

To: Urban Design Commission

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Re: UDC, December 3, 2025, Item #6

Date: December 3, 2025

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Lakeside and South Shore Neighbors Group consists of residents who live on the 700 and 800 blocks of West Lakeside Street and on the 700 and 800 blocks of South Shore Drive, as well as some other Bay Creek and Madison residents. We have come together to collectively represent some common opinions and concerns about the development plans proposed for 999 S. Park, which directly abuts neighboring properties. These neighboring properties contain the homes at 846 W Lakeside, 843 South Shore, and 847 South Shore.

Given the late release of these plans relative to Thanksgiving weekend, we are just now reviewing the plans for Threshold's proposed mixed-use development at 999 South Park St with other area residents. We look forward to meeting with Michael Carlson on Thursday, December 4, 2025, and with our alder as soon as possible to discuss the ways this development can contribute to the enhancement of the South Park Corridor, while also integrating with our existing adjacent community. We welcome the chance to express our views here with the UDC.

#### Fit with Existing Character and Land Uses

The vitality and viability that Urban Design District 7 and TSS and TOD zoning promote refers to both the corridor and the existing community. The Park St. Corridor that is envisioned is not divorced from the community it serves in style, tempo, or function, but instead operates as a bridge between the residential areas to its east and west north of Wingra Creek.

The Comprehensive Plan designates the east side of S. Park as "Neighborhood Mixed-Use" from W. Washington down to Cedar (in contrast to the west side, which is primarily Community Mixed-Use, with the blocks from Olin to Cedar as Regional Mixed-Use). Preserving the character of Park St as a neighborhood shopping street means respecting its role as a connector within the community as well as a conduit to downtown. Park St. cannot serve this dual purpose if it becomes a dividing wall of disconnected, unrelated buildings between properties to its east and to its west. Thus, when one talks about the northbound S. Park Street character, one must include reference to the residences adjoining it that peek out from its intersecting side streets and protect the single-family homes and other buildings located along it and adjacent to it.

Keeping development to a more human scale on the east side of Park Street was a deliberate choice made in the Comp Plan, grounded in the fact that only one narrow block exists between northbound S. Park St and Monona Bay. The shallow predominantly commercial lots along S. Park from the 400 block (at West Washington) to the 900 block (at Lakeside) are immediately adjacent to residential single-family homes and 2- and 3-unit rentals. Even south of the 900 block, from Lakeside St. to Wingra Creek, residences are located only one narrow lot off Park Street. As a result, any new (and especially) taller development along S. Park St. has to be planned with care to avoid looking into a neighbor's windows or yard—or being looked into.

*The Emerson at Emerson and S. Park provides a case study in point. After meetings with neighbors, a much larger development was scaled back to become the 3-story apartment building that provides a much better fit with Emerson St.'s existing residential homes.*

*The VFW provides another example. Here, the initial plans for a 5- or 6-story development were scaled back to 4 and the entire building moved from the west to the east side of the lot to protect homeowners' and tenants' privacy as a result of conversations between Lakeside and Colby St. residents and the developer.*

### Fit With the Block Face

Creating pleasing and integrated block faces is another concern of UDD7. New development is supposed to promote a block face that is cohesive and internally complementary with new development not exceeding existing development by more than a story. The minimum established height for this location is two stories. The maximum height for TSS is 3, while TOD allows 4.

The established block face along S. Park to the north of 999 S. Park on the east side of the street, from W. Washington to Cedar St., is 1 to 2 stories. To the immediate south, except for the 3-story Emerson, one-story businesses with several two-story single-family residences predominate all the way to Wingra Creek. Even beyond, with only a few exceptions, the buildings that front the northbound side of S. Park are mostly 1- and 2-story buildings with the occasional 3-story building mixed in.

The context of the site for the proposed development is thus one in which this 4-story building would be in the midst of 1-2 story buildings on the east side of S Park, with 1-2 story residences at the rear of the property. In fact, the proposed building would be the only 4-story building in this Neighborhood Mixed-Use area, the 400-1400 blocks on the east side of S Park. The other taller buildings pictured in the development application, including the Peloton, with its Community Mixed-Use land designation, are located on the west side of S. Park and in an area intended for more intense development under the Comprehensive Plan.

### Orientation

In addition to character, scale, and context, orientation and materials are essential to good design. The proposed building's placement on its site makes it appear to overflow its bounds (One nearby neighbor has likened it to an "elephant shoved into a bathtub.") Looking at the building from across the street, it will appear to be one story with the higher stories behind it a mass of galvalume siding, one section about 100' long, the other about 120' long. Galvalume is not a UDC-preferred material, and one might ask how well this material holds up since the metal at The Lux, 422 W Johnson, started to appear quite smudged soon after installation.

As a corner building, the proposed development also has a relationship with Lakeside, and its arched pieces are all oriented toward the intersection, not to S Park. However, there is nothing distinctive about the building's side entrance, and overall, the building's placement (as well as its character and scale, detract from its connection to the existing adjacent residential buildings and their connection to the corridor.

