

From: [Jim Lottridge](#)
To: [Urban Design Comments](#)
Cc: [Montessori Childrens House](#)
Subject: Proposed 5555 Odana Rd & 5534 Medical Circle
Date: Thursday, March 5, 2026 10:49:09 AM

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Another option with 25-30 foot wide buffer with dense evergreen trees along Montessori Children's House property line (5530 Medical Circle).

Thank you,
Jim & Laura

--

Montessori Children's House
Madison, Wisconsin
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608.441.9686 (fax)
MadisonMontessori.org





From: [Neils Schoenfelder](#)
To: [Urban Design Comments](#)
Subject: 5555 Odana road
Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 6:24:20 PM

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Commission members,

I'm writing as a concerned community member regarding the planned development at 5555 Odana road. I listened to the presentation during your March 4th, 2026 meeting where this was discussed.

It seemed clear to me that the proposed development -- particularly building A -- was a net deficit to the area. It didn't fit into the surrounding neighborhood, and it really made life hard for Montessori Children's House.

I registered for the meeting as Neither For Nor Against, because I hadn't made up my mind about the proposed development. However, after listening to both sides, I'd like to express that I am now firmly against the proposal. At least in its current state.

Thank you for your kind time and attention.

-Neils S.

From: [Rhianna Drinkwater](#)
To: [Urban Design Comments](#)
Subject: Concern About Comments - UDC Meeting Agenda ID 89886
Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 6:23:08 PM

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Hello,

A statement was made during an open commission meeting regarding not seeing a connection between height of a building and safety. It was noted that there are many play areas around the world that have large buildings around them.

I have very strong feelings of a lack of safety for my minor child with this type spoken discourse in areas that drive safety of our community.

On October 1, 2017 a man opened fire from his hotel room at a height in Las Vegas Nevada. That's just the most obvious indication of safety as an indication of height.

On September 19, 2018 my coworker opened up fire on me and my friends from less than 20-feet away from me in Middleton Wisconsin. I still have the scars from this event.

On December 17, 2024 a student opened fire at Madison's Abundant Life School. This directly affected all of us. This was our community.

It's not within the authority of the Urban Design Commission for Madison to change gun laws in the country. It is **absolutely** within the pervue of the UDC to provide safety for our children by not allowing a 6-story building with direct sitelines to our children, and claim that this doesn't have anything to do with security.

I am angry at the statements Shane Bernau went on the record with claiming that there is not an impact to safety by placing this building next to a playground.

I'm happy to follow up with more information about my lived experience as the adult victim of a workplace mass-shooting. I can articulate the concerns about safety that a parent and a victim has in a situation like this.

I implore you to consider your words before speaking in a public setting to the nature of safety of our children.

Thank you,

Rhianna Drinkwater

Urban Design Commission: 03/04/2026 Meeting

Comment on Item 2 (89886): 5555 Odana Rd / 5534 Medical Cir

Dear members of the planning commission:

My name is Victoria Williams and I am a parent of two children who attend Montessori Children's House, as well as a homeowner here in Midvale Heights.

I'm writing to ask you to reconsider the proposed developments that would surround and overshadow our neighborhood Montessori preschool – an institution that has quietly but profoundly enriched this community for more than sixty years.

We all recognize the need for thoughtful, well-planned density. But good planning is not only about the number of units we can fit onto a parcel. It is about how our decisions shape the lived experiences of the people who are already here – especially our youngest residents, who have no voice in this room.

A Montessori environment is not just a building with children inside it. It is intentionally designed around light, openness, and a deep connection to the natural world. Sunlight is not a luxury in that model – it is a core educational tool. Children learn by observing shadows, tending plants, and working in bright, calm spaces that support focus and emotional regulation. The proposed buildings would quite literally cast this school into shadows for much of the day. That is not a metaphor. It is a physical reality that will affect classroom quality, outdoor play, plant life, and the psychological well-being of our children who spend their formative years there. For six decades, this preschool has served generations of families. It has supported working parents, prepared children for lifelong learning, and created a stable community anchor. You cannot replicate that kind of social infrastructure once it is lost.

City planning should protect these long-standing community assets, not isolate them. Surrounding a preschool on multiple sides with six-story buildings creates a canyon effect – blocking light, increasing noise, and limiting airflow. With the nearby highway corridor, boxing in the preschool with tall continuous structures raises concerns of funneling and accumulating traffic exhaust directly where our children learn and play. Young children are especially vulnerable to air pollution exposure, increasing their risk for lifelong chronic disease. From a public health perspective, we should not be designing conditions that risk intensifying air pollution at an early childhood site.

The proposed apartments also fail to reflect the architectural character that makes this neighborhood unique and a point of civic pride. As embodied in the Marshall Erdman

building set for demolition, this area is widely recognized for its cohesive mid-century design – low profiles, human scale, generous setbacks, and an intentional relationship between buildings, trees, and open sky. By contrast, the current proposal introduces mass-produced looming structures with no visual connection to the surroundings. Replacing a distinctive architectural legacy with generic bulk diminishes what makes this community special. Once a historic Erdman building is gone, it cannot be reconstructed.

