

Mather should downsize proposal

Evanston/ Evanston residents concerned about excessive new development should look at Mather LifeWays' proposal for two huge new buildings at Hinman Avenue and Davis Street. These proposed buildings are two more dominos in a development trend that has seen too many buildings built too tall, too close to the street, too dense and with too much bulk and too little open space.

Such development is inappropriate in Evanston.

It is time for voters to say "enough."

We don't want the urban canyons created by such development. We don't want the traffic congestion. We don't want to lose open space. And most importantly, we don't want huge buildings

overwhelming our single-family neighborhoods. We need to preserve the residential charm of Evanston.

Residents in the Central Street and Chicago Avenue areas have recently succeeded in reducing allowable development. But those efforts will be for naught if developers are allowed to ignore those limits in a planned development. That is what Mather is doing and why Evanston residents should be concerned.

A planned development is allowed to build bigger than generally permitted by-right in a zoning district. The extras over by-right limitations are called "site development allowances" and they are allowed only if the development advances an important public benefit. The zoning ordinance wisely prohibits a developer from exceeding site development allowances unless two-thirds of our aldermen find that the excess is essential to achieve a public benefit.

The ordinance already allows Mather to build to a height significantly greater than allowed adjacent to any other single-family neighborhood in Evanston. The Mather's development exceeds the maximum site development allowances for height and for lot coverage, yet Mather refuses to show why the excess is essential.

So there is no justification for the excess. To the contrary, if Mather were to build within by-right zoning limits, it would still have more housing units than it has today and it would have an average number of units for a continuing care retirement community based upon nationwide statistics. Mather should be required to downsize its project.

If you share my opinion about development, I invite you to learn more by visiting www.matherneighbors.org and contacting your alderman to voice your opinion.

Thomas P. Conley