

**From:** [Bryan Althouse](#)  
**To:** [Urban Design Comments](#)  
**Subject:** Concerns about proposed development on Medical Circle  
**Date:** Thursday, February 19, 2026 8:17:51 AM

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing as a parent of a child enrolled at Montessori Children's House to express my strong concerns regarding the proposed residential development adjacent to our school's playground. I respectfully ask that this proposal not be approved in its current form.

The City of Madison has long emphasized the importance of thoughtful design, neighborhood integrity, and developments that have a positive impact on the community as a whole. I share those values. However, as proposed, this building's proximity to the playground would directly compromise the privacy and safety of the young children who use that outdoor space every day. Privacy for children at school — especially at the preschool age — is not a luxury. It is a basic safeguard that parents, educators, and policymakers have an obligation to protect.

I want to be clear that I support affordable housing and recognize the genuine need for it in our community. My concern is not with the goals of this development, but with the specific design as it currently stands. I believe there are modifications — changes to building orientation, setbacks, window placement, — that could allow this project to achieve its housing objectives while also preserving the privacy and security of the children next door. The Commission's own standards exist precisely to ensure that developments like this one are designed with care and with the community's best interests in mind. I would urge the Commission to hold this proposal to that standard.

I would also note that approving a development that demonstrably compromises children's privacy and safety at a licensed childcare facility could expose both the developer and the City of Madison to significant liability. That is a risk that should not be taken lightly.

I ask that the Commission require meaningful design modifications to this proposal before any approval is granted. Our children deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your time and your service to this community.

Sincerely,

Bryan Althouse

**From:** [Valerie Hicks](#)  
**To:** [Urban Design Comments](#)  
**Subject:** Agenda item #3, File#89886  
**Date:** Thursday, February 19, 2026 8:17:45 AM

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You don't often get email from [valeriehicks@gmail.com](mailto:valeriehicks@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Esteemed Urban Design Committee,

My name is [Valerie Hicks](#) and I am a parent of two children who graduated from Montessori Children's House (MCH) seven years ago. In 2014, we moved to Madison from Boston with two young daughters, not knowing the area and without any family or friend connection. We were fortunate to find MCH. We found not only a great place to educate our daughters, but also a strong community connection. We formed friendships that we still cherish today.

MCH is unique in many ways and location being one of them. Because MCH is so centrally located, it draws a diverse cross-section of Madison residents. The Directors at MCH, Laura Kvalheim and Jim Lotteridge, make community building a priority and foster strong connections among the families through their leadership style. They are an asset to larger Madison community - shaping so many young lives in this positive, encouraging learning environment. The lessons taught here are absolutely paid forward as these children graduate 5k and become students and citizens in other schools and communities.

The location of Montessori school is unique and is

important to the success of the school. The playground and the grounds around the school are utilized as active learning environments and are CRUCIAL to the Montessori philosophy of including outdoor play and spending time in nature as part of the curriculum.

The Odana Rd building is a six story building that is proposed to be built too close to our playground. The building's height combined with its closeness means windows—not just balconies—will have direct sightlines into our playground where young children should play freely and safely. This is inappropriate and presents a liability and danger in its placement next to an early childhood setting. The proximity combined with height creates fundamental safety and privacy problems that cannot be solved by simply moving balconies or planting trees.

Also to be considered is the building's history and structure which lends itself to the unique experience of Montessori education. The building, in many ways, feels like a home away from home. The building also has historical significance as it was designed by Marshall Erdman. As a Madison resident and parent, I value the historic character of our neighborhoods and our small local businesses.

MCH has been serving families for over 60 years, on Medical Circle since 1991, the voices of their

community and impact of this development on them as a local small business have significance.

I want to express my **OPPOSITION to Agenda Item # 3, File #89886.**

**I urge** the Commission to require an increased setback for the Odana Rd building to match the existing apartment complex standard in setback, and remove balconies facing the playground to ensure adequate distance and privacy protection for our children. **I urge** the Commission to reconsider the demolition of the Medical Circle site entirely, OR if new construction proceeds, require that any replacement building fits within the scale, height, and character of the existing commercial park so it doesn't negatively impact the surrounding Marshall Erdman buildings and the local businesses within them.

Thank you for your consideration in honoring the future of our school and honoring the importance place plays in our lives and community.