As proposed, the current development sacrifices both architectural heritage and child-centered urban design for bulk and density alone. We are not asking you to reject development. We are asking for a solution that offers a more contextualized, scaled, and protective design. A step down in scale and echoing existing forms would complement nearby architecture. Introducing step-backs, reduced height, and increasing the set-back would still allow for new housing while preserving sunlight and air flow for our children. I have created a simple AI rendering of an architectural design inspiration that could still increase housing density but also pay homage to the lost Marshall Erdman structure. As you can hopefully agree, it is quite possible to imagine a solution that reflects the scale and materiality of this neighborhood without importing a templated corporate design that can be seen in literally any city across this country... one that seems to emphasize profit margins over human-centered design and community identity.



Thank you for your time and consideration.

Victoria Williams

4825 Woodburn Dr

Madison, WI 53711

832-741-9435

From: [Natalie Smith](#)
To: [Urban Design Comments](#)
Subject: Opposition to 89886 Odana Rd/Medical Cr Development
Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 8:31:38 AM

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Re: Objection to Design As Submitted — 5555 Odana Road & 5534 Medical Circle

Bear Development / Odana Apartments, LLC — Plan Commission Hearing, March 4, 2026

Dear Members of the Urban Design Commission:

I am a Madison resident, a parent, and a professional who works on development projects across the country. I am not affiliated with the Montessori Children's House at 5530 Medical Circle or with the developer. I am writing because I oppose this design as it currently stands, and I am asking the Commission to withhold approval until meaningful design changes are made.

Building A — the six-story structure proposed along Odana Road, sitting closest to the Montessori school playground — has been designed without any analysis of what it overlooks. That is not a minor gap. It is a fundamental failure of the design review process, and it should not be ratified by this Commission. Moreover, the design presents legal risk and liability issues that both the city and developer need to be aware of.

Inappropriate Sightlines:

The Montessori Children's House operates an outdoor playground directly adjacent to Building A's southern elevation. That playground does not appear anywhere in the developer's submitted drawings — despite the developer's own Letter of Intent confirming prior consultation with the school. The Commission is being asked to evaluate a design without the most basic contextual information its own application checklist requires.

Prior commenters have annotated the developer's own grading plan to show the playground's location immediately adjacent to Building A. However, three conditions make this worse than it looks on a flat plan:

- **Building A is taller and closer to the shared property line** than any existing neighboring structure. *This is a material worsening of conditions — not a continuation of them.*
- **The site drops approximately 18 feet from north to south.** Upper-floor balconies on Building A do not look across a fence at the playground — they look steeply downward onto the play surface, like a stadium overlooking a field. No section drawings accounting for this drop have been submitted.
- **Proposed landscape plantings will not screen the upper floors.** Trees grow upward from grade. They do not block downward views from the third floor and above.

Building B — the five-story building along Medical Circle — also presents unanalyzed sightline exposure and must be reviewed. Though Building A is the primary concern.

Safety Issues:

Every school in the United States now unfortunately has to consider and plan for threats of targeted violence. That planning requires controlling visual access to outdoor play areas, limiting unmonitored vantage points overlooking the playground, and maintaining the ability to observe approaching threats without the playground itself being under elevated surveillance from unknown parties.

A six-story residential building with open balconies, placed at an elevated grade directly above an elementary school playground, undermines each of those objectives. The school has no authority over this building, cannot secure it, and has no ability to monitor who is standing on its balconies. This is the world schools operate in today — and a design that has not engaged with that reality has not been honestly considered in its context.

Legal Risks:

the legal risks here are real and should be part of this Commission's deliberation.

Under Wisconsin's Safe Place Statute (Wis. Stat. § 101.11), owners and builders bear a non-delegable duty to construct structures that are as safe as the nature of the premises permits. That duty cannot be transferred to architects or engineers. Regulatory approval does not extinguish it — Wisconsin courts have held that a code-compliant structure can still create an unreasonably dangerous condition.

Wisconsin law also codifies invasion of privacy (Wis. Stat. § 995.50) and criminalizes surveillance conduct (Wis. Stat. § 942.08). These protections carry heightened weight when the subjects are children in a licensed educational setting. A 227-unit residential building with open balconies overlooking a children's playground, with no architectural screening, creates a structural condition that enables observation of minors at scale.

The developer's own Letter of Intent confirms it knew the school was there before finalizing this design. That forecloses any future argument that these risks were unforeseeable. If the Commission approves this design with these concerns in the record and no conditions requiring mitigation, that record will be used in any future litigation. The Commission will have approved a known risk.

