

Public Input for the Historic Preservation Commission, August 28, 2025

RE: Boulevard Arcade Proposal Public Hearing

Lisa Marquardt, 110 South Marion St.

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been privileged to serve on the Historic Zoning Commission in Franklin, Tennessee for ten years. The stated priorities regarding historic preservation in Franklin mirror the same priorities here in Oak Park. However, there is a salient difference in the execution of those priorities: if a COA is denied by our historic preservation commissioners in Franklin, the applicant's only recourse is to modify the application in order to comply with the guidance provided both by commissioners and the design review guidelines. Sadly, in the case of the Boulevard Arcade proposal, we see a blatant disregard for what the commission has repeatedly and clearly stated to the applicant.

On July 25, 2025, the applicant appeared in front of the commission for a third time requesting a COA. One of the commissioners at this meeting posed this very pointed question: "Why does your client and everything you've been putting forward repeatedly not address the village focus on historic preservation?" The same commissioner brought attention to the fact that the applicant had ignored the importance of Envision Oak Park. She described Envision Oak Park as the 'springboard' for a comprehensive plan, a plan that emphasizes historic preservation.

Another difference between Oak Park and the town where I have served, is the attention given to public opinion. Like Oak Park, the purpose of Envision Franklin was to use it as a template for planning and managing growth in a way that aligned with the opinion of residents. That 'template' continues to actively serve as a helpful and important guide. In contrast, the Envision Oak Park document commissioned for the same reasons seems to have fallen by the wayside. The commissioner's statement referencing the importance of historic preservation is clearly articulated in the document itself: "Participants identified historic preservation as an important issue and a value that makes Oak Park unique. Many residents mentioned the need to ensure that historic structures are maintained and rehabilitated in order to preserve the character of neighborhoods and commercial districts." And, as an overarching conclusion based on the study: "Oak Park is nationally renowned for its architecture and history, including three nationally recognized historic districts. By supporting the preservation of the historical and architectural heritage in the community, Village government can help ensure one of Oak Park's defining characteristics, and source of community pride, is not compromised." If Envision Oak Park is *not* used as a compass for decisions by our Village government, the value of Oak Park's historic preservation will be at risk.

Historic preservation commissioners are asked to serve in their capacity because of their commitment to volunteer time and expertise for the sake of preserving Oak Park's historic resources. It is disheartening to see their hard work and dedication jeopardized by political or financial interests that may come into play when a development is proposed. One commissioner stated his frustration in no uncertain terms: "I understand that per ordinance the discretion is on the Village Board to overrule us on certain decisions. I find it very insulting to be told from the beginning that that's the point of all this when we've taken the time multiple times to offer careful feedback to basically be told that all of this is basically laying the groundwork to ask the Village Board who are presumably better disposed to a developer or something like that."

We, the residents of this special place, rely on adherence to the decisions of the Historic Preservation Commission to ensure that the historical and architectural heritage of this special place will not be irreparably compromised. Specifically, the Boulevard Arcade proposal, which would be attached to a 120-year-old landmark and would be out of context with the entire area surrounding it, should not be considered.

Thank you.
Lisa Marquardt
110 S. Marion St.
Oak Park, 60302

August 27, 2025

To: Oak Park Historic Preservation Committee members
From: Patrick Connolly, Oak Park
Re: Opposition to the COA application for 1035 South Blvd.

To whom it may concern:

Here we are again ... but as always, I thank you for your service.

I maintain my opposition regarding the COA application on several grounds, among them:

1. The proposal **does not meet 8 of the 10 HPC guidelines** and is thus **unsuitable**.
2. If built, the addition would **ruin the viewshed** from the **nationally landmarked Pleasant Home** in Mills Park.
3. The proposed building **does not match the scale, scope, and materials** of all the other structures on the block – it is **discordant with the entire neighborhood**.

