



December 12, 2008

Members of the Urban Design Commission
City of Madison
Madison, Wisconsin

Re: Proposed HyVee Grocery at Westgate

Commission Members:

I am writing to provide the position of the Midvale Heights-Westmorland Joint Planning Committee (we are currently working on a neighborhood plan for the area that includes Westgate) on the proposed HyVee grocery store and redevelopment at Westgate Mall. We understand that HyVee and J. Herzog, the owner of the Westgate Mall, will give an informational presentation regarding the proposed store and other future development to the Commission at its December 17 meeting. We attended a preview of the presentation, which included a draft proposal for the redevelopment of the entire mall property prepared by Schreiber Anderson Associates, on December 10. This letter outlines some of the Steering Committee's concerns regarding the proposed HyVee grocery store and future redevelopment.

As described in our draft neighborhood plan, the Joint Planning Committee supports the redevelopment of the Westgate Mall. This underutilized commercial center should be redeveloped into a more functional and attractive community mixed-use project. We understand that redevelopment will occur in phases, and ultimate redevelopment will occur over many years, and perhaps under multiple, sequential property owners.

Our concern regarding the current HyVee redevelopment proposal is to ensure that interim and short-term improvements do not preclude the ultimate redevelopment of the entire Westgate Mall. This is the reason that the Joint Planning Committee requested that J. Herzog prepare a long-term redevelopment plan, and we appreciate that they have retained professional site planners to create a "do-able" longer-term redevelopment vision.

The SAA plan dated 12-10-2008 is a solid initial step in determining Westgate Mall's ultimate redevelopment. However, the Joint Planning Committee believes that the SAA plan is better considered a "Mid-Term Redevelopment Plan", rather than a "Long-Term" plan. In general, we do not feel that it goes far enough in taking advantage of the site for future redevelopment. The density shown on the plan is fairly low and does not specifically call for residential development. People living in condos and apartments could provide a reliable customer base for the retail proposed for the site.

While we do not oppose the proposed HyVee store or the SAA plan dated 12-10-2008, we recognize that neither achieves the community mixed-use (CMU)/transit-oriented development (TOD) character recommended by the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan and the Draft Neighborhood Plan for this site. If the SAA 12-10-2008 plan is considered a "Mid-Term Redevelopment Plan", the Joint Planning Committee recommends the following changes, specifically:

- We would like to see the service and loading docks enclosed, as the rear of the HyVee store faces residential areas of the neighborhood.
- We continue to have concerns about traffic patterns on Odana and Segoe Roads and ask that the City carefully examine current patterns and propose viable solutions.
- We would like to see safe, attractive pedestrian and bicycle entrances to the site from Segoe and Odana Roads incorporated into the plans for the grocery store.

The Joint Steering Committee requests the preparation of "Long-Term Redevelopment Plan" that builds on the current Hy-Vee proposal and the SAA 12-10-2008 "Mid-Term Redevelopment Plan". While recognizing that some of the redevelopment we are proposing may not occur for many years, we believe that it is prudent to make a commitment to a dense long-term plan before a new 83,000 square-foot structure is built on the site. Our suggestions for the long-term redevelopment of the site are detailed in our draft neighborhood plan. These suggestions include:

- A commitment to placing multi-story buildings near the property line along Whitney Way. This will create an attractive gateway and shield parking.
- Take advantage of topography changes along Tokay Boulevard, the Epic building, and the park to incorporate as much underground parking as feasible.
- We believe that the entire site will need a long-term parking solution that does not rely solely on surface parking, as the ultimate density proposed for the site by the City will not allow extensive surface parking lots.
- Taller buildings along Tokay Blvd. (the current plan calls for three stories). Building up to six stories would be appropriate.
- Serious consideration of placing a hotel on the property on Whitney Way, as we believe this would be supported by the Research Park.
- Eventual replacement of the current mall (noted on the SAA 12-10-2008 plan as "Remodel Existing") by a multi-story structure housing retail/commercial on the lower floors and residential units above. The residential portion of the building should have a front that addresses and engages the city park behind the mall.
- Creation of a grid of internal roadways to make the site more neighborhood oriented. One potential connection is a vehicular and pedestrian connection between the Whitney Way access point and the Segoe Road access (through the area now occupied by TJ Maxx).
- Attention to creating a safe, attractive pedestrian and bicycle entrance to the site from Tokay Blvd.
- Recognition that the corner of Whitney Way and Odana Road has potential for a landmark building when the service station closes and the site is redeveloped. This corner is an important gateway to Madison's Near West neighborhood and particularly the University Research Park.
- Consideration of relocating and integrating the West Transfer Point to the Westgate Mall property or the commercial area west of Whitney Way.

The "Mid-Term" and "Long-Term Redevelopment Plans" need to be reviewed and adopted by the City to formalize the redevelopment expectations of the site. The Joint Steering Committee intends to incorporate a "Long-Term Redevelopment Plan" into our neighborhood plan. However, these plans

should also be incorporated into the current plan review process. We are concerned about the permitting process that will be put in place at this site. We understand that J. Herzog and HyVee are pursuing a conditional use permit that would apply only to the grocery store. We would prefer to see a plan for the whole site approved, as without a PUD or other such designation, the redevelopment plans will have no authority.

Finally, the neighborhood is very concerned that the City Urban Design Commission and Plan Commission adhere to the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan in respect to all the objectives and standards of the CMU/TOD land use classifications. We note the support of the Urban Design Commission, Plan Commission, Common Council, Mayor, and City Departments in implementing the Comprehensive Plan at Hilldale and Hill Farms, where there were strong concerns about too much development. Given the emphasis of our community on reducing sprawl and creating vibrant neighborhoods, we hope that our support for the more intensive development recommended in the Comprehensive Plan will also be strongly supported by City decision-makers.

Thank you for your time. Several members of the Steering Committee will be attending the December 17 meeting and will be available to answer questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denise L. Lamb".

Denise Lamb
Member, Joint Steering Committee for Midvale Heights-Westmorland Neighborhood Plan
President, Midvale Heights Community Association

Cc: Thuy Pham-Remmele, District 20, Madison Common Council