

**From:** [gordian](#)  
**To:** [Plan Commission Comments](#); [Matthews, Julia](#)  
**Subject:** Oppose Legistar 91289 & 91294  
**Date:** Monday, January 26, 2026 3:28:57 PM

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Mon. Jan. 26, 2026

Plan Commission members,

Please vote to oppose Legistar 91289 and 91294, which would grant a conditional use permit to SARA Investment Reale Estate for construction of a large housing project at 2103 Sherman Ave.

The proposed building's excessive height and residential density will impair the uses, values and enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood. Traffic generated by this project with 87 parking stalls will add to the dangers of the perilous intersection of Sherman Ave, McGuire St, Warner Dr, and Harbort Dr. Light pollution from lighting on the west side of the building will hinder night time enjoyment of Burrows Park, which is directly across the street.

#### EXCESSIVE HEIGHT

Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMX) zoning districts allow,

"Maximum height. 3 stories/40 [feet]" [1]

At five stories [2; p. 2], the SARA project is 67% over the allowed height limit. In this neighborhood, most houses are one or two stories tall. There are a few small apartment buildings as well. The one exception is McKenzie Place, which is four stories tall.

MGO 28.183 - CONDITIONAL USES says,

"No application for a conditional use shall be granted by the Plan Commission unless it finds that all of the following conditions are present:

...

"3. The uses, values and enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood for purposes already established will not be substantially impaired or diminished in any foreseeable manner."

...

"8. When applying the above standards to any new construction of a building or an addition to an existing building the Plan Commission shall find that the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district...." [3]

The proposed building does not fit the "aesthetic desirability" [3] or character of the

neighborhood. Its excessive mass and resulting shadow effects diminish the overall feeling of the surrounding community.

A height of five stories is not entirely accurate. As the picture on page one of the project plans shows, the east side of the building is closer to six stories tall [4; p. 1].

This excessive height is confirmed by the numbers on page 17 of the project plans (4; p. 17 ~ 20 of 23). See A201. The height at the east end of the building is 80% greater than the 40' height [1] allowed in NMX zoning districts. [5].

In a meaningful sense the SARA building is 80% taller [5] than the 40' height allowed in NMX zoning districts. [6].

## RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

The letter of intent says that the SARA project will have 86 residential units [2; p. 7 ~ 3 of 3]. This number exceeds the 60 units allowed in NMX zoning [6] by 43.33%. The resulting residential density is 126 units per acre [7; p. 7 ~ 3 of 3]. This residential density is many times that of the surrounding neighborhood of single family homes and small apartment buildings. The residential density of nearby McKenzie Place is 54.5 dwelling units per acre [8], which is just 43.25% of the density of the SARA project.

As with the excessive height, the excessive residential density of the SARA project means that the proposed building does not fit the "aesthetic desirability" [3] or character of the neighborhood.

## A HYPOTHETICAL EXERCISE

If the SARA project were reduced to the three stories allowed in NMX zoning districts, the number of residential units would be reduced to 45 [9]. Both the building height and the number of units would be what is permitted in NMX zoning districts. The residential density would then be 66.18 units per acre [9].

The project's reduced density still fails to fit the character of the general neighborhood. It is even 21.43% higher than the residential density of McKenzie Place [9].

The simple truth is that a large apartment tower is the wrong kind of housing on this site. Instead, the developer should consider row housing, small apartment buildings, or two-story town houses, either in a free standing "cottage court" setting or as shared-wall condos or a mix of the two. NMX zoning permits this kind of housing or allows it with a conditional use permit [1]. Such housing would fit in quite well with the "existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district...." [3]

The developer might say that lower density housing would make the project financially infeasible

because higher density means higher rental revenues needed for the housing project. That argument is another way of saying that the developer paid too much for the land. Unless the Plan Commission is working for the seller, it is not the job of the Plan Commission to use conditional use permits to raise the price of land in Madison.

High density development means higher rental revenues per acre. Any economist will tell you that the price of land rises to the level of rents that can be extracted. When developers come to expect the Plan Commission to allow high density development in lower density zoning districts, landowners will demand higher prices for their land. The result is land so expensive that only high density development is financially feasible. A vicious circle is created. Only the Plan Commission can break the cycle.

The seller of the parcel must accept that a large apartment tower is not appropriate for this parcel because an apartment tower does not match the character of the area and because the lot is too small. The parcel could then be sold at a price that would support a lower density housing project.

#### TRAFFIC

The intersection of Sherman Ave, McGuire St, Warner Dr, and Harbort Dr. is very dangerous. I personally have had several close calls when walking across it. The SARA project raises the peril by putting a driveway right in the intersection [4; p. 5 of 23] See sheet C100.

The SARA project's 87 parking stalls can be expected to add hundreds of vehicle trips passing through this dangerous intersection.

#### LIGHT POLLUTION

Plans for the SARA project show 14 exterior lights on the west side of the building [4; p. 11 ~ 10 of 23]. See ES101. Right across the street is Burrows Park. Light pollution will ruin park visitors' ability to enjoy the night time in Burrows Park. Neighbors will have the same problem in their yards.

