

December 5, 2011

Mr. Al Martin
Urban Design Committee
City of Madison
Madison, WI

Re: Grandview Commons Development and Rezoning Request

Dear Mr Martin and UDC,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding an upcoming request to rezone the property commonly known as the Grandview Commons Development site, currently owned by Veridian. Please share this letter with the members of the Urban Design Committee prior to your meeting on this topic tomorrow evening (Dec. 7, 2011).

In my view, the city and your committee are prematurely placing the rezoning request on the table for consideration, without the owner or possible developers submitting a formal project application for approval. A rezoning to allow larger buildings (i.e. 62,000 sq. ft.) would not only open the door for development of a business that many of us feel is too large for the surrounding community plan, it would allow a developer to build outside the parameters of the already established 'New Urbanist Community' design for the area.

Drawing from your committee's own mission statement, I would like to point out the following conflicts in recommending rezoning:

The committee will: **"...encourage the protection of economic values and proper use of properties."**

- * increased traffic flow and added truck traffic on Cottage Grove Road and those roads connecting to it and the development site will run a significant risk of lowering property values in both the Grandview Commons, Sprecher and Richland Hill neighborhoods.
- * approving rezoning of the development to allow larger buildings, particularly in the absence of an approved formal project application, violates neighborhood and City of Madison comprehensive plans.
- * approving rezoning of the development without an approved plan opens up the possibility that a future owner and developer may move forward with a plan that does not resemble the original Veridian plan, or even include a grocery store, as previously indicated. One would assume that a formal project proposal must be approved at some point, but it is quite possible that no proposal with buildings of the requested size will be agreeable to neighborhood residents.

- more -

Grandview Commons Development (cont'd)

The committee will: **"...assure a functionally efficient and visually attractive city in the future."**

* While not formally a 'gateway' to the city, I think those of us living in this area agree that the view of Madison coming west on Cottage Grove Road at the development site is spectacular. This is supported by the layout of the park adjacent to the development site and efforts to this point to preserve the view. Adding a building of this size in the development and renovating the streets and arterials to support it will greatly diminish the view enjoyed by all.

* The addition of this development at a site immediately adjacent to the interstate bridge has inherent problems in traffic control and safety already. Increasing the allowable size of buildings invites near chaos on city streets that were not designed for the traffic load and to neighborhoods that do not want it.

I must also point out that the current owner of the property, while originally involved in the grand concept of the neighborhood and development, appears to plan on selling the property and already has a developer in mind. I believe Veridian is simply hoping to expedite and close their deal with the developer by requesting the rezoning and giving the developer flexibility that it wants, at the expense of what many of us in the neighborhoods feel is in our best interests.

The neighborhoods have been presented a drawing that represents a proposal of what the development could look like. Without an approved formal project plan, that's all we have - a drawing. Many of us are concerned about the quality of our neighborhoods, our property values, the safety and functionality of the streets that connect and lead into and out of our neighborhoods and losing the overall aesthetics that led us to settle here in the first place. I personally approve of commercially developing the large empty field that makes up the development site - but, in a manner that fits the surrounding communities, meets the approval of a majority of the residents and maintains the aesthetics of the area.

I feel that our concerns need to be addressed and considered in significant depth and detail at your meeting - your committee is set up to insure that growth takes place in the best interests of the City of Madison and its residents. We are the residents most significantly impacted by the recommendations you make on this development. Thank you for taking this responsibility seriously and considering our concerns.

Sincerely,

Mike Ales
Richmond Hill Neighborhood Resident