

**From:** [Todd Dale](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Public Comment: March 24 Common Council – Item 46 (File 91514) – Protecting Montessori Children's House  
**Date:** Sunday, March 22, 2026 2:13:09 PM

Some people who received this message don't often get email from [tdale9010@gmail.com](mailto:tdale9010@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

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I've updated my public comment below to refocus my concern in point 3 and added a personal note at the end. You can refer to this version of my email rather than the previous one for my updated comments.

On Sun, Mar 22, 2026 at 11:06 AM Todd Dale <[tdale9010@gmail.com](mailto:tdale9010@gmail.com)> wrote:

Dear Mayor Rhodes-Conway and Members of the Common Council,

My name is Todd Dale, and I am a parent at Montessori Children's House (MCH). I am writing regarding Item 46 on the March 24th agenda. My daughter has attended this school for three years, and my two-year-old son is set to follow her this fall.

I have participated in the previous Urban Design and Plan Commission meetings regarding the development at 5555 Odana Road and 5534 Medical Circle. To be honest, I am writing to you today with a sense of deep disappointment. Throughout this process, concerned parents and faculty have presented legitimate, science-based concerns regarding the health and safety of the 2-to-5-year-olds at MCH, only to feel those concerns were treated as an inconvenience to be ignored rather than a matter to be resolved.

I want to be clear: I am not against more housing in Madison. I recognize the need for growth. However, I am firmly against a "win-lose" approach that treats the viability of a 60-year-old nonprofit childcare center as "collateral damage." We are not just talking about a building; we are talking about a school where children spend their most formative years—a time when 90% of brain development occurs.

The current path of this project fails to protect these children in three critical ways:

1. **Air Quality and Safety:** A six-story wall placed immediately adjacent to a one-story playground creates an "Urban Canyon" effect, trapping construction dust and traffic pollutants PM2.5 in the exact space where toddlers breathe most heavily.
2. **Operational Viability:** MCH is a nonprofit that relies on enrollment. A design that places massive residential balconies overlooking a toddler playground destroys the privacy and "safe-haven" feel that parents look for, threatening the school's financial survival.
3. **Physical Safety and Construction Hazards:** The construction of a six-story building involves high-impact demolition, deep excavation, and constant heavy machinery movement just feet from where two-to-five-year-olds play. These activities introduce immediate hazards, from dangerous debris and dust

to the potential for sudden utility outages or vibrations that disrupt a learning environment. A preschool will struggle to safely operate as an active construction site neighbor without strict, enforceable safety protocols and a defined contingency plan. Without these protections, the risk of an emergency closure or a safety incident becomes a threat to the children's well-being.

**I am asking the Council to move toward a "win-win" solution by adding specific conditions to this approval:**

- **Establish a Relocation/Mitigation Fund:** This project involves significant demolition and utility work. A fund should be established to support the school if it is forced to temporarily relocate during the most disruptive phases, ensuring families aren't left without childcare.
- **Construction Coordination:** Require the developer to schedule the most disruptive, high-decibel, or high-dust work around the school's outdoor schedule to ensure the children are not exposed to hazardous conditions.
- **Design Guardrails:** Require modifications to the Medical Circle building to include greater setbacks or privacy screening to ensure the school remains a viable option for Madison families.

Government should represent people, not just rubber stamp the requests of developers, as it has felt in all our meetings thus far. I hope you will choose to listen to the parents of some of Madison's youngest residents and prove that our city works for everyone, not just the interests of big money developers.

Thank you for your time and for considering the future of our children.

Sincerely,

Todd Dale

Concerned parent and citizen

#### **Personal Note**

This whole experience has been one of the most disappointing ones I've had in recent memory. I had believed at least our local government would be thoughtful and work to get the best outcome for everyone in Madison. I know that sometimes the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, but I've been very surprised by all the win-lose thinking in approaching this. Every committee's responses have felt dismissive of parent's concerns, saying they are unfounded and often claiming there aren't things they can do. I'm certain it's not a "can't", but a "won't". There doesn't seem to be the will to do the best for all of our city's people, and it's sapped what faith I previously had in our city government. Please prove this wrong by taking these suggestions into account.

