

Dear Plan Commission members,

Thank you for your careful deliberation regarding the Longfellow addition at the last plan commission meeting. Many improvements including garbage and loading relocation and removal of surface parking have resulted. For these changes, the neighborhood is very grateful. I am writing to express two remaining concerns regarding the Longfellow project on the 9/16/13 plan commission agenda.

1. At the 9/11/13 UDC meeting there was discussion of making sure that the trees in the terrace on Chandler St. were preserved. These comments echo some made by plan commission members during the last discussion of the Longfellow project. I ask that these requirements be formalized by the commission at the coming meeting. The preservation of these trees will be key to softening the South façade of the Longfellow addition.
2. The UDC approved a design which maintains the concrete block architecture of the 10 foot high P2 parking level. While the block has now been tinted to a tan color, it is still concrete block. This issue was first recognized by neighborhood residents back in March and has been a sore issue with the neighborhood throughout this process. The current design resembles a 3 story apartment complex perched on top of a concrete pad. At the last plan commission meeting, you asked me personally if I had design concerns, and this was my major concern and it has been echoed by many neighbors in the Greenbush area to Alexander, Alder Ellingson, UDC and Plan Commission through testimony and letters.

What is lost by looking simply at the elevations is these images show the entire 46 foot high building and the 10 foot high concrete P2 level may not seem out of character. To give this issue some perspective, I have attached an image of our front porch at 1023 Chandler street which will directly face the South end of the Longfellow addition. I have also attached an image of a concrete block wall as described in the Longfellow plan. Then, I ask you to consider that the top of my porch is roughly 10 foot above grade, and to picture yourself sitting on our porch swing as if this was your home. To do this, I have included a view of where the South end of the Longfellow addition will be from my porch. I have indicated a 10 foot height and superimposed the concrete block wall onto this image to give you a better impression of what neighbors, pedestrians and visitors will experience on the South and West sides of the complex-it will be the concrete block wall that is bleak, without imagination and cannot be covered year round by vines and plantings.

The developers are certainly on their way to gain approval for a large residential complex that required substantial changes in zoning. It is unclear why their design has thus far been allowed to use the cheapest concrete block alternative on the P2 level. I would like to reiterate that I have not seen such a design at any of the new apartment buildings springing up in the area. All of these are faced with materials that match or complement the structure. Why can't the Longfellow development be held to similar high quality design standards?

Since the neighborhood will coexist with this building long term, it would be a substantial gesture were the planning commission to request that the developers soften the big box design and its merging with the surrounding frame houses by requiring some sort of facing on the P2 level. The developers stated at the 9/11/13 UDC meeting they have costed out the facing materials, and it is my guess that this would not put the project out of reach and will not stop the Alexander from profiting handsomely from this high density residential development.

Thank you very much for your thoughtful consideration of this request,

Best Regards,
Eric Shusta
Homeowner, 1023 Chandler St



Residence at 1023 Chandler Street.



Concrete block wall of garage in alley between 1100 block of Chandler and Vilas. This is a reasonable facsimile of the overlapping building design proposed by Alexander.



View of what is slated to be the South side of Longfellow addition from my porch at 1023 Chandler with 10 foot height indicated.



View with 10 foot high concrete block wall superimposed.

DATE: September 14, 2013

TO: City of Madison Plan Commission

FROM: James Matson, Greenbush Neighborhood Resident (1022 Vilas Avenue),
Small Business Co-Owner ("Chiripa," 636 S. Park Street)

**SUBJECT: "Longfellow School" High-Density Rental Housing Development;
September 16 Plan Commission Meeting**

I am writing to express my continued opposition to the Meriter Hospital-Alexander Company proposal to convert nearly an entire block of the Meriter Hospital campus to high-density rental housing.

The proposal would convert the existing Longfellow School building, a designated historic landmark, into rental housing (41 rental units). Of greater concern, the proposal would also create a new "big box" rental housing complex immediately adjacent to the current Longfellow building (64 rental units).