The Lakeside entrance to the building is neither recessed nor defining, as required by UDD 7, and is not on the primary street. The building, which is approximately 51 feet in height at about 15 feet from the property line, transitions to the adjacent single-family residential properties abruptly and jarringly. In addition, the 12-foot high, 45-foot-long featureless wall of the parking garage, which is located about 2.5 feet from the property line the length of the rear of the building) abuts the single-family residential area to its southeast.

This wall is not only unattractive and seemingly out of compliance with UDC's focus on four-sided architecture but does nothing to integrate this primarily residential building into the residential neighborhood; it gives residents on the second floor of 999 S. Park decks to overlook those single-family homes and yards, as do the building's balconies and 4<sup>th</sup> floor patio. The proximity of the proposed development compromises the preexisting uses and enjoyments of its neighbors and detracts from the value of the nearby homes.

Paradoxically, the substantial portion of the building facing Park Street, which is required to be at least two stories, and where greater height can be more easily incorporated than in close proximity to the surrounding homes, is only one story. The parapet, or patio guardrail, is perhaps another 6' in height, but still is not 2

stories. The portion of the ground floor, excluding the parapet, may have 60% windows, but that is not so if the parapet is included—and the parapet reads like part of the ground floor.

### Congestion and Traffic Flow

Another concern of near neighbors arises from their experience of the intersection at S. Park, Lakeside, and Parr, a double intersection that is both problematic and frequently congested.

The intersection at the 900 block of S. Park, Lakeside, and Parr consists of:

- Cars turning left onto Lakeside heading south on S. Park that frequently line up along Park St.
- Cars turning right and left onto Park from Lakeside that back up the length of the 800 block during the busiest times of day and on game weekends
- Cars that cross S. Park onto Parr St. or turn left onto S. Park St. from Fish Hatchery
- Cars bearing right onto Fish Hatchery from S. Park merging with cars turning left from S. Park onto Fish Hatchery.
- Cars turning right onto Lakeside from northbound S. Park.
- Pedestrians and cyclists travelling all of these routes or just attempting to cross S. Park and/or Lakeside St.

The placement of the building's main entrance/driveway on Lakeside St., while it conforms to the zoning requirement of minimizing driveways along S. Park, is ill considered. It will serve to add further congestion to the intersection. Cars waiting to turn right or left onto S. Park will block Lakeside residents into or out of their driveways and will delay cars heading north on S. Park for several cycles of the traffic light at Parr. This will result in on S. Park St. to stacked up in the southbound left-turn lane, across the intersection, and at the mouth of W. Lakeside, as they in turn wait to make a left into 999 S. Park's garage. The resulting gridlock will replicate the situation two streets down where the gas station entrance creates the same problem at the intersection of S. Park Street and W. Olin Avenue. The addition of the N/S BRT, which will soon eliminate all southbound left turns off S. Park except for at Emerald, Lakeside, and Olin, will put additional pressure on this intersection.

The Lakeside/S. Park intersection is, according to the Transportation Commission (2020), one of the two sources of speeding the length of Lakeside St—the other being the intersection at Lakeside and John Nolen Drive. At both ends of the street, cars turn onto Lakeside at speeds well in excess of 25 mph. Gridlock, on top of this situation, seems a recipe for bad news.

The proposed development intends to add patios from which residents of 999 S. Park will be able to observe this mess. Patios correspond to a UDD7 preference for street activation, but as with balconies on S. Park, are likely to remain unused because it is hard to hold a conversation over the noise of S. Park. It would seem to make far more sense, as with the VFW building, to push the mass of the building away from the residential neighbors' property line and toward S. Park St. and to move the building entrance to the primary street face.

### Miscellaneous

Other questions and concerns that near neighbors raised include the following.

1. Where will the building's loading zone be located (Where will the Amazon vans park)?
2. Will the loud garage exhaust be located close to the single-family residences?
3. Will part of the parking garage space be allocated to commercial workers/visitors?
4. Where will commercial workers/visitors park their bikes? Cars? (With no parking along Park St., as a result of the BRT implementation, Lakeside is expected to accommodate the overflow parking, However Lakeside is already filled with residents' cars and cars from existing businesses. Will parking for this building thus flow onto South Shore?
5. How much will the backlit Kalwall panels contribute to light pollution and cause attention to this one particular building?

6. What stormwater mitigation measures will be put in place to avoid flooding the nearby properties on South Shore, which have already experienced flooring problems as a result of being about one story lower than S. Park?

In conclusion, while the building meets the broad standards of TSS zoning (height, number of units), the UDC is tasked with “collectively improv[ing] the visual character and safety of Park Street” and to “help prevent the negative visual and functional impacts of uncoordinated design decisions.” TSS zoning has as its purpose ensuring ‘appropriate transitions between higher-intensity uses within TSS districts and adjacent lower-density residential districts.’

A 60-foot 4-story building on the east side of S Park, just about smack dab in the middle of a 10-block stretch of 1-2 story buildings (with one 3-story exception), a building that has the main architectural elements directed toward the intersection, a building with Kalwall panels lighting up the night and galvalume panels being the primary material facing S. Park, does not meet the goals of UDD #7.