**From:** [Margaret Porco](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#)  
**Cc:** [Montessori Childrens House](#)  
**Subject:** Comment on File #91514 — CSM, 5555 Odana Road & 5534 Medical Circle Submitted to Madison Common Council March 24 2026 Meeting item 46  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 24, 2026 10:17:01 AM

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## Written Public Comment

Re: File #91514 — Certified Survey Map, 5555 Odana Road & 5534 Medical Circle (Agenda Item 46)

Submitted to: Madison Common Council | Agenda: March 24, 2026

Submitted by: Jim Lottridge, Laura Kvalheim (MCH Directors) and Margaret Porco (Board President)— Montessori Children's House, 5530 Medical Circle

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We are submitting this written comment on the Certified Survey Map approval for 5555 Odana Road and 5534 Medical Circle. Montessori Children's House does not oppose the approval of this CSM. The subdivision of this property is an administrative matter, and we understand it is not the vehicle for the concerns our school has raised throughout this development process.

We are submitting comment here because this is the only item related to this development that will come before the Common Council — the only moment in this process where our school's experience as an immediate neighbor can be placed into the public record at the Council level. We are using it for that purpose, and we ask that you read it with care and consideration.

### Who We Are — And How We Approach the World

Montessori Children's House has served Madison's children for over 60 years and has been at 5530 Medical Circle since 1991. We are a licensed early childhood education facility serving children ages 18 months to 6 years (through age 10 for summer camp), a nonprofit, and a small local business. But more than those designations, we are a community built on a specific philosophy of how human beings learn, grow, and live alongside one another.

The Montessori philosophy, as articulated by the American Montessori Society, holds that diversity is a call for celebration — not a cause for fear. Our curriculum is international in its heritage and intentionally global in its perspective. We teach children, from the earliest age, that all living things are interconnected and interdependent — that we share common needs even across difference, and that our role in the world is one of stewardship: toward each other, toward our community, toward the generations that follow us.

This is not background. It is directly relevant to why we are here, and to what has been said.

### **We Support This Development — And We Mean It**

We support affordable housing. Our school has expressed support for this project in every forum in which we have participated, and that position has never changed. We registered here as neutral, meaning: we support this project, and we also need help. We have been treated as though those two things cannot coexist. In Montessori, we know they can.

**Our concerns about this project arose before we knew what type of housing it would be, and they would exist regardless.** They have nothing to do with who will live in the building next door.

Our philosophy is both welcoming and inclusive, critical to ensuring that we are building communities that are genuine and responsive to the needs of those that share them.

At the Plan Commission, our school's concerns were characterized — implicitly, and in a public forum — as a pretext for opposing affordable development or for excluding certain residents from our neighborhood. That characterization is false, and it is contrary to everything we teach. It was painful to hear and dismissed our concerns without consideration.

### **The Prepared Environment Is Not a Preference — It Is the Method**

*"The environment must be rich in motives which lend interest to activity and invite the child to conduct his own experiences." — Maria Montessori*

Central to AMS Montessori practice is the concept of the prepared environment — the idea that the physical space in which a child learns is not incidental but foundational. The prepared environment for children ages 18 months to 6 years requires natural light, access to the outdoors, peace and calm, and freedom from disruptive sensory intrusion. These are not amenities we prefer. They are the conditions under which the Montessori method works — and the conditions under which our state licensing requires us to operate.

During an 18-month to 2 year construction process, our ability to protect that environment will be severely tested. We have asked for noise and dust barriers along our shared property boundary, restriction of pile driving and heavy excavation to hours outside our core quiet and outdoor times, and entrance of construction equipment from Odana Rd instead of Medical Circle. After construction, we have asked for design modifications sufficient to maintain the privacy and security of the outdoor space where our youngest students play and learn. These requests are grounded in what our children need — not in who our new neighbors will be.

### **Conflict Is an Opportunity for Growth — But Only If It Is Heard**

*"Preventing conflicts is the work of politics; establishing peace is the work of education." — Maria Montessori, Education and Peace, 1936*

Montessori education teaches children that conflict is not something to be avoided but an opportunity for growth — provided that all voices in the conflict are genuinely heard, that the needs of each party are taken seriously, and that resolution is sought through mutual

understanding rather than the silencing of one side.

We have not felt heard in this process. We engaged the developer in good faith over multiple meetings. The only confirmed change to the project was the relocation of a dog run. On every substantive concern — construction noise, privacy screening, setback, compensation for required modifications to our facility — we received no commitments and no meaningful negotiation. When we asked directly about noise mitigation, we were told: construction is construction.