Beyond the scope of the COA application, I oppose this building for a host of other reasons:

1. The developers' **stated agenda of ignoring repeated rejections** by the HPC and, without any adjustment of plans, **taking the proposal to the Trustees smacks of a disregard** for Oak Park's historical character, standards and the work and opinion of the HPC.
2. A **lack of transparency** regarding the identity of the developer(s) themselves. **Paul Beckwith, a member of the OP Plan Commission**, is listed as **one of the managers (owners)** of the proposed building's holding company and was identified as such at the December neighborhood meeting by architect John Scheiss. Yet Mr. Beckwith has **not publicly identified himself or spoken out about his role** in the project.
3. **Only one of the 72 Oak Park landmark buildings has been added onto ...** and that was a garage, in scale with the original building. **Approving this addition** (which also calls for height and density variances) **would destroy any illusion of a methodical, planned Oak Park approach to urban design or protection of historically significant buildings**.
4. **Using an alley as the main entrance** to the proposed building for residents, employees, service personnel and emergency responders is **unsound and unsafe**.
5. The proposed **car elevator** for parking **would cause delays and frustration** for anyone using the alley.
6. **A luxury apartment building does nothing** in meeting Oak Park's affordable housing goals. At 24 units, **the developers also avoid the 25-unit threshold for contributing to a housing fund**.

Patrick Connolly
110 S. Marion, Unit 202
Oak Park, IL 60302



Outlook

Fw: Letter against 1033 South Blvd proposal

From: Bruce, Michael <mbruce@oak-park.us>
Date: Tue 8/26/2025 8:38 AM
To: Bruce, Michael <mbruce@oak-park.us>

From: Terri Lackey <terrilackey@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 25, 2025 9:14 PM
To: Bruce, Michael <mbruce@oak-park.us>
Subject: Letter against 1033 South Blvd proposal

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Mike,

The following letter is for introduction into the August 28 public hearing re: the 1033 South Blvd proposal. For the sixth time, we are against this interminable project.

We strongly oppose the proposal to squeeze a 10-story tower with just 24 apartments into the small space behind the historic Boulevard Arcade Building at 1033 South Boulevard.

Our primary concerns—safety and traffic—fall outside your purview, but the project's failure to meet historic preservation standards should be enough to reject it. In fact, it meets only one of the 10 Historic Preservation Commission guidelines. That alone justifies denying it a Certificate of Appropriateness (a second time).

The motivation behind this development is clear: the owners seek to reduce their property taxes from 25% to 10%—not to benefit the community. These are not affordable apartments, nor do they serve any unmet housing need.

We have not objected to the high-rise apartments that have gone up around our condo on South Marion, even when they blocked our view of the sunset. In fact, we welcomed new developments. But this proposal is unnecessary. Why? Because our area already has more than enough so-called “luxury” apartments.

In just the past five years, developers have added 1,227 rental units in our village.

Unlike [1033 South Boulevard](#), these developments used available space efficiently, building shorter structures with more apartments. And they are not within a historic district.

The 1033 proposal, by contrast, would erect a 10-story building—more than double the height of the surrounding structures—while adding just 24 apartments. Developers claim proximity to the Green Line is one of the project's key selling points. If that's the case, they should remove

three floors of parking.

Approving this project would set a dangerous precedent in a location bordering two historic districts. There are countless reasons to deny developers a Certificate of Appropriateness, but the fact that it fails nine out of 10 Historic Preservation Commission guidelines should be the decisive one.

Let's uphold our community's standards. Reject this ill-conceived proposal.

Terri Lackey & Robert Wyatt

110 S. Marion Street Unit 307, Oak Park, IL



August 22, 2025

Dear Members of the Historic Preservation Commission of Oak Park,

I am writing on behalf of Thrive Counseling Center and the individuals we serve. Thrive is a nonprofit organization that has been located in Oak Park for more than 125 years. We are a Community Mental Health Center, serving the most vulnerable and under-resourced individuals in our community.

I understand there is a hearing on August 28th regarding the building of a 10-story addition behind the Boulevard Arcade Building. We are deeply concerned that this new structure would negatively impact our ability to provide essential care.

Thrive's parking lot contains 25 spots for more than 70 employees and interns. Due to the limited capacity of the lot, our staff rely on available street parking to keep expenses down. With additional residents and visitors in the area, we are concerned that parking will become even more scarce, impacting our ability to hire and retain clinical professionals, most of which live outside of Oak Park. This also limits parking options for our clients. More than 100 people visit our agency for services each day, many of whom lack the financial resources to pay for parking or the mobility to walk from a nearby garage.

Furthermore, the alley from Marion to Home is the only way to exit our parking lot. I understand that the residents of the new building would exit and enter through the alley, increasing congestion and 2-way traffic, both safety concerns

Finally, we are already struggling to afford the expense of having to dispose of used furniture, shopping carts and other trash that is often left near our dumpster. We are concerned that this problem will become worse if the area becomes more populated and traffic through the alley increases.

