

CITY OF MADISON
Common Council
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL
CORRESPONDENCE
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Rm. 417
266-4071

DATE: July 9, 2007

TO: Nan Fey, Chair, Plan Commission
Members of Plan Commission

FROM: Ald. Julia Kerr, District 13

SUBJECT: **Fieldhouse Station Comments**

I am recusing myself from the Plan Commission's consideration of Fieldhouse Station, but want to communicate my very serious concerns about this project as the alder of this district.

Intensity

The City of Madison Comprehensive Plan stipulates that the commercial buildings in a Neighborhood Mixed-Use (NMU) district such as the Fieldhouse Station site should not exceed 10,000 square feet (with an exception for buildings with grocery stores). While the plan has no explicit standard for the amount of commercial space for a mixed-use building in an NMU, the benchmark of 10,000 square feet for commercial buildings clearly indicates an intensity of commercial development considered desirable in those districts.

The proposed building includes 23,445 square feet of retail and commercial space. The Plan Commission should carefully consider if more than double the amount of commercial space proposed is consistent with that 10,000 square foot standard for commercial projects in NMU districts (*City of Madison Comprehensive Plan* Volume 2, pages 87-88).

Height

The Planning Division Staff Report notes the following with respect to the building's size: "A continuing area of concern with the concept now proposed is the overall height of the building and the consistency of the project with the height recommendations in the *Monroe Street Commercial District Plan*." Staff goes on to say "...the Plan Commission and Common Council should consider the overall height of the building when determining if this proposal comports to the design guidelines in the *Monroe Street Commercial District Plan*." (Planning Division Staff Report dated July 3, 2007, page 8).

The Monroe Street plan calls for buildings between two to three stories tall (*Monroe Street Commercial District Plan*, page 80). In adopting the plan, the Plan Commission recommended and the Common Council approved "that the range of building heights recommended in the Plan should be expanded to include and permit four-story buildings with the understanding that lot size, proximity to other building forms, setbacks, step-backs, and floor-to-floor height shall be considered

when reviewing the redevelopment of properties on Monroe Street.” (Legistar File Number 05720, version 2).

Unfortunately, there is no standard for the height of a story. However, in a memo to then-alder Ken Golden, principal planner Bill Fruhling did an admirable job of describing the interplay of building use and height. Included in his analysis is a list of the floor-to-floor heights for residential and commercial buildings recent completed in Madison (See Attachment I). The chart below provides a comparison of the calculated average height of floors in comparable developments relative to the Fieldhouse Station proposal.

	Madison Average	Fieldhouse Station*
Non-residential level one	13' 9"	12' 10"
Non-residential level two	13' 9"	12' 8"
Residential level one	10' 5"	16' 4"
Residential level two	10' 5"	16' 6"
TOTAL	48' 3"	58' 3"

*Staff report, page 8

The comparison chart demonstrates that the real effect of including two-level residential loft spaces as the applicant has proposed is the construction of a building that is 12 feet (or approximately one story) taller than comparable four-story buildings.

The analysis shows that the building is more accurately described as a five-story building that utilizes set-backs on the upper levels. I would hope that the Plan Commission would carefully consider this apparent inconsistency with the 2-3 stories in the plan or the provision for four-story buildings in some situations as recommended by the Plan Commission and adopted by the Common Council in connection with the *Monroe Street Commercial District Plan*.

Parking

My constituents have consistently raised concerns about the location and availability of surface parking. The staff reports notes that there are 24 surface parking spaces available for this project on a part-time lease arrangement with the Madison Chinese Christian Church, which is currently challenging the legality of the lease. If the church prevails in its challenge, they are requesting that the lease be voided, which would leave Fieldhouse Station with approximately five surfaces space that are also leased. Similarly, if the church does not prevail, the lease will expire in 27 years.

The report states, “Staff believes that it is appropriate for the City to weigh the merits of the proposed mixed-use project...in the absence of any surface parking given both the finite term of the lease and the pending legal challenge” (page 11). They go on to observe that they believe the project will be viable without surface parking due to its proximity to the bike path and bus lines.

