

Members of the Plan Commission,

We, the undersigned are the three alders that represented the Old University Ave area before 2009, cumulatively representing 20 years of service to the area. As such, we are very concerned about some of the elements of the University Ave Corridor Plan before you tonight.

Although we recognize that the neighborhood has worked very hard to finish this plan, we do not feel that it represents the best interest of the city as it stands now. A neighborhood plan that is passed by the Plan Commission and adopted by the Council must represent the will and best interests of the city, not just the will of the neighbors who came to meetings.

As you will note, the Planning staff has concerns as well. We feel these concerns are a good representation of the issues, and we hope that you will make the changes suggested. Below are some specific concerns we have with regard to the plan.

1. The plan as presented restricts the efficient development of the area by restricting heights on the north side of University Ave. The area between University Ave and Campus Dr could handle taller buildings than those recommended in the plan. Because this area is to the north of the bulk of the neighborhood – and virtually everyone who created the plan – taller buildings will not shade any single family homes or the neighborhood at large.
2. With its proximity to both the UW campus and multiple transit lines, this area has the potential to be a fairly dense, walkable, bike-able, transit-friendly node. This is in keeping with virtually all city-wide plans and is good policy from both a transportation and economic development perspective. University Ave and Campus Dr have been designated the likely most successful corridor for bus rapid transit. High capacity transit such as BRT both rely on and encourage increased density.
3. The Comprehensive Plan has this area supporting considerably great density on the north side of University Ave than is reflected in the plan before you. What this plan is requesting is down zoning the area. This would require an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan or ignoring the neighborhood plan, negating the entire reason the plan exists.
4. The corridor plan requests that more parking be built than is required under current zoning. This too will tamp down development in the area, since parking is very expensive to construct. This is especially true if surface lots are to be avoided, and surface lots are probably the worst use of the land that could result. Already, residents of new buildings cannot get residential parking permits, so they are not contributing to the parking shortage in the neighborhood. It should be up to the developer how much parking to build and how it should be priced. WEam not in favor of requiring residents that do not need parking to pay for it, but that is the result of what is in the plan.
5. We are concerned that the owners of the buildings and residents – especially students and other renters - were not fully engaged in the planning process. Although there were

neighborhood meetings and opportunities for comment, the plan was largely driven by the members of the Regent Neighborhood Association. In our opinions, as representatives of the area for over 20 years (and Alder Webber attended the public outreach meetings for this plan), the stakeholders most impacted by restrictions on development in this area were largely left out of the process.

6. The result of the lack of input from important stakeholders and the unrealistic recommendations in this plan will likely be that the document will be largely ignored should a development be proposed. This undermines the purpose of neighborhood plans and weakens the hard work that good plans involve. We think the city must decide: What is the purpose of neighborhood plans, and how much weight should they carry? Are they accepted and passed as representing solely the opinions of the people that worked on them, so they can be ignored? Or are they the will of the city at large, because they are passed by the committees and Council? If the former, then that should be understood by all involved, from the neighborhood association down to the Plan Commission. If the later, then city committees, staff, and elected representatives must make an effort to decide what is best for the city, not simply what is desired by those who craft the plan.

This corridor is ripe for redevelopment, and with a renewed focus on apartment living for young professionals, transit-oriented development, and the University's continued growth on the west end of campus, there will be a high demand for housing in this area. Already, the housing market in the area – from modest apartments through more upscale rentals and single-family homes – is quite tight. This is exactly the area we should be encouraging development.

The neighborhood association has stated that this plan is only meant to last ten years, yet that assumption is nowhere spelled out in the document. And we are not in favor of restricting good development in the corridor for even ten years.

Please amend the recommendations in the plan before passing it on to the Council. We urge the Commission to accept the Planning staff recommendations and also remove the recommendation for added parking for new buildings.

Thank you for your service and consideration,

Robbie Webber, District 5 Alder, 2003-2009

Tom Powell, District 5 Alder, 1999-2003 (south side of University Ave 1999-2001, both sides 2001-2003)

Ken Golden, District 10 Alder, 1989-2007 (north side of University Ave 1999-2001, not alder for University Ave 2001-2007)