This proposal raises serious questions about the credibility of the city's planning and zoning process:

- According to state law (s. 66.1001, Stats.), city zoning must be consistent with the city's comprehensive plan. The Madison comprehensive plan designates the Longfellow block of the Meriter campus as an "employment area," yet this proposal would rezone the entire area for *high-density rental housing*. That seems inconsistent on its face, and I suspect that a court might find it inconsistent as a matter of law. The city has not taken any action to change the comprehensive plan, nor has it even sought a legal opinion on this issue from the City Attorney. Planning staff have tried to justify this as a "transitional" development on the fringe of the Meriter campus; but that characterization is hard to square with a 105-unit development that consumes nearly an entire city block and is located right across the street from the hospital's main entrance. There is nothing in Madison's comprehensive plan that contemplates high-density housing developments within planned employment areas.
- The project is inconsistent with the Greenbush neighborhood plan, which calls for *owner occupied* housing of low to moderate density. If this project is added to other projects currently proposed or approved for construction, there will be a total of approximately 273 new high-density *rental* units added to the Greenbush neighborhood in *this year alone*. The density of this development is *4 times* that prescribed by the Greenbush neighborhood plan.
- The project is inconsistent with the city's Meriter Hospital General Development Plan (GDP), adopted just 4 years ago in 2009. The Meriter GDP rezoned the Longfellow block out of *low-density* residential use, ostensibly because Meriter needed the block for hospital development (the whole purpose of the GDP). If that rationale no longer exists, the block should arguably be returned to more moderate-density, owner-occupied residential use consistent with the Greenbush neighborhood plan. Meriter and the developer stand to reap a substantial windfall if the city now approves the block for *high-density rental housing* development unrelated to hospital development needs.

- Neighbors understand that land use needs and priorities can change, but this feels like a “bait and switch” abuse of the GDP process. The Madison municipal ordinances (s. 28.098) state that GDPs are to be used only rarely, and only to address unique development needs (such as those presented by a large urban hospital complex). They are not allowed simply for the purpose of increasing the density of development, beyond that allowed in the pre-existing base zoning district. GDPs must also facilitate (not contradict) the goals of the city comprehensive plan and adopted neighborhood plans, such as the Greenbush neighborhood plan.

The Plan Commission is not obligated to approve this development. This is not merely an implementation of the existing Meriter GDP, but rather (as city planning staff have acknowledged) a major change from that GDP. This is not just a minor zoning adjustment. This is a major zoning change, proposed with little or no planning basis or documentation.

The developers are asking the Plan Commission to grant them a big favor, by stretching existing law and process in order to make this project happen. If you decide to grant that irregular favor, over the objections of the Greenbush neighborhood, you should at least make sure that this project is “done right” so that it does justice to its neighbors and the community:

- The project should enhance, not detract from, the Longfellow landmark. The companion building should not feel like a cheap modern add-on, crammed into a too-small space. It should gracefully supplement the grand historic structure. The developer should not be allowed to “cut corners” on materials or design.
- The density of the new building should be reasonable in relation to the building site, the neighborhood, and the adjoining historic landmark. The developers are still trying to cram far too many rental units and parking spaces into a too-small space, contrary to the Greenbush neighborhood plan. That has a number of unfortunate design consequences, including an interior courtyard devoted mainly to parking (rather than green space). What will happen to the cramped “courtyard” parking area (and adjacent pedestrian entryways) when there is a 15-inch snowfall event, or a 100-inch snowfall year? This is not Rome, or even San Francisco.
- The new building should enhance, not impair, the friendliness and “walkability” of the neighborhood. We appreciate the proposal to move the tenant loading and trash pickup area from Chandler Street (where it was *completely* unworkable) to Mound Street. However the Chandler Street façade still presents a decidedly “unfriendly” face to the Greenbush neighborhood (especially when viewed up-close, from sidewalk level), as documented in the September 12 email and photos from Eric Shusta. The garage entrance will also pose traffic hazards on Chandler Street, a very narrow street that is parked on both sides.
- The building should not aggravate existing traffic or pedestrian hazards (especially on Chandler Street), or aggravate existing noise or parking problems in the Greenbush neighborhood. There is little reason for optimism on this score, given the sheer density and configuration of the development as currently proposed.

