

There goes the neighborhood

Evanston/ In the late 1960s, a developer wanted to build an eight-story building on the west side of the 1700 block of Hinman Avenue, but was allowed only three stories.

The City Council believed strongly that Evanston had the right to plan its future development so that the tallest buildings would be in the center of downtown. From there, heights would slope gradually downward toward single-family (R1) neighborhoods. The developer sued.

The city retained Jack Siegel to present our case. He called our then director of planning, Richard Carter, as a witness. Carter testified that the "plaintiffs' development plans would be detrimental to the area, particularly on single-family residences."

This was an expensive effort to protect the R1. The city lost in Circuit Court and again in the Court of Appeals. In 1974, however, the Illinois Supreme Court reversed: 57 Ill.2d 415, 312 N.E.2d 625.

My neighborhood was the immediate beneficiary of that ruling: The single-family homes on the east side of Hinman would not be overshadowed.

Now comes Mather LifeWays with a plan to construct two 10-story buildings, where eight stories are allowed by right, on the east side of Hinman on the 1600 and 1500 blocks. Only an alley would separate them from R1.

There goes our neighborhood and perhaps others in the future.

Details of some of the other 17 zoning variations requested may be found at www.matherneighbors.org.

Mary Singh