

February 2nd, 2026

Hawthorne Elementary School
3344 Concord Ave
Madison, WI 53716

To Whom It May Concerns,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Lucy Sieber, I am the principal at Hawthorne Elementary School. I am writing to support the fencing on the Rise Apartment property to remain as it is currently constructed.

During the initial planning stages of the Rise Apartments, the Wisconsin Housing Preservation Corp. was exceedingly communicative, going above and beyond to solicit community feedback and closely partner with Hawthorne Elementary School given the shared property line. Not only was WHPC thoughtful during the planning process, including hosting community feedback sessions and focus groups, but they ensured all other parties involved, including the construction foreman, maintained excellent communication throughout the building process.

In the initial planning stages for the Rise Apartments, stakeholders at Hawthorne advocated for a fence along the property line. Particularly with the proximity to East Washington Avenue, a fence along this property line is critical for maintaining student safety. Wisconsin Housing Preservation Corp met this request with a high quality, long lasting solution. While the fencing ensures students don't stray from Hawthorne's property, the style of it allows for students and families to have clear sight lines on the walk to and from school.

When leaving school, students walk on a path through the Hawthorne Open Space that runs parallel to the Rise driveway. The outlet of the path is less than a yard from the entrance to the driveway. A solid fence would remove the sightline drivers currently have to see students coming up the path. Without the sightline the current fencing affords, drivers would have no opportunity to see students walking on the path until they turn onto Fair Oaks and are almost immediately in the driveway, creating a dangerous situation for our young students.

Additionally, while WHPC and McGann were nothing but thoughtful and communicative during the planning and construction of the Rise Apartments, there is no denying the significant impact having a construction site next door caused our students and families. Tearing out and replacing the existing fencing would only prolong disruptions to students' learning. Not only that, but the proposal to replace the current metal fencing with wood would lead to more frequent disruptions over the years as the wood fence would need more regular repair or replacement.

Another consideration that comes to mind is the discussions I have had with City of Madison employees about the mural in the tunnel under the East Washington Avenue and Fair Oaks/Wright St. intersection. City officials have repeatedly advocated for the mural to be painted over due to the amount of graphic graffiti the city has needed to repair on the mural. The mural was painted by Dane Arts Mural Arts. When I made them aware of the City's plan to paint over the mural in an effort to stop costly graffiti repairs, they reminded me that all this would do is provide a literally blank canvas for the graffiti to continue. Replacing the current style of fence on the Rise property with a solid fence would similarly provide a blank canvas in an area already known to invite explicit, inappropriate graffiti, this time, in an area directly visible from the school and playground.

Finally, the Wisconsin Housing Preservation Corp. has made me aware that a potential solution would involve putting year-round greenery along the fence, particularly where the Rise property meets the multi-family housing further east on East Washington Avenue and our staff parking lot. While I can't speak to what the other property owners would prefer, Hawthorne staff would prefer not to have added greenery along this section of the fence. Particularly when it is already dark out as staff are leaving for the day, Hawthorne staff benefit from the lighting on the Rise property to make our staff parking lot feel brighter and more safe. Adding shrubbery would remove this benefit for staff.

For the reasons listed above, I urge the City of Madison to reconsider this request and allow the current fencing at Rise to remain. If you have any questions or would like to speak with me further, you can contact me at lwsieber@madison.k12.wi.us or 608-204-2502.

Respectfully,

Lucy Sieber
Principal
Hawthorne Elementary School