We then brought our concerns to the Plan Commission — the body designed for exactly this kind of engagement between neighboring land uses. The conditions we requested were not debated, modified, or even partially granted. They were not engaged with on the merits. The approval standards we identified as potentially unmet — including the standard requiring that the uses and values of neighboring properties not be substantially impaired — were not addressed. And the framing applied to our school cast our child safety concerns as bad-faith opposition to affordable housing, in a public forum, without any ability to respond to that accusation and assumption.

That is not a prepared environment for conflict resolution. That is a system in which one voice has been prepared and the other has not.

### **Cosmic Education Teaches Interdependence — We Are Asking to Live It**

The AMS describes cosmic education as helping children understand that all things are interconnected and interdependent — that we share common needs, and that each of us has a cosmic task: a unique, meaningful purpose in the world. We teach this to children as young as two and a half years old. We believe it. And we are trying to practice it here.

We have made the decision not to appeal the Plan Commission's approval. That decision was not made because our concerns were resolved — they were not even discussed. It was made because the time, cost, and continued harm to our school's limited time and resources to fight through a process that has not been designed to hear us is not something our nonprofit can sustain. We run on a small staff and have a volunteer board. This is not our profession. It is our community.

But we are here. We came back. Because we believe — as Montessori educators — that the community this development will bring is our community too, and that the right response to feeling unheard is not to withdraw but to try again, with greater clarity, and to ask directly: is there room for us at this table?

### **What We Are Asking This Council**

Your community plans describe schools as cultural assets. They describe early childhood education as a city priority. They describe small local businesses as part of the character of Madison's neighborhoods. We are all three of those things. We have been here for 60 years. We want to be here for 60 more, serving children of all backgrounds, in the spirit of the philosophy that has always held that every child — regardless of circumstance — deserves an environment prepared for their fullest development.

We are not asking this Council to reverse the Plan Commission's approval. We are asking you and city staff involved to use your influence — your relationships with this developer, your experience in this process, your authority as the representatives of this community — to ask, on our behalf, what it would take to protect our school during construction and to

preserve the current use of our outdoor learning environment after the building opens.

We do not know what is still possible. We do not know what conditions could be negotiated, what commitments could still be made, or what conversations could still happen. We are not experts in this process. That is precisely the point. We are a small Montessori school. We showed up. We prepared. We made our case. And we were met with a system that is better prepared for developers than for the nonprofits they build beside.

The development coming to our neighborhood will be our neighbor and we will treat all those living in that building as such. All we have ever asked is that we be treated with the same care and respect — and that the city provide help to make that possible, just as it has helped make the development itself possible. In Montessori, we teach children that we are all stewards of the world we share. We are asking the Common Council to practice that same stewardship on behalf of our school, our children, and the 60-year-old community institution that has tried to be a good neighbor in this city for longer than most of us can remember.

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**Laura Kvalheim, Jim Lottridge and Margaret Porco**

Directors & Board President, Montessori Children's House

5530 Medical Circle, Madison, WI

**From:** [Adam Templer](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Bear Development - Response to Claims made by WRCC  
**Date:** Monday, March 23, 2026 9:12:39 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[FW WKOW story regarding the Intersect Apartments.msg](#)

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I was made aware of an additional email from WRCC on March 16 regarding Bear Development not having worker's compensation insurance and/or a worker's compensation insurance claim was not being paid at our development at 808 Melvin (The Intersect). Worker Justice WI provided similar claims via public comment during the plan commission meeting on March 16. The CSM review for our development at 5555 Odana Rd and 5534 Medical Cir is on the city council agenda for March 24 (agenda item #46), so I am not sure if similar comments will be made during public comment during the city council meeting. Due to this, I am providing further details here.

Worker's compensation insurance was in place and the insurance information was provided to the attorney representing the workers. This was outlined in the letter I provided on March 10, which included the DWD filing, confirmation from the attorney representing the workers that he had the necessary insurance information, and certificates of insurance showing coverage. To Bear's knowledge, there has not been a worker's compensation insurance claim filed (there has only been a filing with DWD). We confirmed this again on March 18 with the attorney representing the workers, which is attached for reference.

We continue to do everything we can to resolve any issues at The Intersect.

Thank you,

Adam

Adam Templer  
SVP- Development  
Bear Real Estate Group  
Mobile: 312-405-3277

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**From:** Adam Templer  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 11, 2026 5:52 PM  
**To:** [allalders@cityofmadison.com](mailto:allalders@cityofmadison.com)  
**Subject:** RE: Bear Development - Response to Claims made by WRCC

As a follow up, we just received the attached email from the attorney representing the workers, which is quite relevant to the situation.

