

From: [Mary Arnold](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Support for Housing - Common Council
Date: Sunday, June 16, 2024 8:55:52 PM

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Hi Alders,

My name is Mary Arnold and I am a renter in Madison. There are several exciting housing projects being brought forth at the next Common Council meeting I'd like to show my support for.

Voit Farm

This plan is extremely exciting to me because it shows awareness for good development moving forward. The developers have done an excellent job creating a plan that contains a mass amount of housing (potentially over 1000 units!) while also providing access to a new park, and public amenities. As space in Madison is extremely limited it is excellent to see such a well-thought approach to this large plot of land making something that will last, serve the community, and serve Madison as a whole.

Essen Haus

Of all plans being reviewed at his meeting, this may be the most impressive in its persistence and ingenuity. Seeing the city, developers, and neighbors work together to create something so uniquely Madison and pleasing to the masses is very inspiring and gives me hope that the city is moving towards a development first mindset it so desperately needs. I think the positives of this plan speak for themselves, but I'll still mention my appreciation for the new housing units, the hotel being in a very desirable location, and the thought given to pedestrian and bike friendly spaces. My only complaint is that I hope moving forward the city will do more to encourage development and not get it bogged down in minute details and overly complicated processes that not only slow the growth and projection of the city, but serve as obstacles for smaller developers to build in Madison. I understand the need to make sure the designs will work in the spaces given, but if every proposal takes as long as this one did then there's no chance Madison will be able to accommodate its demand very soon.

Whitney Way Rezoning

If this for some reason isn't passed, then I would ask where else would be better to rezone? Rezoning here is the clear next step as this area has BRT, many jobs, and other amenities all of which will be attractive to developers and allow the city to grow in a controlled manner with minimal impact on the environment. I would also ask the Council to look for other areas of similar profiles for rezoning in the future.

Old Sauk Rd

There has been much talk on this proposal in particular, and most of the complaints come down to either environmental concerns or the character of the neighborhood. I'd like to address

At the Plan Commission one supporter of this plan called the neighbors hypocrites for many of the points they made and while I might not have been so blunt, there are definitely aspects of

that that ring true. Many of those opposed act as though the existing neighborhood simply grew from the dirt the way it is and is the only acceptable way it can be. While they'll raise concerns about stormwater management, tree removal, and car traffic they don't seem to acknowledge that their driveways cover way more land than the proposed development and contribute to stormwater issues, that each house and lawn in the area required the removal of trees and wildlife, and that they contribute to traffic as well every time they drive in it. I would not demand anyone living in the area tear down their house, rip out their driveway, and give up their vehicles because that would be ridiculous. However, those opposed to this plan will demand that nothing deemed "too much" be built in the area because although single family homes are proven to be worse for the environment than denser multifamily housing, they purport that this new development is not in line with their environment-conscientious lifestyle. I do agree that developments should aim to be environmentally friendly as possible, but to deny this development from moving forward for these reasons when the rest of the surrounding area is worse would be ludicrous.

The character of the neighborhood has also come up many times with the argument that this development does not fit in. What is being purported by opposers of this plan is that things can't change because they've been built a way and so anything outside a certain mold is not welcome. I ask the Council to consider what this area (and really all of Madison) looked like 100 years ago, and 100 years before that. Was the character of the neighborhood the same in each situation? Has Madison remained stagnant since its founding? The answer is clearly no, because cities and the neighborhoods that make up those cities are dynamic and evolve to meet the needs of the people living there. The clear current needs of Madison include more housing and preferably more housing along transportation routes. Even then, Stone House's design doesn't seem egregious to me at all. Stone House has compromised with residents to have fewer floors, and has designed the building with front courtyards to prevent it feeling like a long wall. I ask the Council not treat places where people live as a museum and instead support more housing in all of Madison.

Thank you,
Mary Arnold

From: [Josh Olson](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Neighbors for more Neighbors - Supporting more housing in Madison at Common Council
Date: Sunday, June 16, 2024 7:56:36 PM
Attachments: [image_1](#)

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Hi Alders,

My name is Josh, I live on the Southwest side in District 20. I've been following Madison housing issues since 2019 and I've recently attended many West Area plan meetings.

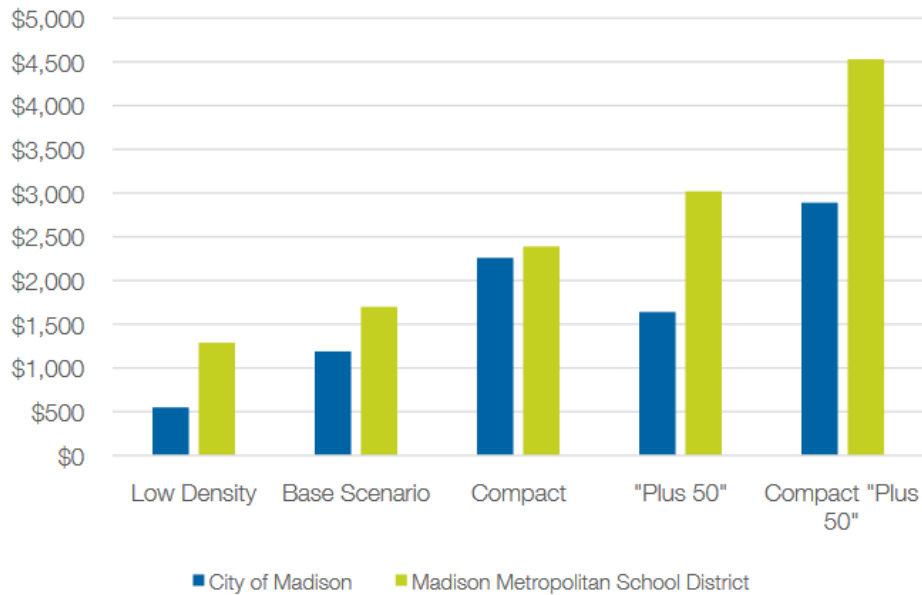
I'm writing to you in support of the pro-housing agenda items for this week's Common Council meeting. We need housing units of all types in Madison and you have the ability this week to make a big dent in our shortage. The following items are particularly important to me:

[Agenda #8 \(78911\) - Voit Farms](#)

- We don't have much space left to build in Madison, so it's important to build sustainable and prosperous home types in the greenfill we do have
- The current Voit farms proposal does a good job of balancing density and desired housing types, making a community where it's easier and safer to walk and bike while not burdening us with costly debt down the road
- I think it's great that we are using [Smart Growth America's lessons](#) from 2015 in Madison in making communities that don't burden the City with additional debt. Low density areas generate the least amount of property taxes and they cost considerable amounts in maintenance after the first depreciation cycle. This plot from Smart Growth America's analysis showing additional density providing the greatest revenue should make us think from a fiscal perspective about our structural deficit, our current need to rely on property taxes to get most of our revenue, and the kinds of housing we should be incentivizing (and this does not even consider the benefits of community, less VMT, and more opportunity for businesses with density)

FIGURE 1

Estimated annual net fiscal impact per acre



[Agenda Item #9 \(82903\) - Essen Haus Redevelopment](#)

- Thank you Alder Rummel for being on board with this redevelopment. I'm glad the City, owners, developers, and neighbors were able to come to a compromise and find something amenable for everyone

- I want to highlight that there were [plans to redevelop this going back to at least 2019](#). It's fantastic that a plan has support now, but what are we showing people in Madison **if it takes 5 years to get approval** to start redeveloping? How many businesses or housing projects are we discouraging from coming to the table because of the risk a project might never break ground?

- How does this long permitting process affect our non-profit or small developers? What can Common Council do to try and shorten these delays? Can we make the rules clearer? Can we try to actively determine landmarks, historic districts, design elements, infrastructure requirements before redevelopment is proposed? How do we reform subjective veto points to be objective checkpoints?

- Cities of our size are not designed to stay in amber. If we continue to look backward and only cherish what has happened before us, we restrict and limit the potentially beautiful, inspiring, and cherished city of the future. There are tradeoffs everywhere and nostalgia is a really powerful emotion, but so is quality of life. Every decision we make, whether it's to redevelop or not redevelop, should be considering Madisonian's quality of life and if we are building towards a more prosperous and resilient city

[Agenda Item # 12 \(83476\) - Whitney Way Rezoning](#)

- This area of Madison has access to many jobs, amenities, and BRT. Building up more in these areas is smart development, especially if there are developers who are ready to build

- We should also consider other areas that are of a similar profile and if those areas should be proactively rezoned in a way that attracts projects that couldn't work under existing restrictions

[Agenda Item # 13 \(83477\) - Old Sauk Road Development](#)

- This item is the heart and soul of housing in Madison and how you respond will establish precedent for either continuing to make our City prosperous and resilient by building more homes OR letting the City become unaffordable as anti-housing, established Madisonians who are not impacted by housing shortages get to call the shots.

Here's the context and the stakes:

1. In an area that the City designated to be Low-Medium residential
2. With a development plan that meets City standards for the zoned area
3. For a development team that has been amenable to public comment, including reducing the number of units, which increases the rent for future tenants
4. And an owner that is likely using the sale of this land as their retirement nest egg, for which we would never ask a single family home owner (with similar retirement plans) to sell their property for less than what it's worth for misguided, subjective, and personal ideals like *the benefit of the neighborhood*

Will Common Council either:

1. Pass the development as it meets city code, showing that it is possible to build incremental housing/"Missing Middle"-like homes *within the Beltline*, saving the City money in the long run on maintenance, while incentivizing developers to find more opportunities within Madison to help families, seniors, young professionals, and all Madisonians find affordable housing

OR

2. Give in to neighbors who are set on maintaining the City in amber, forcing higher property taxes on everyone, reducing City services for everyone, and providing a blueprint for other neighborhoods to [demonize renters and bully their way](#) into no additional housing in **their** backyards, only **other places** in the City, putting us on a wheel of non-existent improvement because everyone gets a veto, resulting in us becoming as unaffordable as San Francisco.

I think in general the City would be in a better spot if it allowed more permitted "missing middle" homes by right rather than conditionally. **When 2/3 of residential land is restricted to only single family detached homes**, it can make new development areas feel like they are getting picked on when they get selected. "Why us? Why not some other area of the City?" These are fair questions in the sense that everyone in Madison is responsible for making this City a better place, so no one should get special treatment. We shouldn't respond to selectivity with "No", we should respond to selectivity with "yes, and other areas are up next".

If we say no to this development, we are maintaining the track we are already on to become San Francisco, San Jose, New York, Boston, or any other desirable city that hasn't built housing. We should be trying something different and not repeating the same disastrous decisions they've made decades ahead of us. We should approve this project and many others like it in the future.

[Agenda Item # 14 \(83478\) - Tiny House Village](#)

- We should try housing of different types and see what works for people. The City should have goals related to these developments and determining if they are meeting those goals

X amount of time after construction is complete

Thank you for reading. If you want to learn more about incremental housing, what you can be doing as an Alder, and how important it is to make our City more prosperous and resilient you can find info at [Strong Towns - Incremental Housing](#). I'm a part of the local conversation in Madison ([Strong Towns Madison](#)), where as a group of Madisonians we are looking to make our City better. Supporting housing so we can have more neighbors is one of our core goals, so be on the lookout for neighbors for more neighbors!

Josh Olson