

TO: Members of Urban Design Commission
FR: Lauren Cnare, Alder District3

Dear Commissioners,

Please accept this memo in lieu of testimony at your Wednesday, January 18 meeting. I am on vacation in Arizona and unable to convince my rental horse that a quick ride back to Madison is part of our contract.

The purpose of this memo is to share my position and request your approval on the Grandview Town Center GDP proposal, which you will review for initial and perhaps final approval tonight. As you are aware, it is hotly debated and well-examined proposal that has drawn residents into a robust discussion.

The project has been in the conversation/development phase for nearly 2 years now. The most recent presentation, the second wide-area neighborhood meeting, was held last week. The mailing for the area contained several thousand names resulting in attendance of roughly 150 people. The presentation format was presentation of the process and the proposal, with an hour and fifteen minutes for Q & A. We collected comments on cards and the Common Council office is typing up the ones that concern the proposal.

From the initial meetings with two Roundy's development teams two years ago, through neighborhood boards meetings, landowner and development team meetings, City of Madison Planning staff meetings, two large neighborhood meetings, half a dozen association meetings, and hundreds of individual face-to-face, telephone and e-mail conversations up to today, I always had confidence that a proposal for development at this site would be approved through improvements along the way from engaged and open-minded residents, city staff professional guidance and design team respect for the people who will be most affected by any project.

Two years later, many, many changes have occurred to the proposal through resident feedback, research, best practices, staff input and many critical eyes – including yours as members of a commission that helps Madison become an enviable establishment of the urban form with buildings and neighborhoods that serve well and age well in all parts of the city.

Despite the long journey and thousands of conversations, there is still disagreement about the suitability of the proposal before you. I wish that we could've come to joyful agreement or at least consensus about the proposal, but we have not. And, it's time to make a decision. With your input, the proposal has another opportunity for improvement as it takes its next step in the decision process.

Tonight, while there is *equally* strong support and strong opposition to the proposal, I urge you to make those improvements that you see, and *approve the proposal* to go on to Plan Commission and the Common Council for further examination and debate.

Here are the reasons for my conclusion to support the proposal:

1. This area of the city has long been the new face of new urbanism in Madison. At the city's edge, it has the land and the attitude to support the notion that "old suburbia" does not have to be endlessly replicated in new developments – urban features can be integrated into neighborhoods, not every resident must drive miles for services and goods, and retail/commercial "homes" can be thoughtfully designed to share the best of the old forms. These businesses do not have to be relegated to a strip mall-parking lot design.
2. The landowners have made a good faith effort to bring this area to fruition exact to plan. The residences have flourished in number and design, but the commercial and retail areas have lain moribund – in good and bad economic times. This situation has occurred in other new urbanist areas of Madison as well. As a community that values learning, I think we have learned that our plans are very close, but not quite as practical as "the marketplace" would wish. Finally, there is a proposal for action! It is different, but not a wholesale change to the original plan for the town

center. By blending the realistic with the visionary, this proposal assures that the plan can be implemented.

3. For some, there is significant concern about traffic and high-levels of activity that would occur with this plan. It's true – there will be additional traffic to this site from the neighborhood and likely other neighborhoods. But, the traffic will be increased with any establishment of any town center, even the approved one – with or without a 58,000 sf grocery store anchor. This grocery store is pivotal in the dissatisfaction and also the realization of this town center. I am convinced that it is the only chance for the other desired things will occur. Things like a coffee shop, an ice cream shop, a craft store and small restaurants that residents have longed for. It is a necessary ingredient in the center. If it must be the catalyst for this growth, let's do it.
4. Without this proposal, nothing will happen in the area, at the very least for years to come. While some will argue that the proposal in its current form does not comport to a fine plan or a definition of new urbanism, neither does an empty field. But a compromise and a test of today's reality winds assures that the underlying tenet of new urbanism – services embedded in a neighborhood, the ability to walk from home for a quick pick-up, creating opportunity for engagement and activity, nearby work and learning opportunities, and small business establishment - can all be met by this proposal. No other proposal – in 10 years – has come forward to serve this end.

Thank you for your attention to this proposal. As I've said before, others and I welcome your insight and input. Please use your professional judgment, practical wisdom and love for the city we all live in to improve this proposal and send it on to other bodies for their work and ultimate approval.

Sincerely,
Lauren Cnare

January 17, 2012 [date added]