

To: Kontext Architects, Tag Evers, Urban Design Commission

Cc: Tag Evers, SARA Investment Real Estate, Bauer & Raether Builders, and KONTEXT architects

From: Carrie Rothburd, Lisie Kitchel, Judy Robinson, Jesse Laz-Hirsch for Planning & Economic Development Committee, BCNA

Re: Sense of the Community re 1224 South Park Street Development

Date: August 12, 2019

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We apologize for the late date of this letter. We were not informed of this review of 1224 S. Park until late August 10, and this unable to hand it in when due on August 8th. We ask you to consider our input as timely and to ensure our timely notice in future on projects that concern our neighborhood.

Community is special in Bay Creek. Neighbors, visitors, and even the Madison South District Police talk about it. It exists among those who live here, and it also exists between residential and business neighbors. Not long ago, the City's Planning Department called this neighborhood a "rare jewel of community" in recognition of that fact that we share a sense of identity that takes years to grow and cannot be created artificially. That identity, however, can easily crumble without mindful development of South Park Street.

No one denies that the urban corridor is ripe for rebuilding. One of the priorities of the Wingra BUILD Plan is the creation of vital retail businesses along South Park Street to meet the unmet needs of the diverse South Madison community and to transform Park Street from a street that divides our neighborhood into one that unites it. But development that gentrifies Bay Creek (and the rest of South Madison), pushing out thriving long-term businesses is not the sort of development this plan calls for. Nor is it development we should accept.

Yet this is what the proposed development at 1224 South Park, however unintentionally, wind up doing. Long-established, local, small businesses, regularly frequented by the community have been shuttered and will be replaced by higher-rent tenants, whose medical services, are redundant along South Park Street. Many of the neighbors who attended the listening session held on July 23, 2019 at the Labor Temple about another development along South Park, Truman Olson, forcefully expressed the fact that they do not want to see the Wingra BUILD Triangle turned into a medical corridor.

In the spirit of building and preserving community, we ask SARA Investment Real Estate, Bauer & Raether Builders, and KONTEXT architects to look good and hard at their cost/benefit of the proposed development at 1224 S. Park and consider the impact of this building on the South Madison community. We ask them to question whether they really need to double rents on their proposed building to defray building costs up front rather than make their return on investment more slowly. We ask why they choose to advertise only for medical and dental clients rather than reach out to the community to learn what is needed here and recruit a broader range of possible occupants. We ask them and you, the members of the UDC, whether their proposed medical building project enhances the streetscape and the integration of South Park Street into the community.

As part of the new South Madison Neighborhood Plan, the City's long-term planners will address preserving the small, well-integrated, family-owned-and-operated businesses that make up the unique culture and way of life in South Madison. This is in keeping with the Wingra BUILD Plan and the existing South Madison Neighborhood Plan, both of which encourage the development of a variety of community-serving businesses along South Park Street to integrate the corridor into the community and to encourage pedestrian and foot traffic along the street.

None of these goals will be met by building more medical and dental space on South Park Street. And while the planners of 1224 have said to neighbors that they will consider turning over tenants in several years when they can afford to lower rents, office space and retail space are not interchangeable. The current building does not have an inviting exterior. It does not open out onto the street in the way that retail space needs to. Moreover, we think it highly unlikely, the building's owners will opt to kick out high-paying medical tenants in deference to the needs of community. Why not instead meet those needs now and advertise for such tenants? Or why not dedicate this medical space to clinics specifically serving the low-income community?

Retail businesses do thrive along South Park Street. The empty and shuttered storefronts are there not because businesses can't make it, but because new development does not send a message that welcomes small business and because it keeps them out with prohibitive rents. The loss of the Taj, which thrived for more than a decade at 1224 South Park, impoverishes our community even as it stands to profit SARA Investment Real Estate, Bauer & Raether Builders, and KONTEXT architects.

We ask the UDC to uphold the recommendations of the Wingra BUILD and South Madison Neighborhood plans and encourage the development of building projects that serve community along South Park Street. We ask you to consider the needs of the community for a thriving urban corridor where people stroll, shop, and dine.