Sincerely,

Valerie HICks

**From:** [Emily Foster Hill](#)  
**To:** [Urban Design Comments](#); [Emily Foster Hill](#)  
**Cc:** [Montessori Childrens House](#)  
**Subject:** Comments for 2/18/26 Urban Design Commission Meeting, Agenda Item #3  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 18, 2026 3:42:42 PM

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You don't often get email from emily.622@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Good Afternoon,

My name is Emily Foster Hill, and I am currently an Early Childhood Special Education Teacher with MMSD. I have been a part of Montessori Children's House Community for the past 38 years. As a preschooler, I attended Montessori Children's House. As a young adult, I served as an Assistant Teacher prior to pursuing my Early Childhood Montessori Credential. Ten years later, I returned to Montessori Children's House and served as a Preschool Teacher, and Substitute. Throughout these experiences, I have had the privilege to work alongside my preschool teacher, and other dedicated staff members at Montessori Children's House who have served 40+ years in building this most nurturing, professional community. Montessori Children's House is Madison's longest running Montessori school, and has now surpassed its 60th Anniversary

As an educator of 20+ years, it is apparent that Montessori Children's House holds exemplary standards of safety on behalf of their students, families, and staff.

I am extremely concerned regarding the privacy and safety hazards imposed upon Montessori Children's House, as outlined below.

Therefore, I highly urge the Commission to consider these three asks:

"I urge the Commission to require an increased setback for the Odana Rd building to match the existing apartment complex standard in setback, and remove balconies facing the playground to ensure adequate distance and privacy protection for our children."

"I urge the Commission to require that all balconies be relocated away from areas overlooking the preschool playground. This is for the safety and privacy of children ages 18 months to 6 years and should be a high priority"

"I urge the Commission to reconsider the demolition of the Medical Circle site entirely, OR if new construction proceeds, require that any replacement building fits within the scale, height, and character of the existing commercial park so it doesn't negatively impact the surrounding Marshall Erdman buildings and the local businesses within them."

Sincerely,

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*Emily Foster Hill*

**From:** [Loren Shaw](#)  
**To:** [Urban Design Comments](#)  
**Subject:** Comments on Proposed condos on Odana Rd and Medical Circle  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 18, 2026 12:55:15 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I'm a parent of two children at Montessori Children's House on Medical Circle and I am deeply concerned about the impact the proposed building on Odana Rd will have on my children's safety and environment while at school. The 6 story building is proposed to be built too close to our playground. The proximity combined with height creates fundamental safety and privacy problems that cannot be solved by simply moving balconies or planting trees. Both windows and balconies will have direct sightlines into our playground where young children should play freely and safely. This is inappropriate and presents a liability and danger in its placement next to an early childhood setting. The existing neighboring apartment complex behind our school (on Odana Rd) is set back further from the playground. This new building should match that existing setback standard. Tree plantings cannot adequately screen a building of this height (6 stories) particularly when it is positioned this close to our property line.

I urge the Commission to require an increased setback for the Odana Rd building to match the existing apartment complex standard in setback, and remove balconies facing the playground to ensure adequate distance and privacy protection for our young children.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this matter,

Loren Shaw

646-919-7915

**From:** [Tessa Begay](#)  
**To:** [Urban Design Comments](#)  
**Cc:** [Montessori Childrens House](#)  
**Subject:** Urban Design Commission - February 18, 2026  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 18, 2026 10:08:41 AM

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Urban Design Commission,

I am writing to state concerns for the Urban Design Commission meeting for the neighboring redevelopments that will impact Montessori Children's House. I am a parent of a past alumni student. When first hearing of the project I had concerns about the impact it will have on the neighborhood and school. My background professionally is as an architectural designer. I understand the need for more housing, however I also have the understanding of how the design process should address existing spaces especially of a school with a long standing presence.

I am asking for the commission to consider the Odana Rd. building setback to address privacy of the school. The Odana Rd building is a six story building that is proposed to be built too close to our playground. The proximity combined with height creates fundamental safety and privacy problems that cannot be solved by simply moving balconies or planting trees.

I urge the Commission to require an increased setback for the Odana Rd building to match the existing apartment complex standard in setback, and remove balconies facing the playground to ensure adequate distance and privacy protection for our children

The proposed demolition of the Marshall Erdman building on Medical Circle and its replacement with a much taller, out-of-scale building threatens our ability to use our building as architecturally intended and impacts the short and long term success of MCH as a local small business. In addition, the demolition of this building – which is a member of 4 buildings designed in connection with the Medical Circle - will impact the heritage and the character of the Medical Circle Commercial Park, as it creates negative impacts on the others and opens the door for development of that entire area. Demolishing one building and replacing it with a much taller structure would destroy the architectural integrity of this historic ensemble.

