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Wednesday, February 15, 2017

Burlington Development Review Board
Department of Planning and Zoning
City Hall
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear Board,

The project area of "The Vaults" is situated in the heart of Burlington's South End, the Arts District and the Enterprise Light Manufacturing zoning district (ELM). The district is designed to help facilitate business and arts while respecting the buffer to the surrounding neighborhoods.

The buildings at 400 Pine have morphed through the decades from rough industrial uses to modern times where they are littered with a variety of uses. Everything from creative, small incubator spaces and artist studios to larger offices and retail exist in our complex.

The buildings we are proposing to demolish are in very rough shape. This is not due to a failure to keep the buildings standing. Many repairs have been made through the years. Evidence of the state of the buildings can be found in the conditions assessment and financial narrative previously submitted.

The brick structure has a failing foundation, was built with very soft brick and has a roof that is compromised due to multiple overloading events. The red warehouse has been modified drastically through the years, greatly reducing any historical value. It too needs a massive amount of work to be saved. The duplex at 30 and 32 Howard has also been modified through the years. Interior trims have been replaced, new floors installed, vinyl siding installed and windows replaced. The units are in rough shape as well. The bottom line is whatever historical integrity other buildings on our site may have, these have unquestionably lost it through the years. Evidence of this has been submitted in the Historic Resources Report. We believe the visual benefit is self-evident. This project also entails expanding a buffer to conform to modern zoning between the commercial ELM and the residential neighborhood it abuts.

The "Vaults" building we are proposing is very much in keeping with the fundamental goals of the ELM and PlanBTV South End. Plan BTV outlined the need for more artist studio space within the South End. This project plans to add over 5,000sf of small studio space to the neighborhood. The plan also outlines that expansion of existing artist space should be encouraged. Unfortunately, rehabbing the existing buildings in this case is cost prohibitive. The only way for us to expand the amount of studio space is to demolish the buildings proposed and build new.

We very much hope to continue to foster the creativeness of the south end with this new structure. By having artist studio spaces on the ground floor, we hope to bring the public into the arts community.

Financially, the city will see a benefit as well through the increase in taxable property value. The structures that exist today are worth very little in comparison to the 3 story mixed use building proposed here.

The city will also realize a benefit from the new infrastructure proposed. The storm water impact is being reduced from what it is today and in addition, while the sewer and storm water systems remain combined on Howard st., the project will be built with separate storm and sewer infrastructure in anticipation of a future split. Impervious area is being reduced by 1,725sf and the peak flow rates for storm water (site total) is being reduced from 0.96cfs to 0.38cfs.

I will add, that unlike many projects in Burlington, we have nearly universal support. Whether it be a neighbor that does not like the unsightly buildings that exist today or a community member who sees the need for more studio and office space for budding artists and entrepreneurs, who have the support of the community, something that means a great deal to us as stewards of the neighborhood. We ask that you help us foster the creativity and growth of the South End by removing these burdensome structures and replace them with something that fits well with our community.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Unsworth', written in a cursive style.

James Unsworth