



Office of the Common Council

City-County Building, Room 417
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard
Madison, Wisconsin 53703
(Phone) 608 2664071
(FAX) 608 267 8669
(TTY) 608 267 8670

Comments for the August 18, 2008 Plan Commission Meeting Regarding Sequoya Commons
Tim Gruber, District 11 Alderperson

I believe that density magnifies design flaws. I believe that the plans for Sequoya Commons (Midvale Plaza), as approved by the Plan Commission, contain design flaws: elimination of green space, elimination of bio-retention areas (rain gardens), poor automobile access, and difficulties with trash collection and move in and move out. I ask that the Plan Commission reconsider its decision of August 4, 2008 and approve the best possible design.

The City of Madison wants to promote high-density infill development. Sequoya Commons complies with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. It is in the City's interest to approve the best design. It is important to listen to the professionals on city planning staff in making our decisions.

The Planning Staff report of August 4, 2008 states: "Given the density of both the Phase II building and the overall Sequoya Commons project, the Planning Division feels that preserving as much open space as possible should be an important consideration for the Plan Commission when determining which alternative should proceed. To that end, staff does not recommend that the driveway with the 5% slope or a singular entrance to S. Midvale Boulevard with a 12% slope be approved. Planning staff does not oppose either of the other two alternatives. The Commission could recommend approval of the Caromar Drive entrance originally proposed, or the newly proposed dual access alternative, the latter of which would result in a distribution of traffic from the apartment building while preserving a reasonable amount of open space for the development."

Green space provides for better esthetics as well as being friendly to our environment. People have commented that they would like more (not less) green space at Sequoya Commons. Adding more impervious surface, the long driveway along the north side of the building, eliminates green space.

In the Plan Commissions conditions of approval from August 4, it asked that the rain gardens be located along the east side of the building. This will not be possible, because there is an existing storm sewer there that will remain. In addition, the east side of the building has retaining walls that step down the level of the landscaping from the first floor to the sidewalk level. The area between these retaining walls would not be able to infiltrate the large amounts of storm water from the roof. Elimination of the retaining walls would have a negative effect on the esthetics of the east side of the building and would require the elimination of the patios on the first floor units.

It might be possible to have rain gardens in the terrace between the sidewalk and the street, but this five foot wide area would not be able to infiltrate nearly as much water as in the 30 foot area along the north side of the building.

Infiltration of storm water is one of the excellent features of the proposed plans. Reduction in the infiltration of storm water would be a mistake, in my opinion.

Good automobile access is important to the short and long term success of a building. The dual access option, that has two garage doors that access Midvale Blvd and Caromar Dr, offers the most choice for 4-5

future residents, disperses the traffic, and diverts approximately 50% of the traffic that would be created by a Caromar-only option.

Neighborhood residents clearly favor the Midvale-only option. They also clearly favor the dual-access option over the Caromar-only option. The applicant has stated a preference for a Caromar-only option but is willing to accept a dual-access option as a compromise. Planning staff supports either the Caromar-only option or the dual-access option.

The dual-access option is a good compromise that allows for the best automobile access and allows for more green space and rain gardens to remain in the design.

The difficulties of trash collection and move in and out are worth noting. There is no way that a dumpster could be rolled up the long driveway in a Midvale-only option. It would also be difficult to move in and out by way of this long driveway. A service door could be provided on Caromar drive for trash collection and move in and out. This is an example of the things that we did not think of during the meeting of August 4 when design decisions were made from the floor of the Plan Commission.

It is my job to represent both the interests of the people in the district that I represent and the interest of the city. This is often a difficult balancing act.

Many of my constituents were angry with me over my support of approval of plans for Midvale Plaza in 2006. At the same time, many of my constituents praised me, and my positive approach of supporting higher density infill, with the best possible design. I am attempting to follow this same positive approach at this time.



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Arboretum

August 13, 2008

To: City of Madison Plan Commission
Madison Common Council

Re: Storm water management at Midvale Plaza - phase2

Since the inception of the Midvale Plaza redevelopment project, the UW-Arboretum has strongly advocated for improving storm water management at this site. We have spoken at public hearings and testified before the Common Council that greatly improved storm water management for businesses and residents in the watersheds draining to Lake Wingra is essential if we are to see improvements in lake water quality and minimize damage to Arboretum natural areas.

We are working in partnership with the Madison Storm Water utility (at some cost to taxpayers) to reduce storm water impacts downstream from this and other areas around the Arboretum. However, these efforts will never be adequate if redevelopment is not allowed to treat, detain and infiltrate storm water in the watersheds above the Arboretum and Lake Wingra.

We echo Alder Gruber's call for increased green space for storm water management in the Midvale Plaza phase 2 development. We strongly urge the City of Madison Plan Commission and Madison Common Council to take steps to prevent continued degradation of the landscape and water quality caused by storm water runoff from the proposed development.