There have been some modest improvements to the original “big box” design, thanks mainly to the objections of federal landmark authorities (as well as some city demands). But the development still has serious design problems that are hard to resolve because of the number of rental units that are being crammed into a limited space. It is still a “big box” rental housing development, shoe-horned into a place where it does not fit, contrary to all existing city plans.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Cc: Tim Parks, Plan Commission Staff
Katherine Cornwell, Planning Division Director
Alder Sue Ellingson

To: Planning Commission, City of Madison

From: Cynthia Williams (resident of [REDACTED] Drake Street)

RE: Longfellow development zoning change (9/16/2013 agenda item # 15)

I am writing to indicate my continued opposition to the plan for the proposed Longfellow development and zoning change at 210 S. Brooks Street.

The substantial zoning change requested to accommodate this project is not consistent with the Meriter General Development Plan or the Greenbush Neighborhood Plan, which calls for low to medium density and increased owner occupancy, neither of which are compatible with the proposed plan for a high density "big box" apartment building. While I understand that Meriter's needs may have changed since the GDP was developed, it does not follow that a 105 unit high density rental housing development should be crammed into an already congested area in the middle of the Greenbush neighborhood.

While the 41 units in the Longfellow building could potentially fit into the neighborhood, and appears to be of high quality, the addition of the 64 unit "big box" building crams too much into too small a space and will add to the existing traffic, parking, and safety problems in the area. When combined with a second large rental unit only a block away, there will be a negative impact on quality of life for those living in the area.

However, I realize that the Plan Commission has the authority to grant the zoning exception the developer is requesting. Should the Plan Commission decide to approve the zoning change to allow this development, I respectfully ask that you consider ways to make this building more compatible with the neighborhood. While I appreciate the modest improvements in the design, such as moving the trash and loading dock away from Chandler Street, as requested by the Plan Commission, there are some additional items that the Plan Commission mentioned at their last meeting that have not been addressed.

Of paramount concern to the neighborhood is the 10 foot tall cement block wall facing the neighborhood on Chandler Street. The developer has indicated that they will tint the block, and camouflage it with greenery so it will appear less like an industrial site. I don't think a cement block wall is a friendly face to the neighborhood and the fact that the developer thinks it needs camouflage it with vines suggests they are aware of this fact. There are numerous apartment buildings going up around town with attractive facing compatible with their surroundings on their foundation level, such as Brownlofts with limestone or Wingra Shores stone block. It would go a long way to making this huge building fit into the neighborhood to finish the wall in an appropriate material compatible with the Longfellow School. (It is ironic that the developer is not interested in incorporating stone as part of a historic redevelopment in a neighborhood known for the many immigrant stone masons that build the capital, historic society, and stone shelter in Hoyt park, among many stone buildings in the city).

Also of concern to the neighborhood is the preservation of existing trees. At their last meeting, some members of the Plan Commission asked about preserving the trees and the developer indicated they

planned to remove most of them. I hope that the Commission will request the preservation of as many existing trees as possible on the site, which will help mitigate the raw appearance of a new big box in a leafy neighborhood.

This building has many design issues that result from placing such a large building in a small space, exacerbated by trying to serve continuing parking needs of the hospital. If you decide to grant the requested zoning change for this building, both Meriter and the developer will reap benefits, while the neighborhood will absorb the negative externalities. I ask the Plan Commission to take this into account and make sure that this large project fits into the neighborhood as much as possible by incorporating a more appropriate façade and preserving the trees.

-----Original Message-----

From: John Perkins

Sent: Monday, September 16, 2013 12:26 PM

To: Parks, Timothy

Subject: comments on Longfellow proposal for this evening

Some additional comments for the Longfellow proposal this evening.

Unfortunately, I don't think I will be able to attend. Please distribute to Plan Commission members if it is not too late to do so.

