

M E M O R A N D U M

Date: June 23, 2025

To: City of Madison Plan Commission, Common Council

From: Alex Saloutos

Re: 4506-4514 Verona Road (District 10): Consideration of a conditional use in the Commercial Center (CC) District for dwelling units in a mixed-use building to allow construction of a five-story mixed-use building containing 324 square feet of commercial space and 93 apartments., Legistar [87879](#).

I am providing additional visual documentation to help commissioners understand the site context, as the applicant's materials do not accurately portray the surrounding environment.

Visual Materials Provided

I am providing this Dropbox [link](#) containing:

- Panoramic photograph and regular photo from the southwest corner of the site (abutting the Home Depot parking lot).
- Panoramic photograph and regular photos from the northeast corner of the site (adjacent to both the South Beltline Highway and Highway 151).

And attached to this memo is an aerial photograph from the Dane County (Access Dane) website showing the broader context of this site.

Site Context

The proposed project will be shoehorned into a site surrounded by the South Beltline Highway, Highway 151, and a massive surface parking lot serving Home Depot and adjacent retailers at the western edge of this commercial area. The site sits at the intersection of major highway infrastructure with no meaningful transitions to residential-scale development.

Lack of Outdoor Amenities

Reviewing the site plan, as far as I can see, there is no outdoor area at grade for residents or children to play. No grassy area. No mature trees to provide shade during hot summer days. No area to play in the snow during the winter. Children who want to play and engage in normal childhood activities would have to walk considerable distances through this concrete jungle or improvise in parking lots and hardscape areas. This is particularly concerning given that there are 25 three-bedroom apartments likely to house families with children.

Additional Evidence and Analysis of Standard Not Met

This additional evidence supports that Standards 1 and 2 are not met.

Standard 1 (Public Health, Safety, and General Welfare):

- The complete absence of on-site green space or play areas for children in a development with 48 family-sized units is detrimental to the health, safety, and general welfare of residents

- Children forced to "improvise in the concrete jungle" or walk considerable distances through highway infrastructure to find play areas faces safety risks
- Lack of mature trees means no shade relief during hot summer days, affecting health and comfort
- No outdoor recreational space impacts physical and mental health, especially for children

Standard 2 (Municipal Services):

- Reinforces that the Parks Division cannot adequately serve this location - not only are there no adequate parks within reasonable walking distance, but there's also no on-site compensation for that deficiency
- The complete lack of green space on-site makes the inadequate off-site park access even more problematic
- Demonstrates that the City cannot provide adequate recreational services when both on-site and nearby off-site amenities are lacking

This visual evidence strengthens the argument that placing families with children in this location, with no outdoor amenities and surrounded by highway infrastructure, fails to meet the basic standards for protecting public health, safety, and welfare while highlighting the inadequacy of available municipal recreational services.

I am not aware of any visual evidence that the applicant has provided that provides an accurate depiction of the context and built environment around this new building. The applicant's architectural renderings are from elevated perspectives that no pedestrian would experience and are designed to showcase the building rather than accurately portray the harsh concrete and asphalt environment in which it would be located. These renderings do not help commissioners understand what residents would actually experience living at this location.

I encourage commissioners to review these materials before making their determination, as visual context is essential for evaluating whether residential use at this highway interchange location meets the conditional use standards.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

4506-4514 Verona Road



6/23/2025, 5:46:00 PM

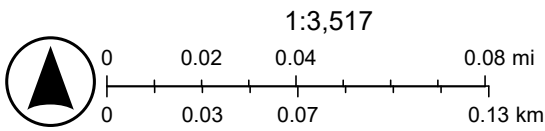
 Parcels

ColorOrtho3Inch2024Web

 Red: Red

 Green: Green

 Blue: Blue



Dane County Land Information Office (LIO), Fly Dane Partnership, Ayres Associates, Wisconsin Regional Orthimagery Consortium (WROC)

From: dianelbarrett@tds.net
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Cc: [Diane Barrett](#)
Subject: Re: 4506 Verona Rd development project - Agenda #87879
Date: Monday, June 23, 2025 3:58:32 PM

[You don't often get email from dianelbarrett@tds.net. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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I would like to attend the zoom meeting scheduled for tonight, June 23, 2025. Please send me the zoom link. I would also like to submit my comments for this project. I do not wish to speak at the meeting tonight but did want to send my comments.

