

2/24/2018



Jenn Jackson

██████████ Busse St.

Madison, WI 53714

Dear City of Madison Plan Commission Members and City Planner, Tim Parks,

Thank you for sharing your time and expertise with the City of Madison by serving on the Plan Commission. I appreciate your commitment to maintaining Madison's high quality of life especially as we plan for our population growth.

I am writing to share my thoughts and concerns about The Grove Apartments proposal. This is a tremendous and exciting proposal for the Eastmorland community. If it is done well, it could be a catalyst to achieve many of the goals identified in the Cottage Grove Road Activity Centers Plan. Yet at this stage, it is missing a key and necessary component - design compatibility.

As Staff acknowledged in their report, the proposed The Grove apartment buildings represent "a significantly different building form compared to what currently exists on the subject site and most of the surrounding area..." photos below on pages 5-7 help to illustrate the severity of this difference. The current design proposal simply does not fit this location. By opting not to design in harmony with the existing neighborhood architecture, The Grove apartment buildings draw a strong visual line that differentiates the existing neighborhood from the 'new' neighborhood.

Many of the conversations that took place during the Cottage Grove Road Activity Centers Plan development focused on goals of inclusion, community development and gathering, and welcoming people through a neighborhood gateway. This proposal should be working to incorporate itself into the neighborhood. As we seek to create a vibrant and successful activity center we need a gateway, not two large buildings that serve as visual blockades by design.

As illustrated below on pages 5-7 the design of these buildings is not respectful of their relationship with adjacent or nearby neighbors. The mass, height, color palette, and density of these buildings are woefully off; the buildings will generally be 3 stories taller than most of the surrounding homes.

The black, grey and white colors of the building are drab, bleak and depressing and do not represent a warm, welcoming and homey feel. The strong and repeated right angles and general rectangularity are unfriendly and cold and do not enhance a 75 year old residential neighborhood with single and 1 ½ story, modest sized, ranch and Cape Cod style homes.

The design characteristics make the buildings stick out, but not in a design forward manner. Rather, it is easy to imagine in just 15 years the white of the building facades fading and a general drab decay weighing down an unsuccessful activity center. Homes in Eastmorland have created a beloved neighborhood environment since they were built in the 1940s and 1950s and will likely continue to do so for decades to come. How will these new buildings that are not relevant to the neighborhood today be relevant in 50 years?

The design of these buildings effectively creates a strong physical and visual boundary between the old and the 'new' neighborhood. This idea of division is not where we should be headed, nor should we be encouraging it. Both buildings should be modified to better align with the existing architecture, however; the North building deserves the greatest attention as it is most adjacent to residential properties. Evaluating and adjusting the roof lines (switch from all flat to at least some pitched), decreasing its overall height to 3 stories, and adjusting the color palette to include a color (or two), would significantly improve the success of this project and its role in serving as a catalyst for a truly successful Activity Center. Image 3 on page 5 showcases MSP's Central Pointe apartments in New Berlin, WI; similarly designed buildings would be much better suited for The Grove development.

Aside from the design problems, the development of this proposal means there is little, if any, opportunity for redevelopment of the existing .75 acre Old National Bank site. What becomes of

this parcel? MPS is relying on the shared surface parking to meet their parking requirements. How does this impact the opportunity for redevelopment? This area will never be able to be an anchoring corner.