#### CONCLUSION

The SARA housing project at 2103 Sherman Avenue diminishes this neighborhood's character and will impair the neighbors' ability to enjoy what Madison's Conditional Use code calls, "The uses, values and enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood for purposes already established..." [3]

Thank you for considering this message.

Don Lindsay

## SOURCES

[1] Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMX) MGO 28.064

[https://library.municode.com/wi/madison/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?  
nodeId=COORMAWIVOIICH20-31\\_CH28ZOCOOR\\_SUBCHAPTER\\_28DMIECODI\\_28.064NEMIEDI](https://library.municode.com/wi/madison/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COORMAWIVOIICH20-31_CH28ZOCOOR_SUBCHAPTER_28DMIECODI_28.064NEMIEDI)

Accessed 20251209

[2] Letter of Intent

<https://madison.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=15035579&GUID=CB1EF2BD-3A4C-4B18-93CF-CE58B3076B47>

Accessed 20260125

[3] MGO 28.183 - Conditional Uses

[https://library.municode.com/wi/madison/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?  
nodeId=COORMAWIVOIICH20-31\\_CH28ZOCOOR\\_SUBCHAPTER\\_28LPR\\_28.183COUS](https://library.municode.com/wi/madison/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COORMAWIVOIICH20-31_CH28ZOCOOR_SUBCHAPTER_28LPR_28.183COUS)

Accessed 20260125

[4] Project Plans

<https://madison.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=15035581&GUID=4E7EBEF5-8393-4787-B06F-5C738D50D9A0>

Accessed 20260125

[5] Calculate the height of the east end of the building

Calculate the height of the parapet"

165 feet  
\* 12 inches  
= 2980 inches  
+ 10.5 inches  
= 2990.5 inches

Calculate the base in inches

94 feet

\* 12 inches  
= 1128 inches

Subtract the base height from the parapet height

1990.5 inches  
- 1128 inches  
= 862.5 inches

Convert to height in inches to feet

862.5 inches  
/ 12 feet  
= 71.875 feet

Calculate ratio of building height to NMX standard

71.875 Building height in feet  
/ 40 NMX maximum building height in feet  
= 1.80 ~ 80% too tall

[6] 28.061 - MIXED-USE AND COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS USES - includes NMX

[https://library.municode.com/wi/madison/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?  
nodeId=COORMAWIVOIICH20-  
31\\_CH28ZOCOOR\\_SUBCHAPTER\\_28DMIECODI\\_28.061MIECODIUS](https://library.municode.com/wi/madison/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COORMAWIVOIICH20-31_CH28ZOCOOR_SUBCHAPTER_28DMIECODI_28.061MIECODIUS)

Accessed 20251209

Dwelling units in mixed-use buildings (>60 units) require a conditional use permit.

[7] Land Use Application

<https://madison.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=15035580&GUID=E490A351-D394-4D0C-p8B7F-8ED616E49FB6>

Accessed 20260125

[8] Staff Report Legistar 39483

<https://madison.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=2392676&GUID=5B5D0E62-C641-4C34-986B-07BD05613DFF&Options=ID|Text|&Search=39483>

Accessed 20260125

[9] Calculate the Residential Density of a Hypothetical Three Story Project

Calculate the number of units on the top two floors

21 units on fourth floor [4; p. 15 ~ 18 of 23) See A105

+ 20 units on fifth floor [4; p. 16 ~ 19 of 23) See A106

= 41 units on the top two floors

Calculate the residential density of a hypothetical three story building

86 units proposed [2; p. 2]

- 41 units on the top two floors

= 45 units on the first three floors

/ 0.68 acres [7; p. 7 ~ 3 of 3]

= 66.18 units per acre [7; p. 7 ~ 3 of 3]

Calculate the ratio of the residential density of a hypothetical three story building to the residential density of McKenzie Place

66.18 Density of a hypothetical 3 story project

/ 54.50 Density of McKenzie Place

= 1.2143 ~ 21.43% Greater density

**From:** [Laura V](#)  
**To:** [Plan Commission Comments](#); [Matthews, Julia](#)  
**Subject:** 2103 Sherman Ave request for conditional use permit  
**Date:** Monday, January 26, 2026 8:02:00 PM

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Plan Commission Members,

The purpose of this is to request that you vote to **deny the conditional use permit** for construction of a large housing project that is proposed for 2103 Sherman Ave. (Legistar 91289 and 91294).

The Plan Commission should deny the permit for the following reasons:

- The proposed height exceeds the Neighborhood Mixed Use maximum height of 3 stories / 40 feet, and would be out of character with the surrounding neighborhood (the majority of the existing structures are two stories maximum).
- The proposal for 86 units exceeds the 60 units allowed in the zoning code by well over 35%.
- The proposal will result in a significant increase in traffic on streets that are already over-utilized. The additional traffic will add to the already-dangerous configuration of the intersection of Sherman Ave., McGuire St., Warner Drive and Harbort Dr. The proposal adds to the congestion by locating the entrance to 2103 Sherman Ave. at the confluence of these 4 streets.

As written, the proposal does not comply with the Madison Neighborhood Mixed Use requirements and will significantly impair the character of the neighborhood. Perhaps more important, the existing infrastructure will not support the significant increase in traffic.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Laura Vogel  
(608) 244-7187