Thank you,

Adam

Adam Templer  
SVP- Development  
Bear Real Estate Group  
Mobile: 312-405-3277

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**From:** Adam Templer

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 10, 2026 3:41 PM

**To:** 'allalders@cityofmadison.com' <[allalders@cityofmadison.com](mailto:allalders@cityofmadison.com)>

**Subject:** Bear Development - Response to Claims made by WRCC

Good afternoon-

We were made aware of a letter sent to the Madison City Council by WRCC, and vehemently deny the allegations made against Bear Development. Please find our formal response attached, along with a press release that was provided by us today in response to media inquires. I am hopeful the summary and supporting documents provide a clear rebuttal to these false claims.

We continue to make a significant investment in Madison to develop quality, affordable housing and do not want this to be disrupted by false allegations.

Thank you,

Adam

Adam Templer  
SVP- Development  
Bear Real Estate Group  
Mobile: 312.405.3277  
[Adam@BearREG.com](mailto:Adam@BearREG.com)  
[www.BearREG.com](http://www.BearREG.com)



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**From:** [John Hotvedt](#)  
**To:** [Adam Templer](#)  
**Subject:** FW: WKOW story regarding the Intersect Apartments  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 18, 2026 1:17:59 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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FYI on the WC issue.

**John Hotvedt**

Vice President – General Counsel

**Bear Real Estate Group**

**direct: 262.842.0575**

[jeh@BearREG.com](mailto:jeh@BearREG.com)

[www.BearREG.com](http://www.BearREG.com)



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**From:** David Robles <[dxrobles@outlook.com](mailto:dxrobles@outlook.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 18, 2026 1:14 PM  
**To:** John Hotvedt <[jeh@bearreg.com](mailto:jeh@bearreg.com)>  
**Subject:** Re: WKOW story regarding the Intersect Apartments

Good Afternoon:

I have notified DWD and am working on the claim. Due to client privilege concerns, I can not comment further without authorization from my client. If I am in need of further assistance, I will let you know. In the meantime, I did receive the releases (yesterday) and will put the packet together for you. I am having some electrical work done on the house (which means my desktop with the information is unavailable until power is restored - using my laptop for this communication.) I will forward an email to you in advance of the packet (releases and information for the assignment of claim) which will be made available on a secure cloud file.

Thank you your assistance.

David Robles, Attorney

(414) 610-6813 (cell)

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**From:** John Hotvedt <[jeh@bearreg.com](mailto:jeh@bearreg.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 18, 2026 11:26 AM  
**To:** David Robles <[dxrobles@outlook.com](mailto:dxrobles@outlook.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: WKOW story regarding the Intersect Apartments

Have you been able to get a WC claim filed with the state? Is there anything else you need

from our end to assist, just let us know.

Thanks again.

**John Hotvedt**

Vice President – General Counsel

**Bear Real Estate Group**

**direct: 262.842.0575**

[jeh@BearREG.com](mailto:jeh@BearREG.com)

[www.BearREG.com](http://www.BearREG.com)



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**From:** David Robles <[dxrobles@outlook.com](mailto:dxrobles@outlook.com)>

**Sent:** Thursday, March 12, 2026 10:01 AM

**To:** John Hotvedt <[jeh@bearreg.com](mailto:jeh@bearreg.com)>

**Subject:** RE: WKOW story regarding the Intersect Apartments

Good Morning:

Thank you. I did not have this information.

David Robles, Attorney

(414) 610-6813 (cell)

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**From:** John Hotvedt <[jeh@bearreg.com](mailto:jeh@bearreg.com)>

**Sent:** Thursday, March 12, 2026 9:57 AM

**To:** David Robles <[dxrobles@outlook.com](mailto:dxrobles@outlook.com)>

**Subject:** RE: WKOW story regarding the Intersect Apartments

Also, hopefully SCS counsel provided this to you already, but our team just forwarded me Raramuri's COIs for both General Liability and W.C.

Passing along just to make sure you have them at your disposal.

Talk soon.

