

September 11, 2012

Union Corners Redevelopment Task Force  
c/o Dan Rolfs  
Dept. of Planning and Development  
City of Madison

Greetings:

The Eken Park Neighborhood is diagonally across from the site of the proposed Union Corners project. At its September 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Eken Park Neighborhood Association met to discuss Union Corners and its potential impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods.

While the association chose not to endorse of any one of the proposals for redevelopment, EPNA did vote to express concerns which we hope will be taken into account by the task force as it seeks an agreement with a developer.

The number one concern is the long term economic viability of the project. The area would not benefit from a project in which one or more of the major elements fails within a few years after construction thereby threatening the surviving elements.

The UW Health Clinic, which is part of the Gorman and Associates proposal, has a long term chance of success. It is a relocation of a clinic which has been around for years and UW Health is an economically stable concern. A clinic would potentially generate business for other, smaller tenants in the project such as coffee shops and medically related firms.

The proposed relocation of the Hawthorne Branch Library, as a government entity is also a stable asset. It, too, would draw traffic to nearby businesses.

EPNA is concerned about the viability of the proposed supermarket. While research has indicated parts of the area are considered a food desert (i.e. no full service grocery store near enough to access without a car) there were concerns there might not be enough customers who depend on walking or biking to make the store profitable given the notoriously low margins of the food business. People who are already in their cars could just as easily drive to Woodman's or Hy-Vee within a few minutes. Will a store of the size proposed be able to compete on price and service to those existing stores? Thought should be given to how the building could be repurposed if the initial tenant fails. If it does, a large, dead space would potentially drag down other businesses in the project.

The dependence of the grocery store on non auto owning customers also increases the importance of enhancing pedestrian connections with the surrounding neighborhoods.

The development must be easily accessible from across East Washington or the width of that thoroughfare the project behind a “steel wall.”

There should also be pedestrian and bicycle paths connecting Union Corners to the existing residential neighborhoods off of Milwaukee to the east and Winnebago to the southwest.

Regarding the housing elements of the proposals, EPNA members expressed interest in elderly housing such as is being proposed for the floors above the library. The single family housing units would likely abut existing neighborhoods which are generally stable. There were concerns whether the new units would be price competitive for this neighborhood.

The remaining concerns involved whether some of the parking could be located below ground.

EPNA requests the task force take these concerns into consideration as you discuss Union Corners with the developer should you select one and proceed with the project.

(s) Art Hackett, Co-chair, EPNA