While I realize our concerns are not related to the historic preservation of the existing architecture, we hope you will consider how problematic the location of this property will be to the existing businesses and organizations operating in the area.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Rook
President/Executive Director



BOULEVARD ARCADE

We ask you to say “no” to the proposed Boulevard Arcade development, and here’s why.

Developers, represented by architect John Schiess, have proposed building a 10-story, 24-apartment tower attached to the rear of the historic Boulevard Arcade building at 1033-1035 South Boulevard. The project requires a zoning variance for height, another variance for density due to the available space, and approval from both the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and the Plan Commission.

And, ultimately, you.

New apartments in this area built in the past five years include Porter (158 units), Eleven 33 (263), The Emerson (at Target, 271), Albion (265), and The Vantage/ReNew (270). These apartments alone added 1,227 units to the village.

Growth is good, but it also comes with costs.

Is the addition of this project's 24 apartments worth its cost: the permanent diminishment of an Oak Park Historic Landmark, the extended shutdown of portions of South Boulevard, and a disregard for pedestrian safety? Its required override of zoning ordinances would be precedent-setting.

There are other, better, and more thoughtful ways to grow Oak Park. We believe this is the wrong project in the wrong place. We urge Oak Park Trustees to look closely at this development to understand why it poses real and immediate concerns for the community. On the following pages, you will see why we ask you to reject this project.

THREE CRITICAL REASONS TO REJECT THIS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

1 It increases congestion and safety risks to an already overburdened area. This proposed development intensifies existing safety issues in a congested area. The plan includes using an alleyway for access to a multi-level parking garage. This heavily used alley connects to Marion Street and Home Avenue, which are busy with vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians (including children and those with mobility issues). Restricted views due to buildings and bushes at both ends of the alley pose dangers. With multiple garages already accessing this alley, adding more traffic heightens the risk for everyone.

2 The development's scale, design, and materials clash with the surrounding buildings and neighborhood. In January, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) unanimously denied the developers' Certificate of Appropriateness request, citing non-compliance with nine out of 10 preservation standards. Allowing new residential construction to attach to a commercial Oak Park Historic Landmark would set a precedent for similar projects. This could lead to more additions on historically significant buildings, potentially harming Oak Park's renowned reputation for historic preservation.

3 This project underscores the need for transparency in Oak Park's Planning and Development process. Several concerned neighbors have contacted Village officials seeking clarity on the process and to understand how the rejection from the HPC will be considered. But they have received little in the way of public updates or transparency. Despite the HPC's rejection, the developer appears to be proceeding as if approval is imminent. (See illustration below.) One report from the developer intended for investors indicates that "all signs point to Village approval in May (2025)," with groundbreaking projected for fall 2025 and leasing beginning in spring 2027. This suggests a troubling disregard for both the HPC's unanimous decision in January and negative community input.