JEH

**John Hotvedt**

Vice President-General Counsel

**Bear Real Estate Group**

**direct: 262.842.0575**

[jeh@BearREG.com](mailto:jeh@BearREG.com)



[www.BearREG.com](http://www.BearREG.com)



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**From:** David Robles <[dxrobles@outlook.com](mailto:dxrobles@outlook.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 11, 2026 7:42 PM  
**To:** John Hotvedt <[jeh@bearreg.com](mailto:jeh@bearreg.com)>  
**Subject:** WKOW story regarding the Intersect Apartments

Good Evening:

I just became aware of the news story by WKOW regarding the Intersect Apartments. As I indicated in my earlier email, I am very appreciative of the actions of Bear in resolving this matter. Accordingly if there is any assistance you are in need of in behalf of my clients to insure accurate information is communicated about this matter, please contact me. Thank you.

David Robles  
(414) 610-6813 (cell)

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**From:** [Diana W](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment: Agenda Item 46 (91514) – Concerns regarding development adjacent to MCH  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 24, 2026 12:56:07 PM  
**Attachments:** [File #91512 AMENDED OPPOSITION - Request for Parcel Decoupling Scale Mitigation and Mandatory Environmental Impact Studies.eml.msg](#)

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Dear Common Council Members,

My name is Diana Weng. I am a mother of two: one child graduating from Montessori Children's House (MCH) this year, and another who will begin their journey there this fall. I am writing to you today regarding the development described in **Agenda Item 46: 91514**.

After attending both the Urban Design Commission and Plan Commission meetings, I am writing to you not just as a concerned parent, but as a disillusioned constituent. This has been my first experience with the city's development process, and frankly, it has left me feeling hopeless and powerless.

Throughout this process, a recurring and frustrating pattern has emerged:

- **The "Dismissal" of Public Concern:** When parents speak with passion about the safety and health of their children, it feels as if we are frequently dismissed as being "too emotional" or "unreasonable."
- **The Lack of Accountability:** During the UDC meetings, we were led to believe the Plan Commission held the authority to address our technical concerns. Yet, at the Plan Commission, the sentiment was that no concrete demands could be made of the developers—not even a simple CFD and noise studies to confirm how these 6-story "monoliths" will affect the airflow, trapped pollutants, and noise from the Beltline.
- **Reassurances vs. Results:** We have received plenty of verbal reassurances, but zero concrete checks and balances. Why does the city solicit public comment if there is no mechanism to hold developers accountable for the long-term health impacts on a neighboring school?

I am asking the Common Council to address the questions that have, thus far, gone unanswered:

1. **Air Quality:** Without a CFD (Computational Fluid Dynamics) study, how can the city guarantee that these buildings won't trap Beltline pollutants directly over the school's playground?
2. **Transition and Scale:** Why can't the plots remain separate to allow for a gradual height transition that respects the existing neighborhood architecture, rather than allowing a monolithic block that towers over the school?
3. **Family-Centric Planning:** If the goal is a vibrant community, why is the unit mix dominated by 1bd/1ba units? To truly support the YMCA, the local pool, and the

school, we need 2 and 3-bedroom units that allow families to take root.

4. **Mitigation and Longevity:** Will the Council require a mitigation fund to assist the school with relocation or safety measures during the intensive two-year construction period?

Finally, I want to be incredibly clear: **I fully support the construction of low-income housing.** I also want it to truly benefit low-income, struggling families. My opposition is not to the *people* who will live there, but to the *process* that is currently prioritizing developer ease over the safety and environmental health of the children next door. We are not using the school as a shield; we are asking the city to treat the school as a vital, vulnerable neighbor that deserves protection.

I ask that you do not dismiss our concerns as "emotional," but rather see them as a legitimate call for better planning and real accountability.

Thank you for your time and for your service to our community.

Sincerely,

Diana Weng

Parent and Community Member

Attached: Previous email to the Plan Commission on my concerns around the development on 5534 Medical Circle and 5555 Odana Rd

**From:** [Victoria Williams](#)  
**To:** [All Alders; council](#)  
**Subject:** Response to Plan Commission Meeting on 3/16/26  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 18, 2026 10:45:25 PM  
**Attachments:** [image.png](#)

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Dear Council Members,

I am writing in response to the 3/16/26 Plan Commission meeting, where a large number of public comments were raised in response to the proposed development at 5555 Odana Road, and 5535 Medical Circle Drive. As we all appreciate, good planning involves balancing multiple priorities, including the development of affordable housing while ensuring that these developments are in context with their surroundings. Although difficult, these goals are not in conflict but are instead mutually reinforcing. This is why I would like to bring attention to the following comment made by alder Carmella Glenn at this meeting at the close of public comment:

"Affordable housing has been blocked by opposition that invokes schools, parks, and child care proxies for arguments that cannot be made openly. Madison redlined its neighborhoods, we steered Black and low income residents away from opportunities for decades. We do not get to call ourselves a city committed to equity and then deny housing the moment neighbors object to who their neighbors might be."

