

From: David Koene [mailto:konkal@charter.net]
Sent: Wednesday, May 05, 2010 9:06 AM
To: Martin, Al
Subject: Apex project

Dear Sir:

I would have attended tonight's Urban Design Commission meeting to discuss the proposed Apex project at the corner of Merry and Winnebago streets if more notice had been given. As a resident of the neighborhood – I live at 1714 Winnebago Street – I am opposed to the proposed development. I am NOT opposed to ALL development; a project which respects the environment and the neighborhood would be welcome, but I oppose the Apex proposal for several reasons:

I. Zoning exists for a reason.

The proposed site was never intended for high density housing. The previous owners already received a variance in the '60's to build the existing apartment building off-center toward the northern end of the lot. Though there is very little lawn on the building's northern side, at least there is a fair amount of open space on the rest of the lot. Should the city now grant another variance to this cite and allow Apex to fill in the whole lot with more buildings? Why have zoning laws if every developer that requests an exception is granted a variance?

II. The project would be harmful to the Yahara River.

The southern bank of the Yahara is a flood plain with highly erodable land. In the past fifty years the shoreline has receded noticeably. If the city allows Apex to rip up valuable green space along the river's edge and replace it with an acre of parking lots and roofs that drain into the Yahara, this erosion will be accelerated. The city has spent millions renovating and beautifying the shoreline of the Yahara river. Why jeopardize this investment – not to mention the ecology of Madison's most significant river way – by allowing Apex to erect an eyesore on the river's edge?

III. High density housing has not succeeded in Madison.

Most of the high-rise condos built in Madison during the last decade are only half full. Cliff Fischer, developer of the 338-unit Metropolitan Place, has gone bankrupt. Condominiums planned for the Hilldale neighborhood have been scrapped. Just up the block from the proposed Apex site, numerous "for sale" signs are posted in front of Kennedy Point. The condo craze in downtown Madison has not stopped urban sprawl. Nor will a host of new apartments. Families looking for a house with a yard continue to build in Sun Prairie and Verona, regardless how many condos and apartments are available on the isthmus.

IV. The project would be harmful for the neighborhood.

No matter who the new occupants happen to be, we can assume they will have cars. Many apartments will be occupied by several car owners. The project Apex is proposing will probably add a hundred or more additional cars to a neighborhood where parking is already scarce. Winnebago Street is a major thoroughfare. Dozens of additional vehicles entering and exiting from Merry Street could constitute a traffic hazard. At the very least they would slow down traffic at rush hour.

V. Apex Sucks.

Apex has a poor reputation as landlords. The existing building has suffered recurrent floods with several inches of standing water in the basement. On numerous occasions garbage has been allowed to pile up next to and on top of the site's dumpsters. Moreover, Apex has done a poor job screening potential occupants. The building has developed an infamous reputation as a result of a several unsavory incidents. The police department has also complained about the unusually high number of calls associated with the location. Until Apex improves its reputation and comes up with a better plan for using the site, their request for a variance should be denied.

Thank you for your consideration,

David Koene