

March 26, 2104

Members of the Economic Development Committee –

Tonight you will be considering the University Ave Corridor Plan, and I would like you to consider the following points during your discussion.

1. The plan as presented restricts the efficient economic development of the area. The area between University Ave and Campus Dr could handle taller buildings than those recommended in the plan. Because this area is to the north of the bulk of the neighborhood – and virtually everyone who created the plan – taller buildings will not shade any single family homes or the neighborhood at large.
2. With its proximity to both the UW campus and multiple transit lines, this area has the potential to be a fairly dense, walkable, bike-able, transit-friendly node. This is in keeping with virtually all city-wide plans and is good policy from both a transportation and economic development perspective.
3. The Comprehensive Plan has this area supporting considerably great density on the north side of University Ave than is reflected in the plan before you. What this plan is requesting is down zoning the area. This would require an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan or that the neighborhood plan be ignored, negating the entire reason the plan exists.
4. The corridor plan requests that more parking be built than is required under current zoning. This too will tamp down development in the area, since parking is very expensive to construct, especially if surface lots are to be avoided, and surface lots are probably the worst use of the land that could result. Already, residents of new buildings cannot get residential parking permits, so they are not contributing to the parking shortage in the neighborhood. It should be up to the developer how much parking to build and how it should be priced. I am not in favor of requiring residents that do not need parking to pay for it, but that is the result of what is in the plan.
5. I am concerned that the owners of the buildings were not fully engaged in the planning process. Although there were neighborhood meetings and opportunities for comment, the plan was largely driven by the members of the Regent Neighborhood Association. In my opinion, as someone who represented the area for six years and attended the public outreach meetings for this plan, the stakeholders most impacted by restrictions on development in this area were largely left out of the process.
6. The result of involvement of important stakeholders and the unrealistic recommendations in this plan will likely be that the document will be largely ignored should a development be proposed. This undermines the purpose of neighborhood plans and weakens the hard work that good plans involve. Although this question is probably beyond the reach of your committee tonight, I think the city must decide: What is the purpose of neighborhood plans, and how much weight should they carry? Are they accepted and passed as representing solely the opinions of the people that worked on them, so they can

be ignored? Or are they the will of the city at large, because they are passed by the committees and Council? If they former, then that should be understood by all involved, from the neighborhood association down to the Plan Commission. If the later, then city committees, staff, and elected representatives must make an effort to decide what is best for the city, not simply what is desired by those who craft the plan.

This corridor is ripe for redevelopment, and with a renewed focus on apartment living for young professionals, transit-oriented development, and the University's continued growth on the west end of campus, there will be a high demand for housing in this area. Already, the housing market in the area – from modest apartments through more upscale rentals and single-family homes – is quite tight. This is exactly the area we should be encouraging development.

The neighborhood association has stated that this plan is only meant to last ten years, yet that assumption is nowhere spelled out in the document. And I am not in favor of restricting good development in the corridor for even ten years.

Please amend the recommendations in the plan before passing it on to the Council.

Thank you for your service and consideration,

Robbie Webber, [REDACTED] Stevens St
Former Alder, District 5, and 20+ year homeowner one block off University Ave