

Jim LaGro: Parking lot need not be an eyesore

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Building a Grandview Commons grocery store with 58,000 square feet does not mean it has to be served by a "big, driver-friendly" parking lot, as suggested in columnist Chris Rickert's Feb. 23 piece.

Good site planning can separate foot traffic from vehicle traffic by integrating walkways in the parking lot. Landscape architects can also reduce the visual impacts of the lot by dividing it into smaller parking bays. Potential storm runoff impacts can be mitigated by planting trees and adding properly-sized green spaces adjacent to the walkways.

Instead of paving a sea of asphalt in front of Madison's new grocery stores, neighborhood associations and city planning staff should negotiate for a higher standard of design quality to create a more attractive and sustainable generation of parking lots.

Although designing and building better parking lots costs a bit more, these additional costs are a small fraction of the total development costs. And the premium paid for walkways and landscaping comes with community benefits like improved aesthetics, enhanced walkability and growing property values.

— *Jim LaGro, UW-Madison Department of Urban and Regional Planning*

12-16