

2943 McKinley Street
Madison, WI 53705

May 6, 2013

City of Madison
Department of Planning and Development
Planning Division
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Rm. LL100
Madison, WI 53703

Project Address: 2635 University Avenue

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing to comment on the proposed redevelopment of 2635 University Avenue. The redevelopment site is located a few streets east of where we live, and we pass by the property on a daily basis, on occasion by foot. While we support the proposed use of the property, there are a few areas of concern we would like to address.

Overall, one of our biggest concerns is the reduction of overstory trees, resulting in a net loss for the neighborhood and the city as a whole. The existing site features two lovely trees situated near the northwest corner of the lot. These trees nicely mirror a tree on the opposite side of Farley Avenue next to Lakepoint Commons, and provide both shade and a visual break from the many structures on University Avenue. The proposal, though, would remove these trees, and plant a taller tree only on the east end of the property, where it would not be easily seen or enjoyed from either Farley or University Avenues. For the benefit of the high volume of passersby and the urban tree canopy itself, we would like to see taller trees nearer to the northwest corner of the property, while still allowing for necessary intersection visibility. Would this be possible as an added feature? Furthermore, could planting street trees also be considered? In general, we hope that preservation or enhancement of the urban tree canopy can be a priority for redevelopment proposals.

Another concern is the large footprint of the proposed building and parking lot. The proposed structure has only a five-foot setback from the sidewalks on Farley and University, and the total lot coverage of the development is 84.8%, where the maximum is 85%. Also, the New Urbanism aesthetic of placing buildings up to the street seems more suited to businesses where drop-in pedestrian or bike traffic is expected. Despite small shrubs and slight setback variations indicated in the plan, the effect on passersby will be intense. Overall, the current ambience of the property, as well as that of neighboring Lakepoint Commons, is very open and airy. Would it be possible to somewhat reduce the overall coverage to lessen any negative impact or dramatic change in ambience? For example, adding a pocket of greenspace in the northwest corner that includes a tree could be a solution to both the lot coverage and tree issues.

A third issue relates to signage. The plans indicate several large signs on the University-facing side of the building, medium-sized signage facing Farley, as well as smaller signs facing the parking lot on the south side of the building. This amount of signage appears potentially excessive. A recent redevelopment with signage that seems more fitting to the neighborhood setting is the Quarry Arts building on Hill Street a bit west of this redevelopment site.

Lastly, with the driveway being on Farley Avenue, it would be appreciated if traffic could be encouraged through signage to use the arterial, University Avenue, rather than driving through the neighborhoods to the south. We hope the traffic effects on the surrounding neighborhood will be minimal.

We appreciate the work that has gone into the redevelopment plans for this site, and again believe the proposed use to be an appropriate one for the neighborhood. Thank you for your attention to our concerns, and for the opportunity to comment on the development proposal.

Sincerely,

Anthony Lathrop
Julianne Dwyer