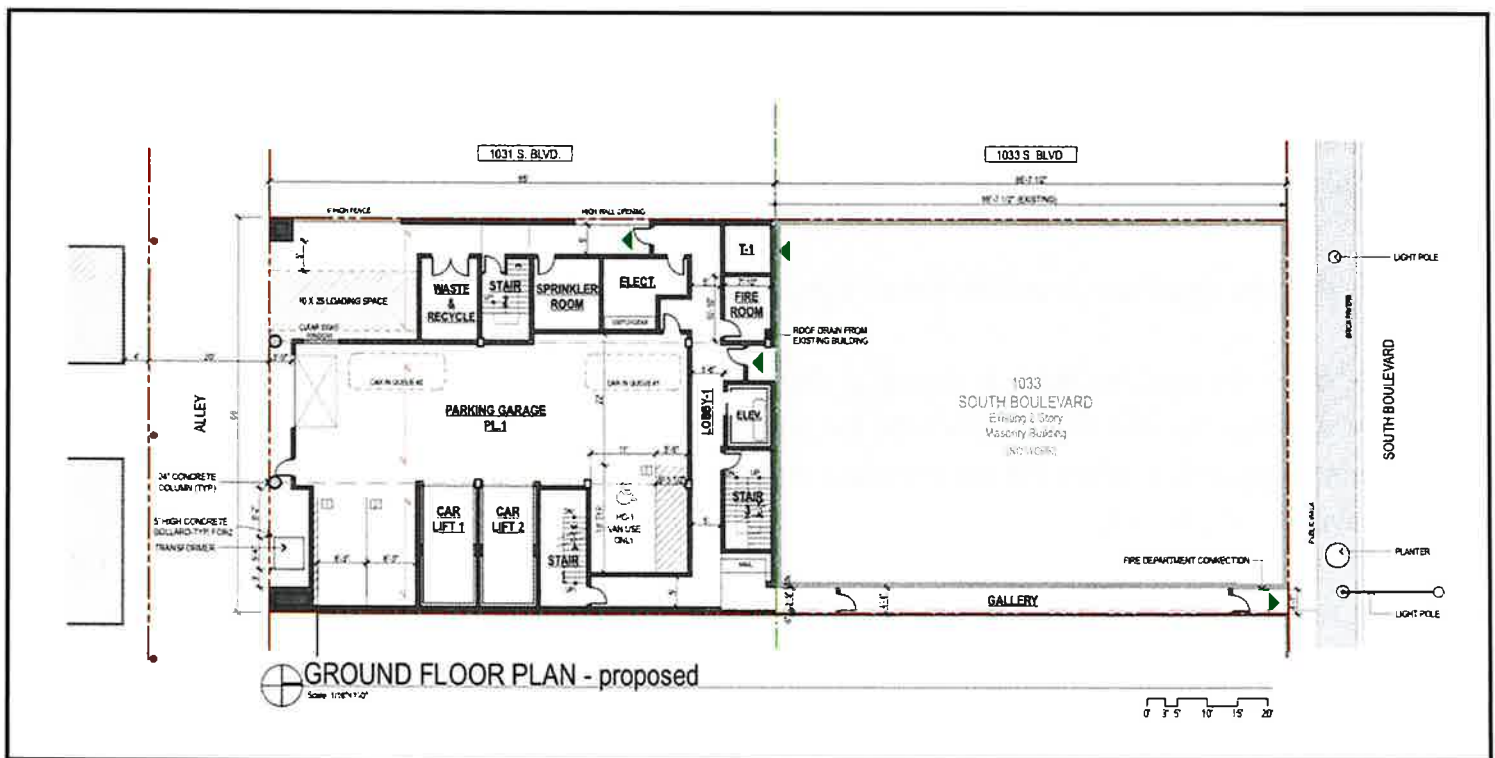
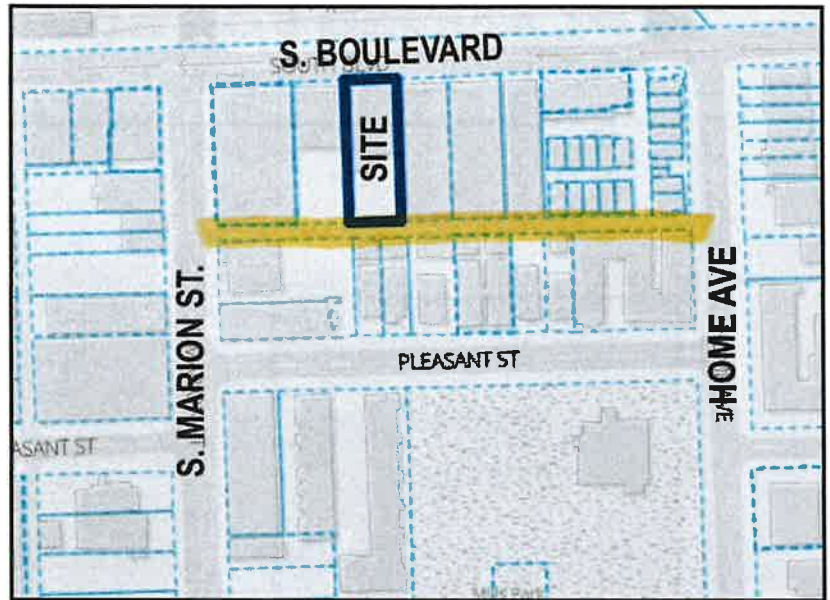
A GOOD IDEA?

The entrance to this proposed 10-story, 24-apartment building is through the alley between Marion and Home.

