

Murphy, Brad

From: mkbridgeman tds.net [mkbridgeman@tds.net]
Sent: Saturday, February 21, 2009 10:19 AM
To: Murphy, Brad
Subject: Plan Commission: 425 W. Washington

Brad,

I will be unable to attend the Plan Commission meeting on Monday, Feb. 23 and want to comment on agenda item 13107 to construct a new mixed-used building at 425 W. Washington Ave.

The neighborhood meeting on Thursday, Feb. 19, was my first chance to get caught up on the plans and hear the developer and others speak about the proposal. The plan has two qualities to recommend it. First, it replaces an under-used site with a project that has a good mix of uses. Second, the design is better than what I have come to expect on such proposals, not merely a timid re-hash of quasi-historical forms and gestures.

These good qualities, however, do not compensate for the considerable harm the proposal does to the neighborhood plan. In his quick review of plans for this area at Thursday's meeting, Tim Parks noted that a consistent thread has been the desire to maintain the character and scale of the street with buildings of two, three or four stories. I don't believe the positives of this proposal compensate for it's being too large. When looking at the drawings of the street facade, it's easy to see that the new structure matches the old AAA building to the west, a building clearly out of place on the block that I don't think would be permitted today. The new building is out of scale when compared to the frame structures to the east, the "character and scale" that the adopted plans seek to emulate. These plans include the Madison Comprehensive Plan and the Bassett Master Plan.

My concern is that neighborhood plans can be too easily undone. The question is whether allowing the new building at 425 W. Washington would be an exception or a precedent. I fear it would be the latter.

The Bassett area has developed nicely over the last several years with a series of well-scaled projects that have increased density and brought housing and vitality to a downtown neighborhood. I think this proposal tips the scale away from the long-range plans for the area and should not be supported at this time.

Michael Bridgeman
106 S Franklin St.