

Agenda Item No. 15

ID# 03088

I'm unable to attend the Council meeting on April 18 but I'm very much in favor of an ordinance to prevent grocers and pharmacies from enforcing a negative use clause in their lease if they vacate the property covered in the lease.

There is not a more basic and essential business that is needed in a thriving urban area than a grocery store. Many of the residents in our neighborhood and other neighborhoods near Sherman Plaza, on the corner of Sherman Ave and Northport Drive, had their quality of life negatively affected by the closing of the Kohls store, and by Roundys and Copps control over whether or not a grocer could locate anywhere in the center, not just in the space they vacated.

Intense public and governmental pressure finally led to Copps allowing a smaller store in the space, two years and ten months after they bought and closed the Kohl's store.

In that time, Copps probably hoped that both middle income and affluent residents of the northside of Madison, including Cherokee and Maple Bluff, would get used to the habit of going to the Copps store off Aberg Ave. And that may have occurred, because Copps reportedly has had record sales over the last three years.

But the lower income families, the senior citizens on fixed incomes, the people within walking distance or a short car ride away from Sherman Plaza, didn't often have handy access to transportation to visit Copps, Cubs or Woodmans, they didn't have the options that many other people had.

They were forced to ask for rides from others, take cabs, transfer twice on a city bus, or try a once or twice weekly shuttle bus to Copps.

An FDA model, called a *market basket survey*, revealed that the basic foods needed to have a minimal healthy diet were not available at affordable prices on the Northside during this period when we had no store.

One lower income resident that I spoke with, took a city bus to Copp's each Saturday morning. Besides the inconvenience of having to struggle with carrying groceries on the bus, with all the waiting, taking four busses in all, and the shopping, it took him at least three hours to shop.

When asked if carrying out a task, that used to take thirty minutes and now takes over three hours, made him angry at all, the resident responded by saying his life was so tough, that this was just another thing to deal with. This is what it's like to not have a lot of money and a lot of influence.

No large business like Roundy's and Copps should be able to impact a neighborhood and its people this way. And, I would argue that along with groceries, and especially as our population ages, ready access to professional pharmaceutical advice and prescriptions drugs is as important as adequate access to food.

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