

10 August 2026

From: Gundega Korsts
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To: City of Madison Planning
RE: Agenda Item 93984
Oakwood Village University Woods

Our alder's postcard said that hearings on 10 August (Plan Commission) and 8 September (Common Council) would address demolition and construction at "6145-6301 Mineral Point Rd + 510 Genomic Dr". Thus my responses, as an occupant of a property located within 200 feet. If my public comment should be directed elsewhere, please let me know.

OPPOSE: Demolition of the Gallery and Tower buildings.

We were assured by Oakwood management that this would happen only "in a couple of years", after the new building is completed. The Tower is home to Section 8 residents, but also serves the entire campus with recreation spaces, meeting spaces, offices for affiliated senior services, and above all a spacious two-room library and reading room that serves the entire campus. These amenities are not included in the initial plans for the new building. That significantly reduces quality of life for all residents. The affiliated organizations can find other accommodations, but residents need and deserve full access to recreation, meeting, and library spaces.

Demolition of the Gallery-Tower complex now, along with the other buildings, makes hundreds of residents give up immediately so much of what has provided quality of life here at Oakwood Village University Woods.

Don't tell old people that "it won't be long" before equivalent amenities are restored. It's not just that some of us likely will die during that 'not long' time. Imposing a year of unnecessary deprivation is just plain wrong.

Management may prefer to get all the demolition permitting done at the same time, but that doesn't justify hurting people.

The Tower still has section 8 residents, so the federal government is involved, too.
As I understand it, demolition of section 8 housing requires at least a year's notice. Management doesn't tell us anything, but you could ask when federal approval of demolition goes into effect.

OPPOSE: Construction of the new building without remedy for major deficiencies.

1. The planned building eliminates the current easy flow between buildings for all residents across all four levels of care. This imposes hardships for residents at higher levels of care, and breaks up the daily life of a community.
 - (a) Restore 2nd-story connection to Heritage. This is prime flow for Independent Living.
 - (b) Restore underground tunnel connection to memory care (Covenant), assisted living (Tabor), and skilled nursing (new Hebron)
 - (c) Eliminate at-grade connection from the new building to the Village Inn dining area. It serves only to isolate new residents while fragmenting shared open space.

2. Demolition of a treasured multi-use Chapel without an equivalent space in the new building breaks faith with the Oakwood community, both residents and donors.
 - (a) Redesign the new worship space to be equivalent in area, height, acoustics, light, and quality of materials.
 - (b) Make the space as long as the current chapel's longer axis. Raise the ceiling to two stories in height for the front 1/2 or 2/3. Alter apartment floorplans as needed to accommodate this two-story chapel.
 - (c) Bring in acoustics experts, to ensure that the new high-ceilinged space is worthy of the grand piano and the splendid donated organ, and of the world-class musicians who come there to present intimate concerts.
 - (d) Preserve stained glass windows. Install in light-boxes, if necessary.
Re-use as much as possible of the wooden fixtures in the present chapel: flooring, altar, dais, etc.
 - (e) Ensure continued historic preservation. In demolition, preserve the section of the original 1920s façade that is incorporated into the current building. Reposition it indoors on ground level as best it can fit. A courtyard feature is a less likely but still possible alternative. Keep thinking until a solution emerges.

SUPPORT: Demolition of both the original Hebron building and the recreation center.

UNHAPPY SUPPORT: Demolition of the Chapel. This should never have been in the original plan. **Did the architects really get three separate engineering firms to agree that the Chapel building could not be preserved?** Surely the challenge of the newer Chapel constructed as if propped up against the older Hebron building is not beyond engineering imagination.

The Chapel is a treasure. When the loss was announced, I heard a woman wail, "But I was going to have my funeral there!"

WISHFULLY OPPOSE: The entire project. It may be a good urban design, but it's all wrong for the Oakwood Village campus and community. The architects aren't to blame. The original management that handled it badly is gone. New management are stuck with making do.

Ideally, the architects would be given a complete do-over assignment, to preserve the chapel and then design a building that is part of the campus, instead of a building that by design reduces quality of life for all other residents.

Re-do the basic footprint so that the tall part of the new building lines up against the east driveway, not impinging on sky and air for all other residents of the Village. In the new footprint, eliminate the private interior courtyard; instead, open to shared space for all.