Dear Plan Commission members:

After having reviewed the most recent changes submitted by Iconica and Alexander Co. for the Longfellow School site, I think some of the changes made are positive. Moving the trash pickup and move-in/move-out traffic to Mound St. and away from TR-C3-zoned homes on a narrower street is a definite improvement. I also think the small greenspace added at the north end of the courtyard makes for a better pedestrian entrance to the new building, and placing bicycling parking in the courtyard near the building entrance is much better than trying to stash bicycle parking along the street and in the bowels of the parking structure.

I am a little concerned about bicycle traffic egress from the structure, though:

- the 5 foot sidewalk between the school and north end of the new building could be a bit narrow and introduce pedestrian/bicycle conflicts along that stretch (5 foot sidewalks after the sidewalk splits between the school entrance and new building entrance is likely sufficient)
- bicycle traffic between the courtyard and street should not be dumped onto the public sidewalk, as this will result in pedestrian/bicycle conflict there; this traffic should be conducted directly to the curb on Mound St

I did mention my concern about the sidewalk width to John Seamon from Iconica last week, and this may already be included in the site plan. Site plans do show a sidewalk from the courtyard all the way to the Mound St. curb, and I would like to make sure the stretch between the curb and sidewalk is not omitted.

I think the city staff recommendations for amount of bicycle parking for the complex sounded reasonable, and I feel those recommendations should be adhered to in a final design.

I feel the city staff recommendation for unit occupancy limits of 2 unrelated individuals as defined in TR-C3 zoning code should be implemented for all units on this site.

I have heard some concerns from neighbors (and you will likely hear such concerns during the Sept. 16 meeting) regarding the look of the south end of the new building. The concrete block proposed for the P1/P2 levels of the structure did change colors before the UDC meeting on

Sept. 11; the neighborhood was able to see the previous custom color before that meeting, but neighbors were not aware of the color change just before the Sept. 11 UDC meeting. The new color--very similar to that used in city-issued trash collection bins--is an improvement over the much grayer colors previously proposed. I, personally, would prefer to see the the large expanse of Ultra Brown brick on the stairway and/or concrete block at the lower level broken up somewhat without generating more light scatter from the stairway into the neighborhood. This is one area where we could see some improvement in aesthetics to the nieghborhood.

Opinions expressed here are strictly my own, as they have not been vetted by other neighbors or neighborhood council members.

Sincerely,

John Perkins
Greenbush Neighborhood Association president

Dear Plan Commission and City Staff,

RE: Agenda item #15, 210 S. Brooks St.

At the 8/26/13 Plan Commission meeting the opponents from the neighborhood talked a lot about density and how the proposed density was inconsistent with the neighborhood plan and the Greenbush-Vilas Revitalization strategy. City staff responded that although the neighborhood plan did specify certain areas for higher density and advised lower density than that requested for this development, the plan did not have a market component related to it. In other words, the density requested by the neighborhood plan was not economically feasible. But density is just one factor in making a project feasible and the other is *making the building attractive to prospective renters*. City staff also indicated that density was just one factor that should be used to consider development. We agree and feel that the *appearance of the building and its interface with the neighborhood* should also be considered. The following two elements of the proposed development question feasibility and appearance.

1. Surface parking

10 stalls have been eliminated but 18 surface stalls remain. Roughly 2/3 of the available space between the buildings is still set aside for parking stalls. In looking at the landscaping plans, screening for the stalls that face onto the Longfellow school are made up mostly of vines (clematis, honeysuckle, wisteria) on trellises. Several trees, serviceberry and hornbeam are also present. Although these landscape choices are interesting, their size (the suggested trees are relatively short) and deciduous nature do not provide much screening from the noise and headlight glare associated with a parking lot. It is also noticeable that there is little or no landscape screening indicated for the parking stalls that abut the new building. For the long-term viability and marketability of this project all surface parking should be removed.

2. Colored masonry block foundation

Since the initial plans were shown to the neighborhood, the masonry block foundation has been an issue. Color changes in the block have been made but the masonry block still makes the foundation ponderous and extremely unattractive. Trellises with vines and several deciduous trees have been included in the plans to break up the massive appearance. Like the screening materials for the surface parking lot, all of these are deciduous and will not provide much of a break from the masonry block during most of the year.