I would recommend at a minimum that the following conditions be considered:

- **Sightline section drawings for both buildings**, accounting for the 18-foot topographic drop, showing which floors retain direct views to the playground at full tree maturity.
- **Permanent architectural mitigation** — louvered panels, opaque lower glazing, or equivalent — on floors with direct sightlines to the playground. A building feature, not a suggestion to future tenants.
- **Increased setback for Building A** from the shared property line with the school. This is of great importance.
- **A recorded good-neighbor covenant** binding current and future owners to the mitigation measures.

Having reviewed comments provided, I also agree with obtaining shadow studies as has been suggested.

I would recommend all of this so that this project does not (either directly or otherwise)

result in the loss of a small business that provides a crucial community service- quality early child care and education.

Revised plans addressing these conditions should be submitted before this project proceeds to the Plan Commission. No approval should issue until that review is complete.

I am proud of Madison's growth. However, we should not trade careful thought about our community's needs for a faster path to another quick building to provide 227 more units. The developers, and the City, cannot have it both ways- the school should not be used as a "neighborhood amenity" when it is convenient, while also having a development proceed in such a way that directly harms the school and its ability to function as it currently does.

The sight lines are real. The topography is real. The children are real. The Commission has the authority and the responsibility to get this right. Let's choose to ensure that we are supporting our local small businesses, community schools and our kids. Shall we?

Respectfully submitted,

A Concerned Community Member

Madison, Wisconsin

From: [Leo Kucek](#)
To: [Urban Design Comments](#)
Subject: #89886: Proposed 5534 Medical Circle & 5555 Odana Road Project
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 7:48:40 PM

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Dear Commissioners:

Through decades of dedication, Montessori Children's House has built and fostered an excellent school for some of Madison's youngest learners. As our kids grow up, cultivating plants in the west-facing windows of their classrooms, and building their own towers, the kids - including mine - know that any growth requires stability at its foundation. The foundation for this excellent school is its peaceful environment, due in part to its amazing leadership and teachers, and in part to its intentional, curated setting.

The proposed development's towering windows and balconies, along with the proximity of the new buildings, are incompatible with the current private, peaceful outdoor environment and playground. To preserve Montessori Children's House's peaceful and curated setting, and to protect our youngest learners' ability to learn in the privacy they have grown to love, I ask the Commission to:

1. Increase the setbacks and require adherence to the existing apartment complex standard;
2. Require modifications to minimize sightlines, especially to the playground; and
3. Reject proposals with any balconies facing the playground.

Thank you for your consideration,

Leo Kucek

To the Honorable Members of the City of Madison Urban Design Commission:

I am Karen Moore, a 26-year resident of Madison's Carpenter-Ridgway Neighborhood on the east side and the grandparent of a current student at Montessori Children's House.

First of all, I would like to note that I am thrilled to see that Madison's strong commitment to housing access and equity continues to thrive. Housing, especially affordable housing, is a critical need in this community, and I am very glad that the City of Madison is working to establish more housing on the west side in addition to the multiple new developments already in place in my own east-side neighborhood.

That said, I also have serious concerns about certain aspects of the 6-story development that is proposed for 5555 Odana Road/5534 Medical Circle. I respectfully ask the Urban Design Commission to consider the following points.

Montessori Children's House (MCH) at 5530 Medical Circle is a vibrant, thriving child-centered preschool that recently celebrated its 60th anniversary. Indeed, there are current students at MCH whose parents attended MCH as children, making it truly a multi-generational treasure in Madison.

The proposed housing development would be extremely close to the lot upon which MCH is located – so close, in fact, that the design in its current incarnation would present an active danger to the children who attend the school. The height of the proposed new building means that windows would have direct sightlines into the MCH outdoor playground. This is both inappropriately and dangerously close to an early childhood educational facility.

Some sources have suggested tree plantings as a screen, but trees cannot possibly provide an adequate screen for a 6-story building. Additionally, trees require decades to reach their full height, meaning that even for a smaller building, decades' worth of students at MCH would be subject to inappropriate viewing from the apartment building as they engage in learning activities on the playground.

There is currently an apartment complex on Odana Road behind the MCH building that is set a reasonable and appropriate distance from the school's playground. The proposed new development should be revised so that it matches the same setback standard.

Additionally, the development design as it currently exists calls for balconies overlooking the MCH playground. This presents a further privacy concern for the children who use the playground daily. Absolutely no preschool should have residential balconies that look down on its playground.

I urge – nay, plead with – the Commission to require an increased setback for the proposed Odana Road building to match the setback established by the existing apartment complex.

I further plead with the Commission to require that all balconies on new buildings adjacent to the MCH property be relocated away from areas overlooking the preschool playground.

The safety and privacy of the children, who range from 18 months to 6 years old, should be paramount in considering possible new developments adjacent to Montessori Children's House. I respectfully ask the honorable members of the Urban Design Commission to keep this priority in the forefront of your collective awareness as you evaluate the proposed housing development at 5555 Odana Road/5534 Medical Circle.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Moore". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Respectfully,".

Karen Moore
mukahosc@gmail.com