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May 13, 2025

Josh Wilber, President
City of Madison Plan Commission
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Room 130
Madison, WI 53703

In re: 4506 Verona Road – Development Proposal

Dear Mr. Wilber:

This is to follow up on comments made by participants at the May 8th virtual neighborhood meeting addressing the particulars of the above-described apartment development project. Since I understand that those comments are now part of the public record and assume that the members of the commission will either listen to or review a transcript of the comments before they vote on the proposal, I won't take your time to repeat them in detail here; suffice it to say that when the Commission members review the record, they will find thoughtful expressions of serious concern for the prospective residents, including significant noise levels at the location, serious air pollution levels at the location, lack of meaningful green space for youngsters, and available grocery shopping. They will also note an extended discussion of the potential for physical safety concerns at the development, and indications by some commenters that such safety challenges might plague another development completed by the project's applicant, Lincoln Area Communities.

I found the meeting troubling. Maybe all of these types of meetings are similar – I don't have much experience – but it essentially came down to an hour and a half of the people who want to make money off the project and the city employees who have been working with them telling the residents why this development is a great idea, and the people who actually live here pointing out why it's a terrible idea.

I myself am disturbed by a few aspects. While the noise and air pollution concerns need no elaboration for anyone with ears and a nose, we have lived at the above address for over 44 years, raised three children there, and have four grandchildren that visit regularly. It doesn't take much parenting experience to realize that you wouldn't want to raise a child in this proposed development. The suggestion that the available green spaces were large or close enough for kids was simply – let's be tactful – unrealistic. Second, the amount of additional traffic that the city's team is projecting that a development of this size will generate – I have no idea what manual they're using – is obviously painfully low. (My wife and I – two retirees – ourselves collectively make at least 4 trips from home a day; the chance that growing families will make less defies belief.) The suggestion that the part of the frontage road supposedly most affected by the development is currently little traveled flies in the face of my experience, and from the tenor of the comments at the neighborhood meeting, I'm not alone in my impression. Additionally – perhaps a nit, perhaps not -- the rendition of the frontage road included in the project sketches makes it look like it is the width of 5th Avenue in New York. It's not.

An additional concern that was only obliquely alluded to during the meeting is the additional traffic risk that the development will create on and about the Beltline – a concern I may feel more acutely than others. In October, 2023, intending to exit the westbound Beltline at Verona Road, I was moving extremely slowly in a

backup in the right lane that extended east of Seminole when I was rearended by an inattentive driver going over 50 miles an hour and driven across all four westbound lanes, ending with the remains of the rear of my car resting against the median between the east-and westbound lanes. About eight months later, Mary Ann Fix was not as fortunate as I was. Ms. Fix was killed when she was rearended by a teenager in approximately the same spot on the highway where I had been – where, as the State Journal has reported, “sudden traffic backups are common.” This development will obviously increase the number of cars getting off the Beltline in this area – increasing the risk of Beltline crashes, increasing crashes on westbound Verona Road as residents seek to cut across lanes to turn onto the frontage road, increasing congestion on Raymond Road for those who try to go the long way around, and increasing congestion on Hammersley -- which is now a much narrower road since recent changes to accommodate a bike path -- for those who choose to exit at Whitney Way and enter the neighborhood from the west.

Finally, and perhaps the most troubling aspect of the meeting for me, was it had the air of the city “checking the box” – that this project is a fait accompli. I have now read the “Development Proposal Process – 4506 Verona Road” document published on the city’s website on May 5, 2025, and see that city employees have dutifully noted that the development fits applicable regulations for the zoning district, and opined that neighborhood uses “will not be substantially impaired,” that adequate utilities and transportation are available, etc., etc., etc. None of this adequately answers the question to which none of the proponents responded when asked during the neighborhood meeting: “Would you want to live there?”

I would suspect that not all members of the Commission are familiar with the southwest side. I suggest that before the Commission votes on this proposal, the members visit the site and ask themselves: ***Do I think it makes sense to cram a five-story, 93-unit mixed-use building into this site in the middle of the most congested part of Madison’s west side?*** There are problems with this location that the developer can’t “fix.”

I understand that the May 19th Plan Commission meeting to address this proposal will be virtual. Although I will certainly be watching, I currently don’t intend to speak; I would simply be repeating what I have relayed here. I’m more than a little surprised – if my impression is correct -- that my alder seems to think that this is a good idea. Hopefully, the members of the Commission will recognize that a proposal may allegedly meet all the pertinent regulatory requirements ... and still be a very bad idea.

Thank you for your attention.

Very truly yours,

James J. McCoy

Copy: Plan Commission Members
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