

From: Mike Knott [mailto:meknott@charter.net]
Sent: Monday, January 16, 2012 10:47 PM
To: Soglin, Paul; Murphy, Brad; Waidelich, Michael; Cover, Steven; Martin, Al
Subject: Grandview Commons big box

Mayor Soglin, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Waidelich, Mr. Cover and Mr. Martin,

Again, I am writing to you on behalf of my family and myself regarding the eminent degradation of our health, safety, welfare and property value as a result of approving a big box retail in our residential neighborhood.

I just finished reading Mr. Munson's "Addendum Packet #1" which was submitted to Mr. Murphy on January 10, 2012 and dated January 11, 2012 in the public record. I have followed the process of this proposal from day one. In fact, the first "neighborhood meeting" conducted by the City and applicant just took place on the evening of January 12th, 2012; the first in over two years since this proposal was first unveiled. Contrary to Mr. Munson's cover letter, I am unaware that any neighborhood input, including what was gathered at this meeting, has been incorporated into the applicant's proposed plan. It appears that all public comment regarding this proposal, which will be devastating for many families in the Grandview Commons and Richmond Hill Neighborhoods, has fallen upon deaf ears. The only real significant change to the applicant's plan is the continuation of Gemini Drive to Cottage Grove Road as suggested by Traffic Engineering. Additional architectural graphic embellishment of the parcel at the corner of Cottage Grove Road and North Star Drive, the "urban square", is intended to draw attention away from the big box at the East end of the Town Center. In the current economy, those appropriately scaled and located buildings to the West have no better chance of being built after a big box is approved and built than they ever had. All this desperate applicant really cares about is unloading the Doric Lodge property ASAP before he's in deeper financial trouble.

I really admired Alder Johnson's sensitivity when commenting at the December 7, 2011 UDC meeting. She said that many of the families who are in opposition to this proposal are concerned with the scale and location of the proposed big box. We're one of those families. She must actually be listening to her constituents' voices of concern. I'm not so fortunate; my Alder does not support our concerns.

What does a long, lavish walkway from a vacant parcel at Cottage Grove and North Star Drive, through an enormous asphalt parking lot to the front door of a big box do for the dozens of homeowners who will be forced to look at the backside of it? The big box has a finish floor elevation in excess of 30 feet above single-family homes to the North and East. Any past attempts to discuss the contextual relationship of the box to the homesites 100 feet away to the North and East are quickly squelched by the development team and Alder.

I know that the off-the-shelf Copps design plans and elevations are just a place holder at this point to get the zoning, neighborhood and comprehensive plans changed, but when someone tried to ask how tall this box was at the January 12 neighborhood meeting, no one from the design team or Roundys even knew! One of them said "19 feet?" That's exactly how high my great room ceiling is! I've attempted to graphically scale those building elevations by using the old trick of using some elements that I knew how tall they were, like doors, trucks and people and creating my own scale. I estimate the East, loading dock side to be over 30 feet high. Plus, I estimate the arching roof not in keeping with the vernacular of the neighborhood to be another 10 feet high. They respond like something as trivial as how high this big box is going to be towering over our homes shouldn't matter. I'm one of those

homeowners and it matters to me tremendously. Does the definition of New Urbanism mean I should see the top of a big box over the single-family home rooftops on the other side of my block when I sit on my deck to enjoy my garden?

Those two concerns, scale and location, are the two things that have never been on the table for discussion which totally perplexes me. I've said this before, there is a palatable solution for these concerns but it would actually require the development team to put forth more effort than pulling the standard big box plan off- the- shelf and plopping it on the site plan where it fits. It would require a solution that is the product of *quality design*. The applicant and I apparently differ on the definition of that; I can't believe I'm really the only one who recognizes this.

Please share this installment of my ongoing concerns with all Urban Design Commission and Plan Commission Members prior to the January 18th, 2012 Urban Design Commission Meeting and the January 23rd, 2012 Plan Commission Meeting.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

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