

From: [LaDonna Steinert](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: Public Comment in Opposition — File #91512 5555 Odana Road & 5534 Medical Circle — Conditional Use Application
Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 5:24:11 PM

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Commissioners, my name is LaDonna Steinert. I am a parent of children who attended Montessori Children's House, and I currently serve as Treasurer on its parent-led board — a role I have continued even after my youngest moved on, because I believe deeply in what this school provides to our community. Montessori Children's House is a school located at 5530 Medical Circle · Madison, WI 53719. This school and the 50+ families that rely on the services provided at the school, will be directly impacted by this conditional use application.

When we were searching for childcare for our youngest child approximately five years ago, we understood what was at stake. We have a 14-year-old and a soon-to-be 7-year-old. Before we found MCH, my youngest attended a different childcare center that went through significant organizational instability. The impact on him — at just 15 months old — was immediate and observable. We were dropping off a child in tears every morning and picking up a child who had been calm and happy but was beginning to exhibit stress-related behaviors: biting, hitting, and heightened distress. The research on early childhood development is clear that instability in caregiving environments produces measurable behavioral and emotional responses in infants and toddlers. We removed him from that center and took the time necessary to find a setting where he could feel genuinely safe — safe enough to learn, to grow, and to flourish.

The moment we toured MCH, we recognized the difference. My son thrived there — engaging with outdoor environments, exploring sensory and nature-based activities, and building the kinds of secure relationships that early childhood research consistently identifies as foundational to long-term development. We left him daily without distress. That shift was not incidental. It was environmental. The outcomes have been tangible. My son is now performing above grade level in math, reading, and language in his public school. I attribute that directly to the hands-on, child-led learning model at MCH and the secure relationships he built there. More importantly, he is a socially aware and empathetic child — and that, to me, is the most significant outcome of all. My story is not alone. You may hear from other families who also want to highlight how special this non-profit school is and the lifelong impact it has, is or will make on their lives.

As a nonprofit, MCH is able to maintain tuition at rates that keep this model accessible to families across a range of income levels. That accessibility depends directly on the stability and integrity of its physical space. MCH's outdoor environment — carefully cultivated over more than 30 years — is not supplementary to its program. It is the program. Montessori methodology, particularly at the early childhood level, is built around freedom of movement, connection to the natural world, and a prepared environment that children experience as safe and predictable. That environment cannot simply be relocated or reconstructed in a matter of weeks. Decades of intentional development, appropriate zoning, parking, indoor-outdoor flow, and community trust are not assets that can be recreated at a new site. This development

would not only disrupt daily learning and childcare for nearly 50 enrolled children during construction — it would permanently alter the conditions that make MCH's program possible. Once that environment is compromised, it cannot be restored.

For these reasons, I am asking the Commission to not approve the development. If it is approved, delay construction to allow the developer to work with MCH on timeline and a temporary relocation. Additionally, I request two specific modifications to this proposal: first, an increased setback for the Odana Road building; and second, the removal of balconies that would have direct sightlines into the MCH playground. A six-story residential building positioned at this proximity to an active toddler and preschool playground raises real and documentable privacy and safety concerns. Landscaping buffers and tree screening do not adequately address residential windows and occupied balconies with unobstructed views into a licensed childcare facility's outdoor play area. Families selecting a preschool are making a decision about where their most vulnerable children will spend their days. Direct residential sightlines into that space undermine the protected environment that is central to MCH's identity and licensing standards.

MCH has served Madison families for more than 60 years. I urge this Commission to give this proposal the careful, thorough scrutiny it deserves — and to require modifications that genuinely protect the children, families, and community institution next door.

Thank you.

LaDonna Steinert Treasurer, Montessori Children's House Board Madison, WI

Dear Commission,

While I would deeply love to support affordable housing in my area, I am writing to formally register my opposition to the demolition of 5555 Odana Rd and its replacement with housing.

I am a member of Supreme Health and Fitness, housed in 5555 Odana Road, as well as a resident of the neighboring Midvale Heights neighborhood who frequents Odana as a driver, biker, and pedestrian and passes through the Odana/Whitney Way intersection at least daily.

My opposition to this project is threefold.

First, while I am a newer member to Supreme Health and Fitness it is clear to me that there is something incredibly unique and special to the community this gym cultivates. The closing of this business due to building demolition would be an incredible loss to myself, personally, and many others who rely on Supreme not only for movement, but connection to others.

Second, the buildings at 5555 Odana Road and 5534 Medical Circle are actively home to several local businesses and the demolition of a currently well used space feels wasteful when there are abandoned buildings and spaces in the same neighborhood, like the grocery store on Tokay which has sat empty for over 7 years, the now unused land housing the former bus transfer point, and two nearly empty buildings at the corner of Medical Circle and Odana Road that have only lost businesses since MSCR vacated for their new space a few years ago. It seems these unused areas could be developed to provide the much-needed affordable housing near public transit and public services without replacing existing and thriving businesses.

Finally, I am concerned about the impact on the traffic patterns at the intersection of Odana and Whitney Way with the increase of vehicles and pedestrians. The western intersection along Odana is already often backed up significantly as Odana Road narrows from two lanes to one and as cars wait to turn right towards the beltline from Odana. People regularly make reckless decisions in an effort to go around traffic backups, merge unsafely, drive in bike lanes, and frequently block the driveways to the businesses at 5555 Odana Road and Heritage Square as they wait on light cycles. An increased number of residential cars entering and exiting traffic at precisely this point of congestion would add to the back up and chaos for other cars and increase risk to pedestrians, who must already cross any part of that intersection with great care.

Thanks for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erica Koepsel', written over a thin vertical line that extends from the signature down towards the typed name.

Erica Koepsel
Madison, WI