

*Statement regarding Parking & Traffic Impacts of Knickerbocker / Monroe Development*  
*August 6, 2012*  
*PRISCILLA ARSOVE*

I would like to address the issues of traffic and parking, which remain a major concern for this development and one of the reasons we think it needs continuing study.

I suspect most of you here have heard about the problems at Parman Place, a similar mixed-used building by the same developer and architect, located just eight blocks west on Monroe and Glenway. That development has wrought havoc on the streets behind it, primarily due to all the restaurant parkers who jam the once-quiet streets. One resident wrote to wish us “more success than we had in preventing this building that stripped our neighborhood of character and truly reduced our quality of life.”

The staff report for the Parman development did not foresee the parking mess there; it suggested that proximity to public transport and bike paths would help mitigate parking issues. We’ve heard the same thing about the Knickerbocker development: that parking and traffic impacts will be “negligible.” But if we don’t know what kind of businesses will occupy the commercial space – something the developer hasn’t disclosed - how is it possible to say future parking and traffic impacts will be negligible? It isn’t.

If we have learned one thing from Parman Place, it is that parking concerns are also traffic concerns, and in turn, safety concerns. Drivers looking for parking drive hurriedly, shoot into driveways to turn around, park erratically. This is especially dangerous by Parman Place because the streets there don’t have sidewalks, but it’s a problem on any residential street, especially those with a lot of children – more than 20 in the case of Knickerbocker Street.

The situation on Knickerbocker is complicated by the dangerous intersection with Monroe Street, which is borne out by the accident record. It’s impossible for cars to turn east at certain times of the day, so they head back onto Knickerbocker and other nearby streets to go east.

More cars will only intensify these problems. The Rouse development provides 21 parking spaces for 21 apartments, with no extra parking for visitors, people with more than 1 car, or for customers of the yet-to-be determined businesses. That will certainly increase parking demand on Knickerbocker, which already has an abundance of temporary parkers. Then we add the 60 additional apartments at the new Wingra Shores development directly across Monroe Street – more people who will be looking for parking and trying to navigate that difficult intersection.

So, to summarize, I and most of my neighbors don't believe it's possible to say there will be negligible traffic impacts on Knickerbocker, and that there won't be ANY FORESEEABLE AND SUBSTANTIAL IMPAIRMENT to "the uses, values and enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood" – which is standard 3 of the Conditional Use.

I'd like to close with a final word about Parman Place, because I hope lessons can be learned from this experience. The City did take a few steps to deal with some of the more glaring parking issues, including restricting parking on Monroe Street to avoid backups, and instituting one-sided parking on some of the side streets so service vehicles could get by. But the problems for residents are still there, and there doesn't seem to be any solution to them. If this trend continues -- and infill developments bordering residential neighborhoods aren't more carefully planned -- then neighborhoods will gradually erode. We need to take a closer look.