

December 20, 2010

To: Members of the Plan Commission

From: Elizabeth Greene, 110 N. Spooner St. (District 5)  
Member, RNA Board  
Member, University Avenue Corridor Plan Advisory Committee

**Re: 2508-2544 University Ave/516-518 Highland Ave PUD-GDP-SIP Application (Legistar ID# 20516)**

I would like to submit the following comments on this project. I am speaking for myself, not for the RNA Board or the UAC Plan Advisory Committee, but felt that I should identify myself as associated with those bodies.

**Responding to the report of the Urban Design Commission dated December 15, 2010:**

The motion approving the project provides for staff approval of several modification, including the following:

“Study the ability to use loft units or taller units to break the cornice line on Campus Drive.”  
I am opposed to any increase in height of the project, which is already too tall.

“Continue the development of the ‘alter’.”

The "altar" on the east end increases the height and is a visual distraction; it should be removed. It does not really serve to balance the patio roof on the west end, since the west end feature does not extend above the roof line.

**Responding to the Report to the Plan Commission dated December 20, 2010:**

The six-story facade on Highland, with no setback from the sidewalk, does not contribute to a pedestrian-friendly environment. The InnTowner is not as tall (54 ft. vs 70 ft. for Mullins, I believe) and is set back from Highland with a parking area and portico, softening the effect of its height. Stepbacks should be considered to soften the effect of the Mullins east facade.

I fail to see how the staff can conclude, in its analysis, that the plan meetings is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. This infill development is not "complementary to and compatible with the existing and planned characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood." The density is much higher that suggested for CMU, and the neighborhood plan under development will most likely request a change from CMU to NMU for that area. The analysis states that "staff believes that the higher density of dwelling units proposed can be justified in this case by the project's proximity to both a low-density, mostly single-family area to the south of the mix of commercial uses on the south side of University Avenue and a large regional employment center to the north that includes the University and Veterans Administration hospitals and the University of Wisconsin campus." This makes no sense to me. How can high density be justified on the basis that the residential surroundings are low density? And the large regional employment center, although providing a potential market for the developer, is not in the neighborhood.

The staff also notes that the project reflects the Comprehensive Plan recommendation that heights should be greatest along campus drive and step down to lower densities and heights along University Avenue. This is true, but there is a notable exception: the five-story west tower. This tower will be a looming presence along University Ave. and will define the entrance to the University Avenue Corridor from the west in a way which is not likely to be consistent with the UAC plan.

The Zoning Administrator has noted that "the applicant has not provided the two designated off-street loading areas for this project, and therefore requests a waiver of one loading space." I am opposed to such a waiver. There should be adequate off-street loading space to prevent blockage and backup of traffic in an already congested area.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments, and for the time you spend evaluating requests that come before the Plan Commission.