Kevin McSweeney, Director

David S. Liebl, Chair-Storm Water Committee

ADDENDUM
PLANNING DIVISION REPORT
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Of July 30, 2008

RE: LD. #10643: Zoning Map Amendment LD. 3367 To Rezone 515 S. Midvale Boulevard from PUD-GDP to PUD-SIP

On July 7, 2008, the Plan Commission referred a request to rezone the 3.6-acre subject site located at the northeastern corner of S. Midvale and Tokay boulevards from PUD-SIP to Amended PUD-GDP-SIP for 30 days to allow the applicant to submit plans for a Midvale Boulevard driveway alternative to provide access to the underground parking level for the 100-unit apartment building for the second phase of the Sequoya Commons Planned Unit Development. The three- and four-story Phase II building also includes 10,650 square feet of first floor commercial space. The Commission asked that the Traffic Engineering Division review the revised plans and provide a report as well as provide information regarding traffic calming, and also asked that the applicant address questions raised by staff regarding the proposed unit mix in the second phase building.

The applicant has submitted supplementary plans for the Phase II building that provide two alternatives for providing access to the underground parking level in addition to the earlier proposal to provide access solely from Caromar Drive. The first option calls for the driveway from the underground parking to Caromar Drive to be maintained and for a second parking entrance to be constructed along the north wall of the building with a driveway leading to S. Midvale Boulevard. The driveway to Midvale in this alternative is steeply pitched with a 12% slope, which in most cases would be the maximum grade an exposed driveway would be allowed to be constructed with under City ordinances. The applicant estimates that approximately half of the vehicles accessing the underground parking would utilize the S. Midvale Boulevard entrance except in those cases when the driveway could be closed due to slippery conditions primarily in winter. Drawbacks to the second driveway noted by the developer include the loss of three residential balconies along the northern façade overhanging the proposed Midvale driveway, the loss of three parking stalls in the garage below building, resulting in a 133-stall garage, and the loss of about 30% of the greenspace provided within the 30-foot setback between the building and northern property line.

The second alternative submitted by the applicant calls for the elimination of the Caromar Drive parking entrance and the construction of a longer, more gently sloped driveway into the garage from S. Midvale Boulevard. The driveway in this scenario would have a 5% slope, which would allow it to provide access to a 136-stall garage year-round. While this scenario provides the same amount of underground parking as the Caromar-only option originally presented, it results in the elimination of five balconies along the northern façade as well as most of the 30-foot deep greenspace and rain gardens proposed along the northern property line.

The applicant indicates that 4 three-bedroom units will be added to the unit mix in the predominantly one- and two-bedroom apartment development in both scenarios described above.

The Planning Division believes that all three of the options before the Commission – the original proposal to take access solely from Caromar, the proposed alternative to take access solely from Midvale and the dual access option – have benefits and drawbacks and that any of the three could be approved. The Caromar Drive option originally proposed by the applicant has caused concerns about traffic impacts from the neighborhood to the east of the site but provides the most open space for the development by providing unimpeded greenspace along the north wall of the building as well as balconies for all of the units. The S. Midvale Boulevard-only driveway option removes traffic accessing the underground parking from the neighborhood but severely reduces the greenspace along the northern property line and eliminates most of the balconies along that first floor facade. The dual access option will also result in some reduction of greenspace along the northern border of the property and the loss of three balconies on the first floor, though this option would likely result in less potential traffic impact on the neighborhood to the east.

Given the density of both the Phase II building and the overall Sequoya Commons project, the Planning Division feels that preserving as much open space as possible should be an important consideration for the Plan Commission when determining which alternative should proceed. To that end, staff does not recommend that the driveway with the 5% slope or a singular entrance to S. Midvale Boulevard with a 12% slope be approved. Planning staff does not oppose either of the other two alternatives. The Commission could recommend approval of the Caromar Drive entrance originally proposed, or the newly proposed dual access alternative, the latter of which would result in a distribution of traffic from the apartment building while preserving a reasonable amount of open space for the development.

In closing, the Planning Division recommends that the Plan Commission forward a **substitute** for Zoning Map Amendment 3367, rezoning 515 S. Midvale Boulevard from Planned Unit Development, Specific Implementation Plan (PUD-SIP) to Amended Planned Unit Development, General Development Plan/ Specific Implementation Plan (PUD-GDP-SIP), to the Common Council with a recommendation of **approval**, subject to input at the public hearing and the following conditions:

1. Comments from reviewing agencies, include conditions #2, 3, 4 & 6 of the July 1, 2008 Planning Division report.
2. That the floorplans for the project be amended to clearly identify each dwelling unit type, including which of the two-bedroom units contain dens that could be occupied as three-bedroom units. The final plans for all dwelling units shall be approved by staff. [Replaces condition #5 of the July 1, 2008 report.]