I was to express my opposition to this project. I do not think location is appropriate for a housing complex. I do not think sufficient evaluations have been done regarding increased traffic on the frontage road as well as the noise pollution the residents will need to endure. Verona Rd is a main artery into and out of Madison. The location of this proposed site will have traffic noise all day and night with no sound barriers. I also feel it a horrible idea to place an apartment building basically in a parking lot. Although there are a few grocery stores with a few blocks, they are small and will require residents without transportation to cross over the beltline or Verona roads at an extremely busy intersection. I also am not sure which school district this location would be in but if it is Orchard Ridge Elementary, I do not believe they have bussing. And I believe Toki and Memorial buses pick up on Raymond Rd which is quite a distance. I am also worried about the increased traffic on both Reetz Rd and Hammersley Rd. Reetz Rd has only sidewalks on a short bit of the road and has a lot of people that walk and bike on it.

I know Madison is in need of affordable housing, but I strongly believe this site is not appropriate and this project should not go forward.

Sincerely,
Diane Barrett
Orchard Ridge resident

M E M O R A N D U M

Date: June 23, 2025

To: City of Madison Plan Commission, Common Council

From: Alex Saloutos

Re: 4506-4514 Verona Road (District 10): Consideration of a conditional use in the Commercial Center (CC) District for dwelling units in a mixed-use building to allow construction of a five-story mixed-use building containing 324 square feet of commercial space and 93 apartments., Legistar [87879](#).

This memorandum addresses agenda item number 8 on the June 23, 2025 Plan Commission agenda and provides an analysis of the conditional use application for this project. The analysis recommends denial based on the failure to meet several required approval standards and includes 1) a review of applicable standards, 2) recommended findings of fact, and 3) a critique of the applicant's legal arguments.

Summary

The conditional use application for a 93-unit mixed-use development at 4506-4514 Verona Road should be denied because the applicant has failed to provide substantial evidence that three approval standards are met. The site's location at the intersection of two major highways, with approximately 175,000 daily vehicle movements, creates an environment that is detrimental to residential use. The proposal conflicts with the City's Comprehensive Plan recommendations and contradicts the fundamental purposes of the Commercial Center zoning district. Staff recommends denial based on Standards 1, 2, and 4 not being met.

Review of Standards Not Met

Madison General Ordinance 28.183(6)(a) establishes the framework for conditional use approval:

The City Plan Commission shall not approve a conditional use without due consideration of the recommendations in the City of Madison Comprehensive Plan and any applicable, neighborhood, neighborhood development, or special area plan, including design guidelines adopted as supplements to these plans. No application for a conditional use shall be granted by the Plan Commission unless it finds that all of the following conditions are present:

This ordinance language makes clear that approval requires finding ALL conditional use standards are met, and that comprehensive plan recommendations must be given due consideration. The evidence demonstrates that three critical standards cannot be found met:

Standard 1—Public Health, Safety, and General Welfare.

MGO 28.183(6)(a)1 states:

The establishment, maintenance or operation of the conditional use will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or general welfare.

The establishment of residential units at this location will be detrimental to public health, safety, and general welfare for several documented reasons. The site sits in what can only be described as a concrete and asphalt jungle, surrounded by major highway infrastructure carrying 175,000 daily vehicle

movements. This creates significant noise pollution and air quality concerns that cannot be adequately mitigated for residential use.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation and City of Madison recognize these concerns by designating the area as “Limited Eligibility” for affordable housing funding specifically due to highway proximity. Staff analysis comparing this proposal to seven similar developments shows this site has the poorest access to parks and greenspace while being closer to more highway traffic lanes than any comparable approved project.

