

To members of the Urban Design Commission:

We are writing to express our concerns with the proposed project entitled 8Twenty Park St. While we support the affordable housing aspect of the project, we have specific concerns related to the design of the building and the aesthetics of how it fits into the neighborhood.

It is important to recognize that this one-block wide and three-block long strip of land where we live is essentially an island, bounded by St. Mary's hospital to the north and multi-unit apartment buildings to the south. These three blocks have character and charm with a majority of the single-family homes dating to the 1930's. It is concerning to have an urban, four and five story apartment building encroaching so deeply into the neighborhood. It doesn't fit. It is not to scale with the surrounding buildings as you will see below.

Issue 1) Project is not to scale with surrounding buildings and homes

The developer is using St. Mary's as a barometer for the height of their building, stating it is five stories high so their new building should be as well. However, we feel that is the wrong building to be looking at and instead we should be looking at everything else around this block and use those as the comparisons. Guidelines for Urban Design District No. 7 state "New infill buildings should not vary by more than one story from the average building height in the block when that block exhibits a concentration of existing buildings and a well-defined blockface". The block in question is full of single-family homes that do not exceed two stories. Therefore, we do not feel the portion of the building that extends into the neighborhood should exceed three stories.

Existing buildings directly across the street from the project, two-story, multi-unit, Haywood Drive homes:



Existing buildings: single-family homes directly across the street from the project, Brooks St. homes:



Issue two: Building design is an urban look that may be appropriate for downtown or Park St but does not fit in with the surrounding homes.

We support the vision of the Greenbush revitalization plan (2010) that, in order to increase density, recommends medium scale townhouses and cluster courtyard housing (Part I, I-3), We look to Arboretum co-housing and City Row apartments as models and wish this developer was incorporating this sort of neighborhood-friendly design into this project. There are other examples of affordable housing in residential areas that do a much better job of blending in their building with the neighborhood. For example, this three-story building on Johnston St, City Row Apartments with a peaked roofline:



Issue three: Concern for the view from Brooks St. While the five single-family homes on the east side of Brooks St are slated to remain, we have concerns about the view of this looming building behind them. Furthermore, the west side of Brooks St. is higher, offering those homes an even “better” view of the building that is proposed. To see the elevation of the higher homes on the west side of Brooks St please refer to the image at the top of page two. The developer shows streetscape views from Brooks St of what the building will potentially look like from the street. However, we feel this is misleading as the views are from street level and in actuality the west side of Brooks St. is quite a bit higher. Here is the actual view facing east (towards the proposed development) from the front door of the west side of Brooks St. homes. Note the elevation:



We have concerns about what the looming building will look like behind these homes on Brooks St. As an example, we can look at the Ideal building (located several blocks north) and see the view those homes have of the building (which is only a two story building at this point, not four as is proposed here!) Here is the view from the homes that back up to the Ideal building:



The Ideal building is an example of an urban design on Park St. that steps down dramatically as it encroaches into the neighborhood. Why aren't we doing the same thing here?



We request that you work with the developer to keep the affordable housing component but work on a design that better fits in with the existing neighborhood (i.e. City Row apartments) and has step-downs, like the Ideal Apartments, as it pushes back into the neighborhood. Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,

Marissa Burack and Jason Hagenow
841 High St.
Madison, WI 53715