While she touches on an unequivocally important issue that unfortunately exists in many contexts, this commentary was not warranted in response to the public concerns expressed in this meeting. I want to respectfully clarify that public comments were not rooted in opposition to affordable housing, nor targeting the racial diversity of potential residents. Rather, the bulk of the substantive public comments reflected legitimate, site-specific concerns that the development would pose to the adjacent preschool, particularly related to effects of the building's massing and overall design incompatibility with the surrounding area. These are standard planning considerations that apply to any development, regardless of the income level it serves. Accordingly, the majority of commentary requested modifications to the building's design, such as increasing set-back and reducing height, not asking for it to be sidelined. These public concerns raised in interest of the preschool are not unreasonable. The zoning of the back portion of building A is limited to 5 stories, requiring a conditional use permit to allow the entire structure to be at 6 stories. The setback of this building is only 100 feet from the preschool playground, and considering the elevation drop towards the preschool, would tower at least 7 stories directly above the school. This configuration would clearly raise foreseeable concerns.

Yet the chilling effect that alder Glenn's flashpoint comment had on the meeting was palpable. Her introduction of accusations centered on concepts of redlining and discrimination made in response to site-specific planning concerns effectively shut down constructive discourse. Framing the public input in this way felt dismissive of legitimate issues related to how the building design would meaningful impact the preschool that it would literally surround on two sides. When site-specific concerns are not directly engaged, and are instead reframed in

broader or unrelated accusatory contexts, there is a risk that valid input is overlooked. This undermines public trust and limits the Commission's ability to fully evaluate the project on its merits. My concern regarding the configuration of this new development on traffic emission dispersion from the nearby highway was noted by Plan Commission staff, although no air pollution dispersion study was done, nor requested.

**Thus, I respectfully request a response to this specific concern that I have raised in public commentary testimony at both the Urban Design and Plan Commission meetings. I am including a reiteration of the issue below.**



This project, as currently proposed, would introduce two mid-rise large-scale apartment buildings in close proximity to a major highway, and would effectively surround an existing preschool (Montessori Children's House). The image above is a reminder of the proximity of the preschool to the beltline, and how the proposed development would envelope this early childcare site and potentially limit airflow and the dispersion of traffic pollutants arising from the freeway.

Given the well-documented impacts of near-roadway air pollution - particularly fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), nitrogen dioxide, and ultrafine particles - this situation raises significant concerns about increasing exposure risks to young children, who are especially vulnerable to respiratory and developmental effects. As a researcher at UW Madison, I have published peer-reviewed findings of the impact of air pollution exposure on adverse health outcomes. There is also a substantial and growing body of research supporting urban design configurations and spacing as central to impacting street level air pollution concentrations and dispersion:

<https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/city-building-arrangement-air-quality>

<https://nhsjs.com/2025/investigating-the-impact-of-high-rise-buildings-on-urban-wind-patterns-pollution-dispersion/>

<https://phys.org/news/2025-09-narrow-streets-flanked-tall-pollution.html>

The combination of increased traffic activity and the construction of mid-rise buildings near the roadway may substantially alter local air pollution dynamics in two critical ways:

- **Increased emissions** due to higher traffic volumes, congestion, and diesel vehicle activity associated with residential density

- **Altered dispersion patterns** caused by building-induced airflow disruptions, including potential street canyon effects, pollutant trapping, and downwash zones at ground level

These factors can lead to localized pollution hotspots, particularly at pedestrian height, where children and staff at the preschool would be directly exposed. In light of these risks, I respectfully request that the commission require the Wisconsin DNR (or other applicable regulatory body) to complete a comprehensive air dispersion modeling study to ensure a complete environmental review process for this development.

Thank you for your service and for your consideration of community input.