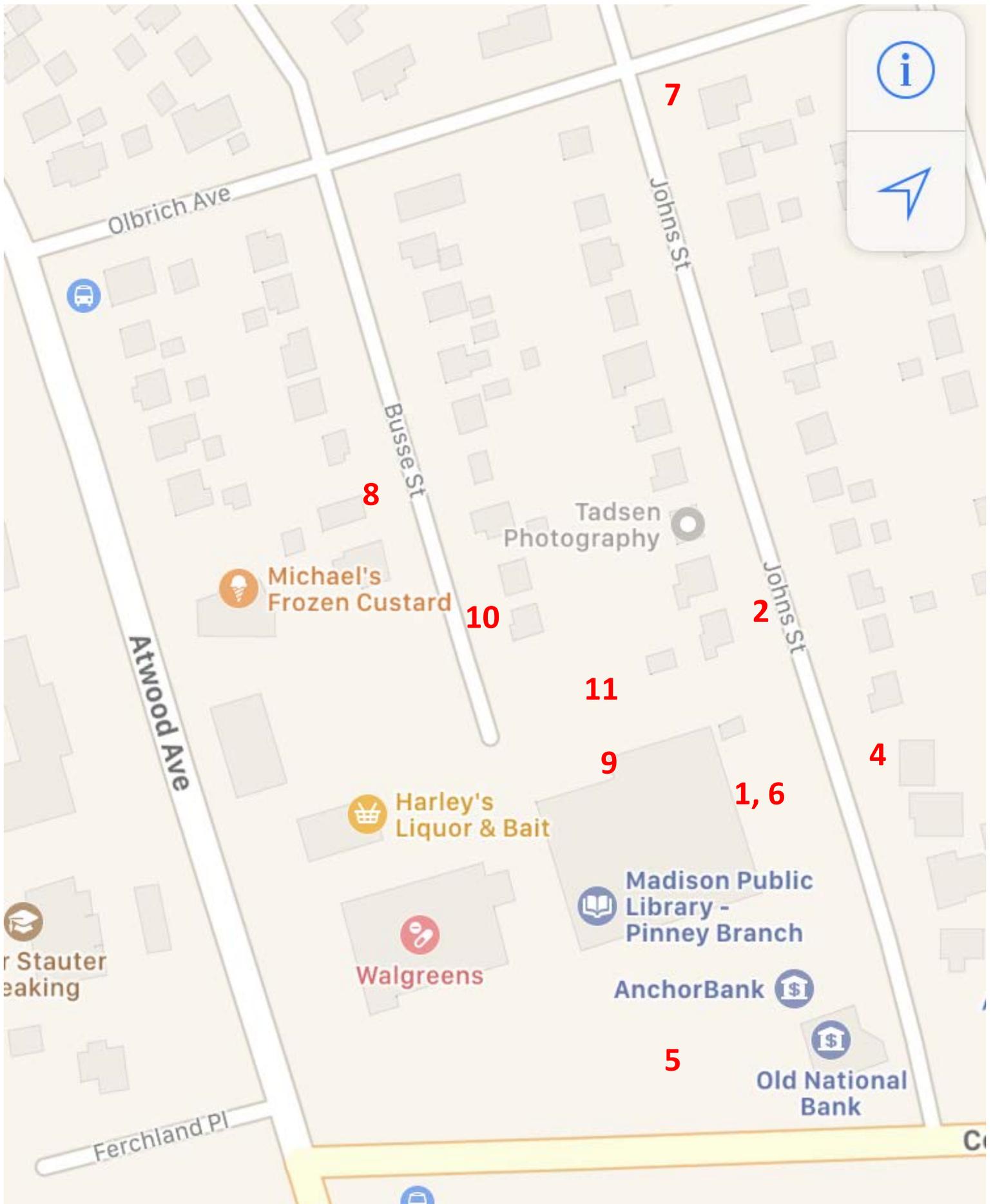
I ask that you refer this proposal to the Urban Design Commission for review, or request the developer submit a redesign that is more residential in character and compatible with the existing neighborhood. I am also hopeful that thought can be given to the impact that The Grove development would have on the future of the Old National Bank site and the remaining activity center property. If, based on proximity, The Grove buildings drive the design of the remaining Activity Center redevelopment it becomes even more critical to get it right.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my concerns.

Kind regards,

Jenn Jackson

Eastmorland home owner of 10 years



Locations of the images on the following pages



Image 1 -  
 Dimesion IV Madison Design Group: Group 2.2

The North East side of the North building is adjacent to the one story blue house in the photo on the right. A rendering of this end of the building was not included in the proposal. The revised Group 2.2 rendering with the stepback (shown on page 6 of the Staff report) was not available for inclusion.



Image 2  
 3837 Johns Street, 1.5 story, 862 square foot home, immediate neighbor.

Image 3  
 The MSP Real Estate photo below showcases their Central Pointe apartments in New Berlin, WI. This design sensibility would be much more relevant anchoring the Atwood Activity Center.



Image 2

Image 3



Panorama of homes on the East side of Johns Street directly across from the East side of the North and South buildings.



Image 5

The images above and to the right represent the view of the proposed buildings from the East side of Johns Street.

Dimension IV Madison Design Group  
Group a2.3 (above)  
Group a2.2 (right)

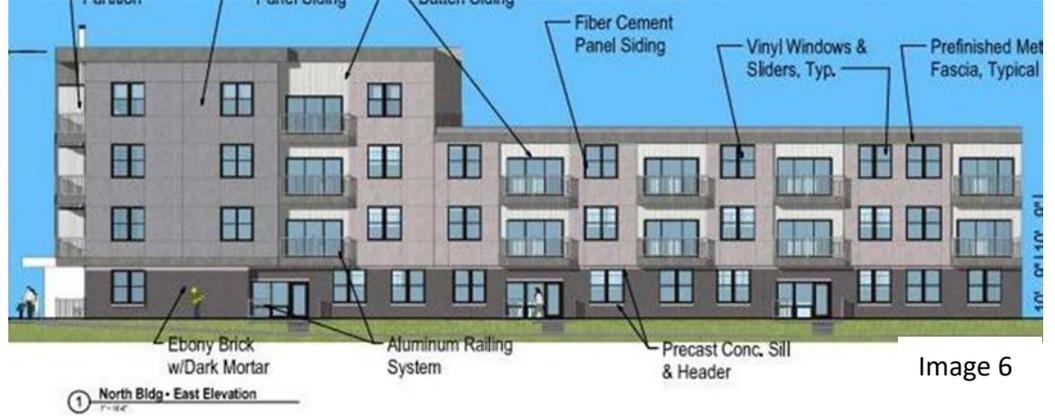


Image 6



Johns Street at Olbrich Avenue facing Cottage Grove Road. 2-3 floors of the North building would be visible from this location. No renderings from this location were provided.



Image 8

Panorama on Busse Street facing Cottage Grove Road.



Image 9

North side of the North building, view from Busse Street.  
Dimension IV Madison Design Group a2.1



Image 10

Busse Street facing Pinney Library today, approval of The Grove would mean a view of the 4 story North building.



Image 11

Back yards of homes on the East side of Busse street looking toward Olbrich Avenue that would be viewable by three floors of residents in the North building.