The Madison Police Department has identified specific safety concerns, including documented unsafe pedestrian crossing patterns where pedestrians regularly attempt to cross 8-12 lanes of highway traffic rather than use the 330-foot tunnel that many residents avoid due to safety concerns. The absence of nearby recreational facilities creates particular concerns for children in a development with 25 three-bedroom units.

Standard 2—Municipal Services.

MGO 28.183(6)(a)2 states:

The City is able to provide municipal services to the property where the conditional use is proposed, given due consideration of the cost of providing those services.

The City cannot adequately provide municipal services, particularly park and recreation services, to this location. The Parks Division has confirmed that while Britta Park is within walking distance, it currently lacks any meaningful improvements, and no additional parkland can be acquired closer to the site. The walking route to parks with actual amenities requires crossing major highways and exceeds 15 minutes, failing the City’s planning goal of 10-minute park access for residential units.

The Madison Police Department has expressed concerns about maintaining current service levels given the potential for increased calls for service based on the developer’s other properties, without corresponding resource increases.

Standard 4—Orderly Development.

MGO 28.183(6)(a)4 states:

The establishment of the conditional use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.

The proposed residential use fundamentally impedes orderly development in multiple ways. First, it contradicts the statement of purpose for the Commercial Center zoning district found in MGO 28.068(1). The CC District is established to transform auto-oriented sites into mixed-use centers that are “equally conducive to pedestrian, bicycle, transit and motor vehicle activity.” This highway interchange location is fundamentally unsuitable for pedestrian and bicycle activity, making the proposed transformation impossible to achieve.

The CC District is also intended to “encourage appropriate transitions between higher-intensity uses and adjacent lower-density residential districts.” However, this site is not transitional—it is surrounded by highway infrastructure and commercial uses, with no adjacent lower-density residential districts requiring transition.

More critically, once this residential development occurs, it will permanently impede the orderly redevelopment of the surrounding commercial area. This new residential building would significantly constrain reconfiguration of the street network and commercial layout for higher and better commercial uses once it is constructed. This irreversibly compromises the area's ability to serve its intended regional commercial function.

The site is designated "General Commercial" in the Comprehensive Plan, which explicitly states that GC districts are not generally recommended for residential uses, especially those adjacent to highways. The Economic Development Division's policy of ensuring adequate commercial land supply recognizes that this interchange area, with its highway access and commercial infrastructure, serves important regional commercial functions that would be permanently compromised by residential conversion.

Recommended Findings

To deny this application, the Plan Commission can make the following findings based on the evidence, or lack of it, in the record:

Finding 1—Standard 1 Not Met.

The establishment of residential units at this location will be detrimental to public health, safety, and general welfare due to:

- Documented noise and air quality impacts from 175,000 daily vehicle movements;
- Designation as "Limited Eligibility" area for affordable housing due to highway proximity;
- Poor park access and highest highway exposure compared to similar approved developments; and
- Safety concerns identified by police regarding pedestrian crossing patterns and lack of youth recreational facilities.

Finding 2—Standard 2 Not Met.

The City cannot adequately provide municipal services because:

- The Parks Division cannot provide adequate park services given the lack of improved parks within reasonable walking distance and inability to acquire additional parkland;
- Walking routes to improved parks exceed planning guidelines and require crossing major highways; and
- Police resources may be insufficient given projected service demands.

Finding 3—Standard 4 Not Met.

The proposal impedes orderly development because:

- It contradicts the CC zoning district's purpose of creating mixed-use centers equally conducive to pedestrian, bicycle, and transit activity at a location fundamentally unsuitable for such activities;
- It fails to provide appropriate transitions as intended by the CC district in an area surrounded by highway infrastructure;
- Residential development will permanently prevent future reconfiguration of street networks and commercial layouts for higher and better commercial uses;
- The site is planned and designated for commercial use in the Comprehensive Plan; and
- Converting commercial land removes inventory needed for regional commercial functions in an area specifically planned for automobile-oriented commercial uses.

Finding 4—Comprehensive Plan Inconsistency.

The proposal:

- Conflicts with the Comprehensive Plan's General Commercial designation and fails to meet the Plan's criteria for allowing residential uses only when there is adequate access to parks, transit, and walkable street networks.