I urge the Commission to reconsider the demolition of the Medical Circle site entirely, OR if new construction proceeds, require that any replacement building fits within the scale, height, and character of the existing commercial park so it doesn't negatively impact the surrounding Marshall Erdman buildings and the local businesses within them.

I ask that you take in the concerns from the Montessori Children's House the vast umbrella of wonderful parents, staff and community members. I chose the school for my daughter to attend because of the learning they offer for young children, in doing so I was supported in so many ways as she started her education. My daughter still talks about fond memories of her time at MCH. I appreciated the learning environment that encouraged her to be a good person. We are a community fostering, caring for the next generation and so on. I ask the school's long standing presence be considered for this proposed project could impact.

Thank you,  
Tessa Begay

**From:** Tox Bar <[thetoxbar22@gmail.com](mailto:thetoxbar22@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 17, 2026 4:07 PM  
**To:** Vaughn, Jessica L <[JV Vaughn@cityofmadison.com](mailto:JV Vaughn@cityofmadison.com)>  
**Subject:** 5534 Medical Cir and 5555 Odana Rd project

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To: Urban Design Commission and Members of the Common Council

Re: 5534 Medical Circle and 5555 Odana rd.

Dear Commissioners and Council Members,

I write to formally object to the proposed demolition of 5534 Medical Circle and to request that the application be denied or, at minimum, postponed pending further study and analysis.

My concerns are grounded in land-use compatibility, public health and safety, infrastructure capacity, and historic preservation—not in the nature of the proposed residents. Housing affordability is an important public policy objective; however, zoning decisions must still satisfy statutory standards and remain consistent with adopted planning documents.

#### 1. Land-Use Compatibility and Comprehensive Plan Consistency

Medical Circle functions as a professional medical corridor characterized by business uses that require reliable customer access, predictable traffic flow, and adequate on-site parking. A rezoning that permits a higher-density residential use represents a material shift in the established land-use pattern.

Under Wisconsin law and Madison's zoning ordinances, rezonings must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and must promote the public health, safety, and welfare. I respectfully request that the Commission make explicit findings on how this proposal:

Maintains compatibility with surrounding medical and professional uses;

Avoids adverse operational impacts on adjacent businesses;

Preserves the functional integrity of this corridor.

Absent clear evidence of compatibility and plan consistency, approval would be premature.

## 2. Traffic, Access, and Patient Safety

My area serves elderly patients, adults, families, and children. Safe ingress and egress, short walking distances, and predictable traffic conditions are essential.

A higher-density residential development is likely to increase:

Vehicular trips and turning movements on Medical Circle;

On-street parking pressure;

Pedestrian crossings in areas not designed for residential density.

Before any approval, a formal traffic impact analysis and parking demand study should be entered into the record, specifically addressing cumulative impacts on adjacent businesses/properties. Without such analysis, the Commission cannot reasonably conclude that public safety and access will remain protected.

### 3. Parking and Spillover Impacts

If the proposed development includes reduced parking ratios (as is often the case with income-restricted housing), spillover parking onto nearby parcels is a foreseeable consequence. Any measurable reduction in available parking or increased congestion would directly and materially impair businesses in the area.

The City should require a binding parking management plan and enforceable mitigation measures before considering approval.

### 4. Historic and Architectural Considerations

The structure at 5534 Medical Circle appears to possess historical or architectural character consistent with the development history of this area. Prior to approval of any rezoning that would facilitate substantial alteration or demolition, I respectfully request:

A formal determination regarding historic eligibility;

Review by the appropriate preservation authorities;

Inclusion of preservation findings in the public record.

Irreversible demolition should not proceed without a clear evaluation of the building's historic value and the effect on the other buildings along Medical Circle.

### 5. Procedural Safeguards and Findings

Given the material change in land use, I request that the Commission and Council:

Make detailed written findings regarding Comprehensive Plan consistency;

Require traffic and infrastructure analysis;

Evaluate compatibility standards under the zoning code;

Consider whether a conditional use framework, rather than straight rezoning, would better protect adjacent professional uses.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the proposed project/demolition/rezoning be denied, or alternatively deferred until comprehensive studies and compatibility findings are completed and made part of the official record.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your careful consideration of the long-term integrity of the Medical Circle corridor.

Sincerely,

Stevin Smith