

# CRANES

## Capital Region Advocacy Network for Environmental Sustainability

*On behalf of its member organizations and individuals, advocating collaboratively for the environment of the South Central Wisconsin region (eight counties: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Rock and Sauk) toward a high quality of life; an ecologically sustainable and just culture; and, the celebration of the beauty of this place, both natural and built.*

### VISION

*The Capital area's environment, including water, land, and air resources, will be conserved or restored to ensure the region's quality of life and the beauty of this special place, for all who live or visit here, now and in the future.*

### PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

*Earth/Art® Resources  
Friends of Cherokee Marsh  
Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy  
League of Women Voters - Dane County  
Madison Audubon Society  
Sierra Club - Four Lakes Group  
W. Dane Coalition for Smart Growth & Environment  
West Waubesa Preservation Coalition*

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*River Alliance of Wisconsin*  
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*Ad Hoc Union Corners Committee*  
ATTN: Kenneth Opin, Chairperson  
City of Madison Common Council

c/o Dan Rolfs, AICP  
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Economic Development Division / Office of Real Estate Services  
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Dear Chair Opin and Members of the *Ad Hoc Union Corners Committee*:

The *Capital Region Advocacy Network for Environmental Sustainability* (CRANES) thanks the *Ad Hoc Union Corners Committee* members for your service and for your careful consideration of the various Union Corners development proposals.

While we write today about Union Corners, we are also hoping to inspire the City of Madison to use all such future opportunities to achieve greater environmental sustainability. We note that just to the west, the public is making a considerable investment in a sustainability incubator. We also note that the Union Corners site is a "showcase" location, which means it can also be a sustainability showcase.

Therefore we support the calls of some very thoughtful neighborhood residents for an "ecovillage" approach. In a setting such as this, many cities aim to have "urban villages" built, which is a step in the "green" direction. These mixed-use developments allow residents to live, work, and play, insofar as possible, on site. Key components include green spaces, public spaces/facilities, a right-sized grocery store, restaurants, work opportunities, retail outlets, a hardware store, a bank branch, a medical clinic and so forth. Additionally, the density is high enough to make all of this economically workable.

All the developments before your committee could be called "urban village" proposals. All of them consider East Washington Avenue. as a transit corridor, and the possibility of rail transit, while assuring connections to offsite bicycle trails. Some of them take additional steps toward the ecovillage approach, with provisions for stormwater retention, solar energy, increased rooftop albedo (white membranes), greenroofs, underground or at-level-enclosed parking, etc.

Now we think that the finalist/s should be asked to work further with the City and neighbors in a private/public partnership toward the ecovillage approach:

- Require a carbon neutral or net negative development approach, including planning and construction; maximize distributed renewable energy generation, or future installation of same (e.g., make all roofs and parking area solar-ready);
- Use *Living Building Standards* so that all structures recycle the water used in them, generate the electricity used in them, etc.
- Ensure that the developed site's hydrology functions as it did prior to the Original Survey (i.e., 1830), with regard to stormwater runoff, sediment, infiltration, evaporation, and so forth; additionally, build in features that compensate for

the unnatural conditions predicted by climate change modeling for the Yahara region (i.e., cisterns for droughts, adaptive design for flashier and more intense rain storms, etc.);

- Build for at least the maximum density acceptable to the surrounding neighborhoods, while also addressing other neighbors concerns about economic sustainability, yet also design all buildings and structures to accommodate more density in the future, either through vertical additions or above surface/at-level parking (for instance, the proposed Wisconsin Historical Society/Wisconsin Veterans Museum curatorial facility could be built using City air rights over what is currently envisioned by developers as surface parking); and,
- Provide ped/bike connectivity across Milwaukee and Winnebago streets as well as, importantly, across East Washington Avenue. We urge serious consideration of an artful landbridge between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> streets; this could if built wide enough to allow for additional property tax generating development over East Washington Avenue.

The ecovillage approach addresses equity on an intergenerational basis. This element of ecosocial justice is literally built into the structures, complementing the many thoughtful ideas already brought forward regarding equity.

Again we know that service on such a committee can be time-consuming, and we appreciate your efforts on the community's behalf. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

Sincerely,



Gary Werner  
President, CRANES 2010-12 Board of Directors