Critique of Applicant's Response

The applicant's 11-page "written testimony" demonstrates several fundamental misunderstandings of conditional use law and procedure:

1. The applicant incorrectly characterizes approval as 'mandatory' based on their conclusion that all standards have been or will be met, when the Plan Commission must evaluate the evidence in the record and determine whether substantial evidence supports finding all standards are satisfied.
2. The applicant mischaracterizes the decision-making process, treating conditional use approval as administrative rather than discretionary. They seem to believe the Commission can only deny with evidence of negative impacts, when the statute requires affirmative evidence that all standards are met.
3. The applicant misapplies Wisconsin Statute 66.1001(2m)(b) regarding comprehensive plan consistency, ignoring that Madison's ordinance still requires "due consideration" of plan recommendations.
4. Notably, the applicant fails to address how their proposal aligns with the CC zoning district's fundamental purpose of creating areas equally conducive to pedestrian, bicycle, transit and vehicle activity. Instead, they focus on technical compliance while ignoring the district's transformational intent.

5. Much of the applicant's "evidence" consists of opinions from their own consultants rather than independent verification. Under Act 67's substantial evidence standard, which requires "facts and information, other than merely personal preferences or speculation," the Commission must evaluate whether the applicant's consultant opinions provide sufficient objective evidence for conditional use approval.

Summary and Recommendation for Denial

Wisconsin law requires substantial evidence that all conditional use standards are met before approval can be granted. The Plan Commission must evaluate the evidence in the record and determine whether each standard is satisfied. Based on the evidence presented, including staff analysis and departmental reviews, the Commission cannot find that Standards 1, 2, and 4 are met. While this analysis identifies three standards that cannot be found met, the Commission should note that failure to find any single standard met requires denial under the ordinance's requirement that "all of the following conditions are present."

The Plan Commission should deny this application and make the recommended findings of fact. The substantial evidence standard works both ways: just as the Commission cannot approve without evidence standards are met, it should not hesitate to deny when that evidence is lacking.

A Personal Note and Final Considerations

If the Plan Commission entertains a motion to find the standards met and approve this conditional use permit, I respectfully request that the Commission table this agenda item until commissioners can visit the site personally. Standing at this site—in a concrete and asphalt jungle next to the largest freeway in the county—commissioners should ask themselves whether they can honestly find that "the establishment, maintenance or operation of the conditional use will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or general welfare" of the families and children who will live there.

If commissioners visit this site and still believe that housing our neighbors and their children in this location is not detrimental to their health, safety, and general welfare, I am deeply disappointed in what type of neighborhoods and city we are creating. We should strive to provide housing that enhances quality of life, not merely housing that meets minimum technical requirements while subjecting our neighbors and their children to significant adverse environmental impacts.

Thank you for considering these comments. Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

Opposition to Standard of Approval 4 Language

We understand and appreciate the intention behind preserving land for future commercial use especially along key corridors. But when we take a closer look at the conditions on the ground and the broader community goals, it's clear there's room for a more balanced approach.

In many areas of Madison, we see commercial parcels particularly those along major thoroughfares sit vacant or underutilized. Despite strong marketing efforts, traction with traditional office or retail users has been limited. There's simply less urgency in today's market for larger standalone commercial development and we've witnessed this trend continue for many years now. Within the commercial real estate market we are seeing an overall decline in values over the last ten years and vacancy rates that continue to rise with a lot of shadow inventory that isn't currently reflected in the office market data. The retail market has shifted to small standalone building with a drive-thru which will undoubtedly require new curb cuts and would certainly increase traffic concerns.

Meanwhile, our region is facing a very real challenge when it comes to housing and especially affordable housing. Rising construction costs, higher interest rates, and program uncertainties are making it harder than ever for developers to bring new projects forward. Viable land options are scarce, and in many cases, sites that are technically available don't align with where we truly need housing to grow.