Although the project was approved at the Urban Design Commission of 9/11/13, there was considerable discussion regarding the use of the masonry block foundation without resolution. It appeared to be the one area that still was a concern for commissioners. This was apparent in the overall rating of the development by several commissioners, only a 6-7 out of 10. Although this rating does not affect approval of the proposal, it does not show the development in the most favorable light. Most notably, one of the comments included with the rating advises: "need to honor neighbors' request for brick base". We feel that facing the masonry block with brick would make its overall appearance more attractive not to just prospective renters but to those who live in the neighborhood.

While we appreciate the positive changes the developer has made to this project, they are not enough to overcome an unappealing design for both renters and neighbors. At the 8/26/13 Plan Commission meeting you approved the TID for our neighborhood district (TID #43 (Park/Drake) We find it ironic that you would approve this TID to get owner-occupied housing into our neighborhood while at the same time approving the Longfellow development as proposed. You are certainly not rewarding *current* homeowners who took a leap of faith (without the benefit of city TIF funds) moved into this neighborhood, and renovated their houses at considerable cost and sweat equity. Instead you are rewarding these home owners with a flawed and unattractive building that does nothing to further our neighborhood.

Thank you for your consideration,

Cynthia Koschmann
Edward Mason
[REDACTED] Emerald St

-----Original Message-----

From: Ellingson, Susan

Sent: Monday, September 16, 2013 2:18 PM

To: Brad Cantrell; Eric Sundquist; John Finnemore; Ken Opin; Zellers, Ledell; Melissa Berger; Michael Rewey; Resnick, Scott; Tonya Hamilton-Nisbet

Cc: Michael Heifetz; King, Steve; Parks, Timothy; Cornwell, Katherine; Cover, Steven; Randy Alexander; John Seamon; Bill White

Subject: Support for Longfellow

To Plan Commissioners:

I support the proposal for 810 S Brooks St, the Longfellow redevelopment. I hope you will approve it tonight. I have waited to voice my opinion until important improvements were made in the proposal.

Opponents of the proposal say "it's too dense," with negative effects being primarily the size of the building, added strains on traffic and parking, and more transient residents, rather than homeowners.

- Size

The proposed new building is substantially smaller than the medical office building that's permitted in the current zoning. It will be about the same size as Longfellow school. It's about the same height as the proposal for 107 S Mills. Most houses in the Greenbush neighborhood are 2 stories, some are 3. 4 stories is reasonable and, like 107 S Mills, provides a good transition between the hospital and the neighborhood.

- Traffic and parking

The proposal will have substantially less impact on traffic and parking than the medical office building that's permitted in the current zoning. It includes plenty of parking spaces and will forego on-street parking permits. It is on the periphery of the neighborhood, with only the hospital between it and Park St. Traffic Engineering expects no significant impact on traffic or parking. If the building is built and if neighbors find traffic too difficult, I will lead a neighborhood process to consider changes, such as removing parking from one side of Chandler St.

- Transients

The proposed apartments will not be managed by student-housing landlords who neglect maintenance, and are clearly not designed for student tenants. The units will have upscale finishes, too few bedrooms, and too high a price per bed for students. They are designed for workers with good jobs, including hospital employees and young professionals at Epic. These are people we very much want in our neighborhoods. Once they live here they will fall in love with the place. They're much more likely to stay in town to raise families.

- Positive effects of density

Density, in my view, is to be desired, not opposed. More dense developments use less energy, foster more social interactions, and support

local businesses. Dense developments close to the city center encourage people to bus, bike, and walk, rather than drive.

The Greenbush neighborhood has more than its share of substandard housing. Everyone wants to reverse that trend. New investment in the area is the *only* way to do it. The Longfellow proposal will not only bring 104 new upscale dwelling units to the neighborhood, it will also help fund a TID to rehabilitate nearby single family housing.

The alternatives are either to shutter the old school and let it decay, or to invest in the future. I urge you to choose the future.

Sue Ellingson

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Sue Ellingson, Alder • Madison District 13 district13@cityofmadison.com • 259-1824 Subscribe to email updates: www.cityofmadison.com/council/district13/updates/