

Dear Urban Design Commission and Planning Commission,

I am writing to urge you to reject the application by CBL Properties to demolish a two-story retail building to construct one-story 83,000 square foot retail building at West Towne Mall. Although this project may be allowed by current zoning on that site (zoning which has essentially been unchanged since 1970), it goes against the future land use guidelines as put forth in the Imagine Madison plan, and is incompatible with the direction in which this city is heading. As you are aware, the city has just begun the process for developing an Odana Area Plan, which will encompass this site. In the brief for that plan, the city states that this style of development “increases traffic, decreases pedestrian and bicycle activity, reduces the effectiveness of transit, and increases stormwater runoff, amongst other negative impacts.” I believe it would be reasonable to put a brief pause on any development in the plan area until the plan is complete.

I want to make it clear that I am not opposed to Von Maur moving into the West Towne Mall. In fact, I believe that it will bring much needed retail variety along with a number of jobs. However, I see no reason why Von Maur cannot renovate and re-use the existing building on the site. If there is a reasonable hinderance to using the existing building, I am certain Von Maur can work with the city to create a building that is more in line with the future direction of Odana Area development. As it stands, the current proposal presents a long, unbroken single-story building with almost no windows, articulation, or street interaction outside of a single entrance. If allowed to be built as currently proposed. This building could hold back sustainable redevelopment for decades to come.

Best,
Joseph May