At the same time, there's strong evidence that thoughtfully designed residential, especially mixed-use development can help activate commercial areas, not hinder them. We've heard directly from nearby employers like Sub-Zero, Pacific Cycle, and Brunzell Lumber that the addition of housing and vibrancy would support their workforce recruitment and bring new energy to the area. This kind of development creates built-in foot traffic, supports local businesses, adds housing opportunities for nearby employers and adds to the overall appeal of the corridor.

It's also worth noting that some of the city's Qualified Census Tracts have already seen a concentration of affordable housing projects in recent years. While that investment has been important, it's led to a natural desire from staff, alders, and neighbors to avoid over-concentration and look for more geographic balance. Opportunities like this site offer a chance to respond to that feedback and deliver housing in a way that supports broader equity and planning goals.

In short, while preserving commercial land remains important, it is equally vital to respond to today's market realities and community needs. The current imbalance between supply and demand in the commercial real estate sector calls for more flexible, adaptive land use strategies. Allowing a mix of residential uses—particularly affordable and workforce housing—on this site offers a clear win-win: helping to alleviate the housing shortage while also enhancing commercial vitality and supporting local job growth.

With Regards,

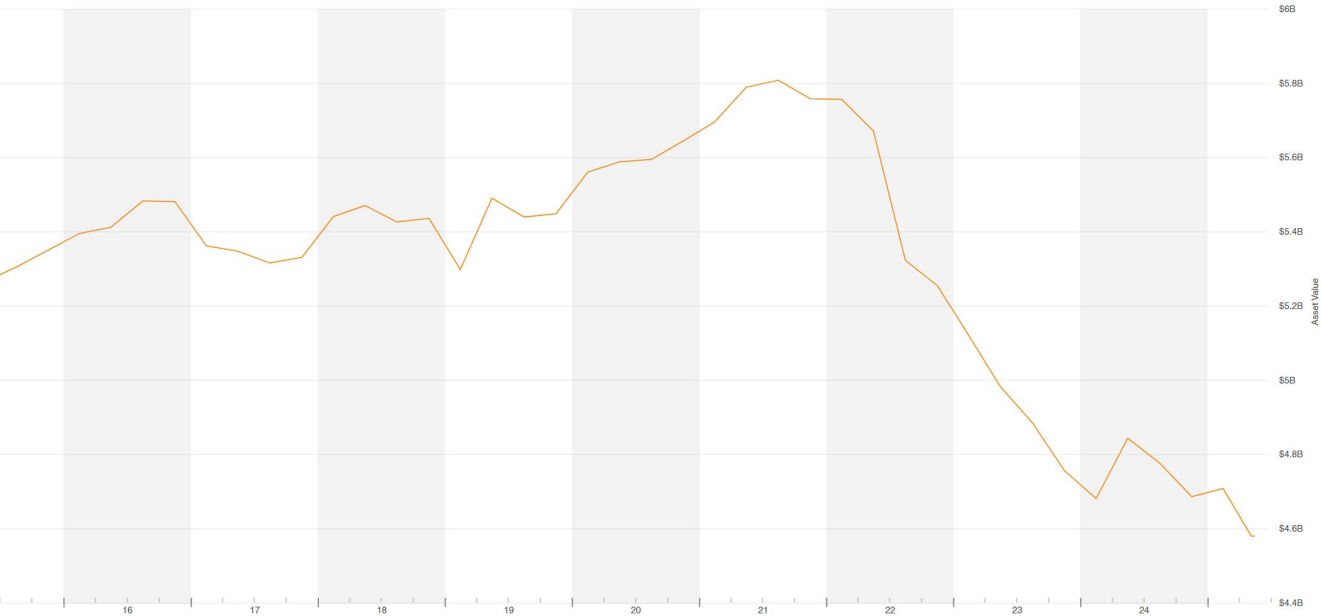
Bryant P. Meyer

Oakbrook Corporation- Commercial Real Estate Broker Associate

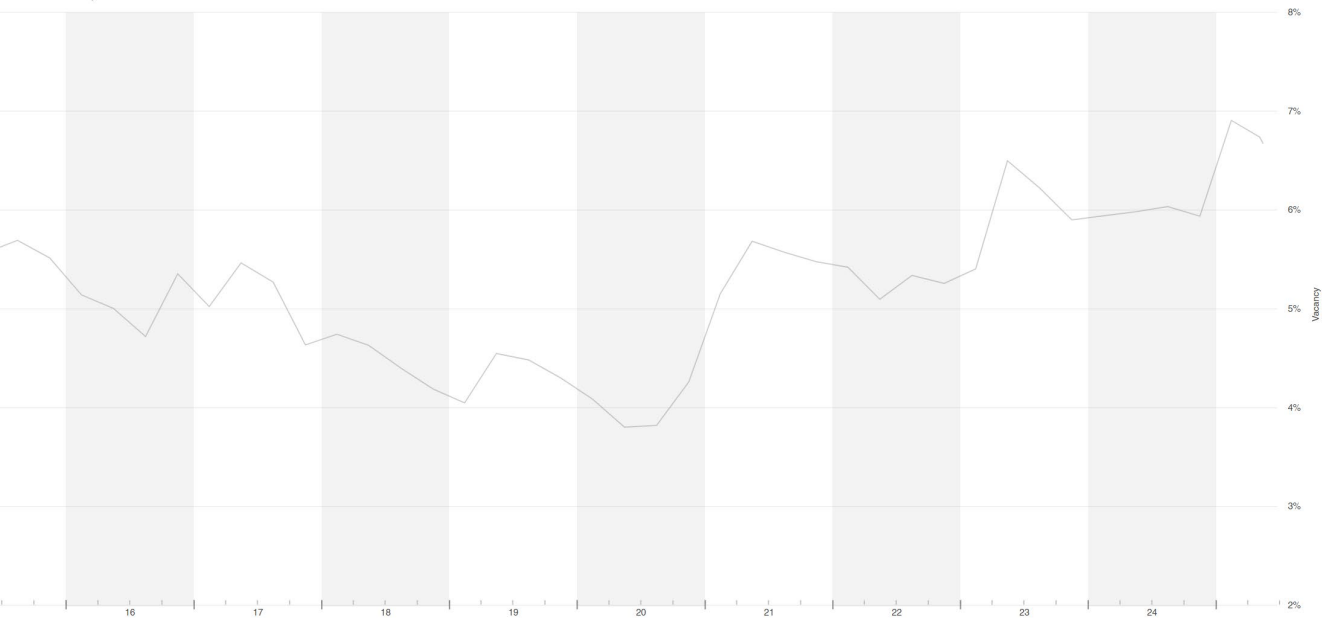
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CoStar Commercial Real Estate Office Values in Madison



