

# Carpenter-Ridgeway Neighborhood Association



3326 Madison Ridgeway Avenue, Wisconsin 53704  
carpenterridgeway@gmail.com

Date: November 2, 2014

To: Bradley A. Cantrell, Plan Commission  
Eric W. Sundquist, Plan Commission  
Ken Opin, Plan Commission  
Ledell Zellers, Plan Commission  
Maurice C. Sheppard, Plan Commission  
Melissa M. Berger, Plan Commission  
Michael W. Rewey, Plan Commission  
Scott J. Resnick, Plan Commission  
Steve King, Plan Commission  
Tonya L. Hamilton-Nisbet, Plan Commission

From: Sarah E. Peterson, President, Carpenter-Ridgeway Neighborhood Association

Re: Conditional Use Permit for 707-709 Rethke Ave.

I write to express the Carpenter-Ridgeway Neighborhood Association Board's opposition to Heartland Alliance's request for a conditional use permit for the property located at 707-709 Rethke Ave.

We are cognizant of the need to develop new, innovative, and compassionate ways to address the challenges of Madison's homeless population. We believe, however, that the property located at 707-709 Rethke Ave. is not the proper property on which to build the 60-unit supportive housing development proposed by Heartland Alliance. Our concerns echo those expressed by Alderman David Ahrens in his October 16, 2014 memo.

To begin, the plan submitted by Heartland Alliance envisions only 12 parking spots. Because of the large size of the proposed building, there is simply not enough room to accommodate any more parking spaces. The development will house 60 residents and Heartland Alliance envisions a staff of nine full-time employees. Given the poor public transportation options available in the area, it is foreseeable that Heartland Alliance may need to purchase a van or bus to assist residents in getting to and from appointments and stores. It is also likely that the lack of public transportation could cause a significant number of residents may wish to purchase vehicles. Additionally, the parking spots will have to accommodate visitors, outside service providers, and others contracted to perform work at the development. There is little street parking in the area. For those seeking to park at the development, the next choice is likely to be to park in the parking lots of the nearby hotel and chiropractic clinic. Although those businesses can seek to have illegally parked vehicles ticketed and towed, it is unreasonable to place such a burden on those businesses.

Secondly, the application submitted by Heartland Alliance indicates that the development will have a common kitchen and community room available for use by the general public, thus making this a “mixed use” project. Presumably, Heartland Alliance's desire to classify this as a "mixed use" development is, at least in part, an effort to get around the more stringent parking requirements of a purely residential facility. It is far from clear that there is any need for these amenities in the community. MATC has recently announced that it is moving its culinary and baking programs to its Truax Campus. Additionally, the Feed Kitchen on Sherman Ave. provides commercial kitchen space to those seeking it. The East Madison Community Center, Bethesda Church, and the Hawthorne Branch of the Madison Public Library all provide community rooms. Furthermore, the utility of the common kitchen and community rooms offered at the proposed development would be greatly stymied by the fact that there is little parking available for those who may wish to use those spaces. Finally, these spaces would be available for use by the public only when they are not being used by residents. Given the programming goals put forth by Heartland Alliance, it seems quite likely the availability of the common kitchen and community room would be limited. It seems then, that it is a stretch to label this development as “mixed use.” It is unlikely that outsiders would have the need for, or the ability to regularly use, the common kitchen or community room.

Finally, Rethke Avenue and the adjacent East Washington Avenue corners are primarily commercially developed. It is not clear that placing a large residential facility would fit into the current development scheme, nor it is clear it would be a good fit for any future development plans for the area.

Given concerns about parking, the questionable character of the proposed “mixed use” spaces, and the general commercial nature of the area, we urge the Plan Commission to reject the conditional use permit for 707-709 Rethke Ave.