Sincerely,

Victoria Williams

**From:** [Victoria Williams](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#)  
**Subject:** Common Council 3/24/26: Public Comment on Item 91514  
**Date:** Monday, March 23, 2026 1:36:52 PM  
**Attachments:** [Common Council Public Comment.pdf](#)

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Good afternoon,

Please see the attached document to be submitted for written comment on item 91514 at the 3/24/26 Common Council meeting.

Thank you for considering public input,  
Victoria Williams

**Common Council Meeting: 03/24/2026**

**Comment on Item 91514: Development at 5555 Odana Rd / 5534 Medical Circle Dr**

Dear members of the Common Council,

I recognize that the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for this project has already been approved by the Plan Commission on 03/16/26 and that the Council's role at this stage may be limited. However, I am submitting this comment to ensure that my ongoing concerns are part of the record. In this testimony, I raise concern as to whether the required finding for CUP approval – that the project will not be detrimental to public health - has been fully supported by site-specific evidence. **I want to emphasize that this is not a general objection to development at this site, but rather site-specific concerns considering the site's location, proposed design and massing of the buildings, and the vulnerable population of preschool children whose health may be impacted by this development.**

The location of this specific development is located immediately adjacent to a preschool and in close proximity to the Beltline, a major source of traffic-related air pollution. Young children are particularly susceptible to these pollutants due to their higher respiratory rates and developing lungs. Adverse health outcomes from traffic-related pollution exposures in children has been strongly supported in the medical literature. **A recently published review in this area reports that exposure to air pollutants during sensitive early childhood developmental periods is associated with heightened risk for respiratory disorders, neurodevelopmental impairment, and chronic conditions including cardiovascular disease**<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, the World Health Organization has recently lowered its health-related limit values for particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) and nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), both of which are tied to vehicular emissions, to reflect these known harmful effects of air pollution on human health<sup>2</sup>. In my research as faculty at UW Madison, I have previously published on how air pollution exposure is associated with increased risk for dementia in another vulnerable population, older adults<sup>3</sup>. However, the mechanisms by which harmful air pollution exposure impacts the body are universal across these sensitive populations,

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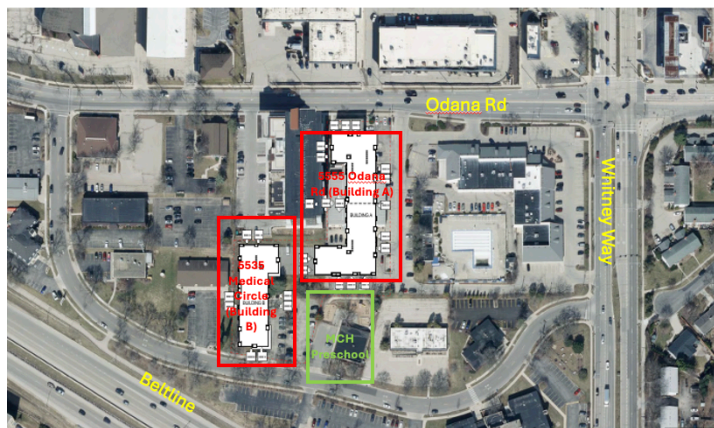
<sup>1</sup> Chong-Neto, H. J., & Rosário Filho, N. A. (2025). How does air quality affect the health of children and adolescents?. *Jornal de Pediatria*, 101, S77-S83.

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization . World Health Organization; Geneva: 2023. Climate Change and Noncommunicable diseases: Connections.<https://www.who.int/news/item/02-11-2023-climate-change-and-noncommunicable-diseases-connections>

<sup>3</sup> Williams, V. J., Trane, R., Sicinski, K., Herd, P., Engelman, M., & Asthana, S. (2024). Midlife and late-life environmental exposures on dementia risk in the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study: The modifying effects of ApoE. *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, 20(12), 8263-8278

where aside from direct impacts to the respiratory system, other body organs (including the brain) are indirectly impacted by elevated pollution-associated systemic inflammation.