CoStar Commercial Real Estate Office Vacancy Rates in Madison



From: [Valerie Schend](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: Agenda Item 87879
Date: Sunday, June 22, 2025 5:34:37 PM

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The Orchard Ridge Neighborhood Association hereby requests a traffic study to be completed on Verona Frontage Road, Service Road, Hammersley Road and Reetz Road before approval is granted for the 4514 & 4506 Verona Road Development.

A petition is circulating through the neighborhood and currently has more than 60 signatures.

This should be at the forefront of planning especially after reading the article in the current Cap Times. As referenced in the article of the June 18 edition, The most common comments regarding the Southwest Area Plan were complaints about traffic and safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

This area has beltline and Verona Road traffic approaching 200,000 vehicles daily and as noted in the Lincoln Ave report, residents would need to walk 10-20 minutes, crossing Verona Road and the beltline underpass to access groceries, parks, and other amenities. And the vehicular traffic will only increase as the city grows and deals with future DOT changes to the interchange.

This neighborhood has limited paths to enter or exit the area, during peak traffic hours trying to enter the beltline through the roundabout, trying to turn left onto Raymond Road off of Reetz, or trying to turn onto Whitney Way can be challenging. The city has already had to alter Atticus Way to alleviate traffic congestion at the roundabout.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Val Schend
Secretary - Orchard Ridge Neighborhood Association
4913 Paul Ave
Madison, WI 53711
608-274-3785

"When inspiration calls, listen carefully."