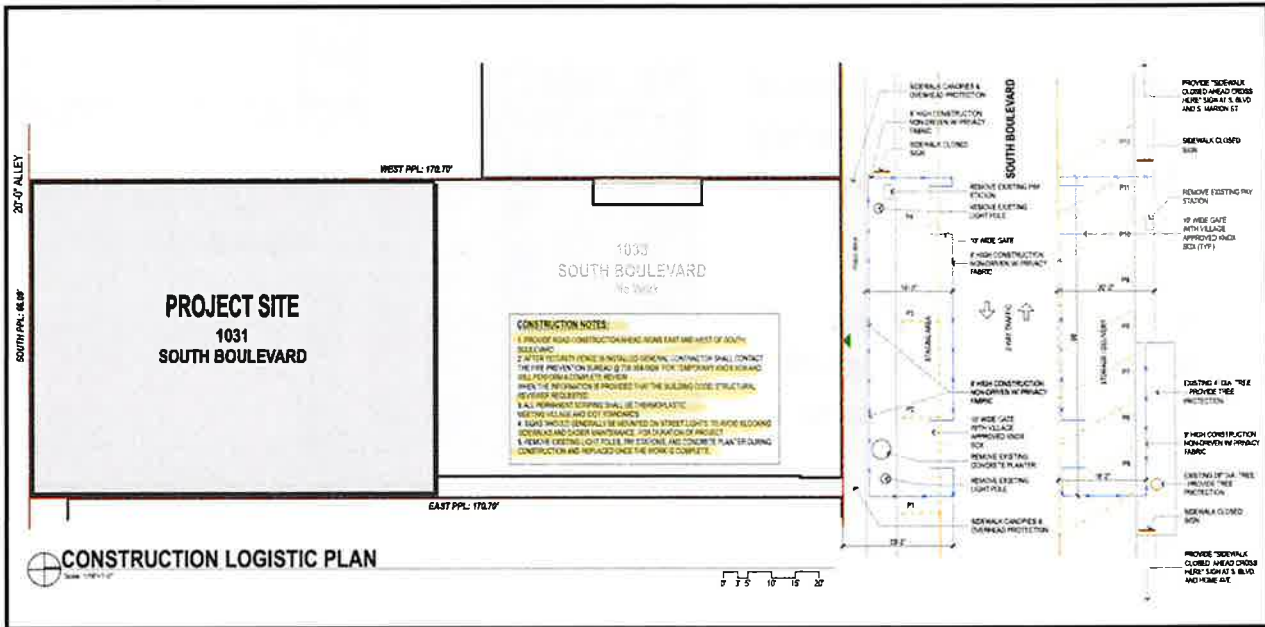
How will emergency vehicles navigate that? A pedestrian entrance is through a (gallery) gangway—85-feet long and 4-feet wide. (See image below.)

Additionally, the proposed car lift for renters to enter and exit the building will cause alley congestion as cars line up to enter the garage.

None of this sounds like a good idea.



DID YOU KNOW CONSTRUCTION STAGING IS PLANNED FOR SOUTH BOULEVARD?



Construction staging is scheduled for South Boulevard, which will negatively affect driving, walking, and parking between Marion and Home. Given its congestion during rush hour, closing South Boulevard would redirect traffic into adjacent neighborhoods. *(The architect's notes in the above graphic are listed here.)*

1. Provide road construction ahead signs east and west of South Boulevard.
2. After the security fence is installed, the general contractor shall contact the fire prevention bureau at 708-358-5626 for a temporary Knox box and will perform a complete review when the information is provided that the building code/structural reviewer requested.
3. All permanent striping shall be thermoplastic, meeting village and I-Dot standards.
4. Signs should generally be mounted on street lights to avoid blocking sidewalks and easier maintenance for the duration of the project.
5. Remove existing light poles, pay stations, and concrete planters during construction and replace once work is complete.

WE HAVE ENOUGH TRAFFIC ON MARION STREET



Clockwise from top left:
Delivery truck backs into alley between 212 Salon and Kettlestrings Grove, stopping traffic in both directions. Delivery and moving trucks creating traffic congestion on Marion. An Opera House resident needs help getting out of garage because UPS truck is obstructing view of exit driveway.

THE ALLEY BETWEEN MARION & HOME IS BUSY, TOO



Delivery and commercial repair trucks frequently park in the alley to lighten the traffic on Marion Street and to free up parking spaces for visitors.



Cars, bikes, and pedestrians use the alley, too. More traffic here is a safety issue, dangerous for the large number of residential units and businesses that share this alley between Marion and Home.