

Date: May 5, 2010
From: Larry J. Chapman, 208 Merry Street, Apartment #3, Madison WI 53704
To: City of Madison, Urban Design Commission <amartin@cityofmadison.com>
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Subject: Winnebago and Merry Street Multi-Unit Residential Development/Apex

This letter expresses my reservations about the 1628 Winnebago Street multi-unit residential development proposal scheduled to be presented on behalf of Apex Investment Group 8 at the Urban Design Commission's May 5th meeting. I am not convinced that this development will benefit the neighborhood, the larger community or the Yahara River environment.

The scale of the project is not appropriate to the scale of the nearby homes. The existing twenty-two unit apartment building at 222 Merry Street stands in contrast to the eighteen, largely single family detached residences along one-block long Merry Street and adjoining Ramsey Court. The current Apex plans include a new, second apartment building that will add another twenty-three units.

The plans don't appear to provide any new public space. They eliminate the traditional neighborhood sledding hill at the southwest corner of the apartment building's parking lot and reduce the space currently devoted to gardens and laundry drying lines below it.

The sites for this development complex are in an area where there are arguably too few porous surfaces that allow water to move into the soil layer. The plans look as though they will further reduce the open space available for soil infiltration of rainwater, storm flows, snow melt or floodwaters. The shoreline along Merry Street is particularly vulnerable because of the relatively high level of the street compared to the river.

I realize the importance of economic development to the city and its residents and I certainly agree that improving housing, in particular, is essential. For example, the existing apartment building at 222 Merry Street could benefit from renovating the apartments, maintaining them carefully, and having a building manager who lived on the site. But these plans to add another apartment building on Merry Street are not appropriate. There are other locations in the city better suited to a project of this style, scale and environmental impact.