At issue with this particular development is how the approved building design may limit air movement and the dispersion of nearby traffic-related air pollution in a way that would concentrate these pollutants at ground level at the preschool. The building's massing and increased height (which required approval through a Conditional Use Permit) creates a nearly continuous wall of development that largely envelops the north and east boundaries of the preschool (shown below). Although the back of Building A is currently zoned at 5 stories, with the CUP allowance of 6 and accounting for elevation change, will stand at least 7 stories within 100 feet of the preschool playground. With the orientation of the beltline to the South, **this creates a strong potential for a canyon or barrier effect, where the air circulation is constrained and pollutants are more likely to accumulate rather than dissipate**<sup>4</sup>. Of notable relevance, the prevailing winds generally come from the South/Southwest in summer months when children at this preschool spend a large portion of their day playing outside. Whitney Way and Odana Rd also carry a high traffic volume, and the proximal placement of driveways and internal circulation routes bordering the preschool boundary, both likely confound these exposure effects as well. Given the known health risks associated with air pollution, there is a substantial scientific literature that has evaluated the impact of urban design configurations on ground-level air pollution exposures. A particularly relevant finding is that **increasing building permeability, limiting height, and increasing setbacks were found to be the most effective solutions to mitigating air pollutant exposure problems in isolated urban canyons**<sup>5</sup> – which are precisely the problems with this development.



<sup>4</sup> Fu, X., Liu, J., Ban-Weiss, G. A., Zhang, J., Huang, X., Ouyang, B., ... & Tao, S. (2017). Effects of canyon geometry on the distribution of traffic-related air pollution in a large urban area: Implications of a multi-canyon air pollution dispersion model. *Atmospheric Environment*, 165, 111-121.

<sup>5</sup> Ng, W. Y., & Chau, C. K. (2014). A modeling investigation of the impact of street and building configurations on personal air pollutant exposure in isolated deep urban canyons. *Science of the Total Environment*, 468, 429-448.

**These specific circumstances of this development compound to increase the need for due diligence to ensure public health and safety.** This is not a general planning concern; it is in response to the potential for site-specific harm. This is a unique situation where there is a direct problematic intersection between the massing and enveloping layout of the proposed developments and its proximity to the freeway where air quality concerns are greatest. When combined, these factors importantly compromise the health of preschool children (as young as 18 months), whom by state licensing requirements must spend time outside each day. Together, these facts **elevate the concerns above typical zoning considerations into substantive health and safety risks.** This combination is also not a typical condition, where the "comparable developments" or precedents that were raised in the Plan Commission are applicable. Instead, **the presence of these risk factors warrants a site-specific evaluation rather than reliance on general assumptions about the development's impacts on air quality.**

Under Madison's ordinance, the Council must be able to make specific findings that the project will a) not be detrimental to public health, safety, or welfare, b) is compatible with surrounding area, and c) will not create substantial adverse impacts. Without the city evaluating how the buildings' height and massing would affect pollutant concentrations at a preschool boundary, it is difficult to conclude that the project will not be detrimental to public health or welfare. **The very modification being granted through the Conditional Use Permit (additional height) is directly related to the potential for increased pollution concentration at a location that serves a vulnerable population (children).** The absence of analysis regarding the effects of this development on near-roadway air pollution exposure in the context of increased building height and massing adjacent to a sensitive use, raises questions about whether that finding was fully supported. Further, the expectation that this development will be publicly funded and subsidized should create a higher expectation of due diligence to ensure that health and safety standards are met.

Overall, I want to clearly reiterate that this constitutes a site-specific issue involving the intersection of design, location, and a vulnerable population. Addressing it doesn't require opposing development or sidelining this project, but it does **require ensuring that public health considerations are meaningfully integrated into the final design.** I respectfully defer to the Common Council what strategy should be pursued to ensure that this new development is not adversely impacting the health of our children; whether this proposal needs to be sent back to the Urban Design or Plan Commission(s) or can be addressed and mitigated during future planning stages. However, I strongly urge the Council to acknowledge this potential harm in the record and ensure that the necessary steps, including a site-specific air dispersion modeling study, be completed in order to reach an informed decision that this development does not pose a risk to the health of a sensitive

population. If adverse impact is indicated, I encourage the applicant to incorporate reasonable mitigation measures, such as:

- Stepping down building height and/or increasing setback of Building A along the boundaries adjacent to the preschool
- Adjust building placement or design to improve airflow and pollutant dispersion
- Relocating or minimizing vehicle activity near the preschool boundary
- Incorporating vegetative or structural buffering to aide in pollutant dispersion
- Implementing enhanced filtration and air quality protections

Thank you for your time. I would greatly appreciate any guidance, recommendations, or next steps your office could provide regarding this matter. I have yet to receive a direct response to this foreseeable concern that I have now raised through public and written comments at the Urban Design and Plan Commission meetings, and in direct email correspondence to the Common Council. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this concern further.

Sincerely,

Victoria Williams, PhD