

From: [Nicholas Davies](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: Concerns about South Madison plan (68084)
Date: Sunday, December 12, 2021 10:57:49 PM

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Dear Plan Commissioners,

Single-family zoning originated as one of the tools of racial redlining. For over half a century now, we've run the experiment of suppressing natural densification, and we've seen the problems it causes. We now have a critical housing deficit, and precipitously rising costs for buyers and renters. People with the least to spend on housing end up bearing the worst of it. Letting South Madison stagnate isn't going to help.

A neighborhood plan like this is supposed to be a chance to reenvision what the neighborhood could be like in future, but this current plan mostly just reflects the status quo. Why isn't the city devoting the same level of resources to this as it did, for example, to the Odana/West Towne plan?

Today we're talking about an area that's only about 2 miles from the capitol square. This area has a transit transfer point today, and is expected to have a BRT route in future. The Wingra path is one of the best routes in the whole city for walking and biking, both for recreation and commuting, with easy connections towards the square and the East side. Park St already has a host of amenities, including groceries, bakeries, farmers markets, restaurants, a library, higher education, public health, and more.

This is a neighborhood that's going to make a lot of sense for a lot of people, whether any of us like it or not. And we should want them using our transit system, paying into our school system, not driving in from Deforest or wherever the sprawl horizon is in another decade.

The more that we suppress densification, the more economic pressure there'll be on the housing stock that's here. The only way to prevent people from being displaced is to allow enough housing to be built for both today's neighbors and tomorrow's.

There's also a real danger that the pent-up demand for housing (combined with a 5 floor height limit) will lead to the mixed use zones along Park St becoming primarily residential, and pushing out the commercial amenities that make the area livable and vibrant today.

I get the desire for owner-occupied housing, but we can do better than single-family only zones. If we allow duplexes and triplexes throughout the Thorstad area, that could mean 2-3 times more owner-occupied housing. With low-rise condo buildings, we could get more housing for sale at a more affordable price point. Zoning codes like TR-C4 would at least allow for a natural equilibrium of low and mid density buildings.

On the Fish Hatchery corridor, a major arterial, this plan shows just low/mid residential zones, like exists today. A couple commercial plots, where there are stores today. With this plan, we're saying that for the foreseeable future, our vision is that residents along this corridor should have to walk all the way to Park St for most things. Maybe there's fast food in Fitchburg, but for some reason, we aren't planning to improve the Beltline crossing at all

for non-motorists. Why aren't we taking this seriously?

Similarly, this plan doesn't propose really solving the inhospitality of Park St to non-motorists. Yes, it's part of highway 151, but why are we preemptively declaring defeat? What if it means human lives lost, like it has on East Wash?

I hope you'll consider these problems at your meeting, while there's still a chance to further revise this plan.

Thank you,
Nick Davies
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