

To: Alder Shiva Bidar-Sielaff  
From: Marcia Vandercook, 2310 Rugby Row  
Date: March 9, 2014  
Re: University Avenue Corridor Plan, File # 32635

Shiva, I would like to express my personal support for the University Avenue Corridor Plan. I am a member of the Regent Neighborhood Association Board and have attended many meetings and open houses where the plan has been discussed.

The corridor plan expresses important things about the area that aren't apparent just from zoning maps. As you know, the Regent Neighborhood has a distinctive character and attracts people who really want to live there. It's not actually the easiest place to live – the houses are old, the lots are small, the streets are narrow. But people live here in order to walk and bike to work, to have their children walk to school, to be near their churches and synagogues, to walk to small corner groceries and businesses. Take away the failing plaster and the parallel parking, and it's the kind of neighborhood that new urbanism tries to re-create.

The corridor plan seeks to maintain this city-focused way of life. It builds on the area's strengths and tries to address its weaknesses, particularly with respect to parking and business development. It considers University Avenue not in isolation, but as a key street affecting the neighborhood as a whole.

The corridor plan accepts and welcomes a certain amount of growth, but it also recognizes that density and redevelopment are not unalloyed benefits. It advocates a balance of uses, a recognition of how much can fit in a small space. For that reason, the plan asks for reasonable front-yard setbacks to promote pleasant, easy walking and room for street trees to grow. It asks for reasonable back-yard setbacks to promote quiet and privacy, so neighbors don't live under the gaze of dozens of strangers. It asks for reasonable height limits so University Avenue does not feel like a canyon. It asks for reasonable numbers of parking spaces and attention to mass transit, so small businesses can survive and the new people can easily come and go.

Although the plan is based in a positive vision, it does reflect a concern that too much growth on University Avenue will eat into the neighborhood fabric. On the south side of the street, there is concern that greatly increased density will drive out the families in the adjacent blocks, slowly turning a stable neighborhood to rental properties – a trend the city is now trying to counteract in the Vilas and Greenbush Neighborhoods. There is also agreement that the historic district should be fully protected. On the north side of the street, although there's room for more height, there is still a strong desire for open space, landscaping, and adequate parking. It's important that the flavor of a welcoming residential neighborhood be retained.

Strong neighborhoods make strong cities, and the Regent Neighborhood is working to remain a strong contributor for many years to come. The University Avenue Corridor Plan strives to preserve the liveable, organic character of the neighborhood while incorporating careful, sustainable growth. I ask for the city's support of that goal.