

John Driscoll statement for the Urban Design Commission

Wednesday, December 07, 2011

Regarding: #24689, Amended PUD-GDP for Grandview Commons Town Center. 3rd Ald. Dist.

*Hopefully, you can read this in under three minutes!!!

The Vandewalle proposal before you tonight is not the beginning of a "Town Center" for the Grandview Commons neighborhood area. It is THE END. The big box concept they are proposing is the antithesis of a New Urbanist, town center concept. The juxtaposition of this high density, big box structure to that of the existing, single family homes is an absolutely inappropriate proposal for the area.

The drawings showing a public library and smaller scale mixed use are misleading. Please consider the economy and consider the budget crisis the City of Madison is trying to manage. The display of a library in this proposal is disingenuous. It could be a decade or more before the area sees a library. There is also the issue of the offer of that land sun setting before the city could take advantage of building there. There is a good chance we may never see a library built in this location. Please also consider the known no-complete clauses the Roundy's corporation is well known to demand. The drawing you will see before you tonight of a town center is nothing but a drawing. It will only ever be a drawing if the big box is allowed to go forward. The town center concept for the Grandview Commons area is highly unlikely with a big box with no complete clauses within a few hundred feet - connected by a hideous expanse of paved parking that Madison residents simply will not walk through. They are unpleasant and they are unsafe. This concept is a failure. The developers appear to have abandoned the concept of a New Urbanist neighborhood. However, those of us that live there have not.

I have taken the developer's word that there is a grocery store involved in this and I have referenced it here. However, there is growing concern that due to Roundy's dire financial situation, there may not even be a deal in the works with a grocer. But rather, this is an attempt simply to rezone this property to elevate its value and sell it to a developer in the Fox Valley area. Once that is done, that developer is free to submit even more threatening possibilities for this currently delightful Madison neighborhood. If any member of UDC thinks this is even remotely possible, I beg that you explore this to the fullest extent possible. You may choose to begin with why this applicant has not filed a formal project application, but is asking for zone and comprehensive plan changes with nothing more than drawings of what it might look like. Followed by why isn't this being proposed for land already approved for this use right up the street on Sprecher and Milwaukee streets.

Members of the UDC, if your mission includes:

- * encourage the protection of economic values and proper use of properties
- * maintain and improve the established standards of property values within the city
- * assure a functionally efficient and visually attractive city in the future

... then you are surely on solid, ethical ground in refusing Vandewalle's proposal before you tonight. Our residents, neighborhoods and City rely on people like you, on commissions like this, to do the right thing.

Thank you

UDC submitted
comments 12/7/11
#24689