (over 3/4 of a mile away) and the blue line at Chicago (over 3/5 mile away) which may not be close enough to provide viable public transit alternatives. The adjacent bus lines (8 along Halsted and 66 along Chicago) will need more buses to accommodate the increased usage. Without these additional public transit investments, the area will be congested impacting the industrial businesses, local business patrons, commuters, and through-travelers.

One potential way to reduce the impact on traffic would be to structure the residential units as workforce housing for businesses located in the Goose Island area beyond the onsite affordable housing. If the workforce housing allowed people to commute to work as pedestrians, this would mitigate the traffic impact, improve public health, and preserve affordability. Provided appropriate protections for industrial businesses are instituted, this might be a viable option.

North Branch Works looks forward to continuing to work with Onni Group, the Department of Planning and Development, and Ald. Walter Burnett (27th Ward) to ensure that this development serves the needs of the community as a whole.

Sincerely,



Steve Simmons
Director of Business and Economic Development

Cc: Ald. Walter Burnett, 27th Ward