While I am not generally a proponent of surface parking lots, over the years I have worked very

closely with many Monroe Street merchants on a variety of projects. Merchants have consistently emphasized to me how critical convenient surface parking is to the success of their operations. Their many years of retail experience in this area has convinced me that projects must provide some accessible surface parking for retail to succeed in this area. Therefore, I am very concerned about the viability of this project without convenient surface parking and how people needing or wanting those spaces will be accommodated.

It is also important to note that street parking on this corner is very restricted with a few spaces across Monroe Street and more spaces on the same side of the street as the but one block up in the 1600 block of Monroe. Street parking is prohibited in front of the proposed building on both Monroe and Regent streets. By comparison, the recently approved Wingra-Arbor development will have 4,000 square feet of commercial space and 10 surface spaces. Occupants and visitors will also be able to park on Monroe Street (except in the morning to accommodate commuter reserve lanes), Knickerbocker, and Arbor Drive.

Finally, the leased parking lot is not part of this PUD application so on a technical basis, the commission is being asked to approve a large building with an intense level of commercial and residential uses without the assurance of permanent surface parking.

I would hope that Plan Commission members would carefully consider approving a project of this size with a small number of surface parking spaces that will only be available for a finite amount of time, the prospect of almost no surface parking if the church prevails in its lawsuit, as well as the technicality of no surface parking in connection with the project you are being asked to approve as the parking lot site is not part of this application.

Traffic

The applicant has proposed an entrance to the underground parking level that he states will only allow vehicles leaving the garage to exit out on to Regent Street. The Madison Chinese Christian Church has consistently expressed concerns that cars leaving the building will opt not to try to turn onto the heavily traveled Regent Street and will instead use their parking lot as a turn-around area.

I am concerned about the Plan Commission approving this project without first having confirmation that the garage entrance is correctly engineered to only allow access to Regent Street. I am further concerned about the prospect of approving this project without any provision to ensure that the church's parking lot will not become a vehicle turning area for the occupants and users of Fieldhouse Station.

I believe that the traffic study provided by the applicant (Short Elliott Hendrickson, dated December 18, 2007) correctly identifies the principal concern that neighbors have consistently raised with traffic associated with this project:

“A capacity analysis and gap study confirms that there is a lack of acceptable gaps for traffic wishing to turn left from the alley during the peak hour. The capacity analysis resulted in a poor level of service for the movement (Level of Service E). The gap study conducted during the peak pm hour measured an inadequate number of gaps for left turns. There is ample capacity and gaps for right turning traffic from the alley” (page 8).

Unfortunately, the study does not address two related aspects of the difficult access to this project:

First, beyond the very poor level of service for the estimated 19 cars exiting the alley during the peak period and wanting to take a left to head west, the study does not discuss the effect of the estimated 46 west-bound cars per peak hour essentially seeking to make the reverse movement and turn across the east-bound lanes and into the alley (See Attachment II). These cars will have to stop in one of the two west-bound Regent Street lanes and wait for an opening in the east-bound traffic in order to execute the turn. I would hope that the Plan Commission will consider the effect on nearby businesses as well as other property owners that will result from the increased congestion at this important intersection directly attributable to this project.

Second, the study does not address if the 20 foot reconfigured alley will give drivers turning into the alley sufficient radii to execute the turn off the street when there is a car waiting in the alley to turn onto Regent Street.

While I generally try to support infill development projects and have consistently supported increased density on Monroe and Regent streets, I believe that this project has some serious deficiencies that the Plan Commission should carefully consider.

enc: Sample of Recent Development Projects

ATTACHMENT 1

Sample of Recent Development Projects

		Floor-to-Floor Height:
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<u>Commercial / Mixed-Use Developments - Non-Residential Components</u>		
Krupp Office Building, Eastwood Ave	Office F-F:	10' 3"
Grandview Commons Retail Area - Bldg. B (Mixed Office/Retail)	2nd Floor F-F:	11' 0"
Grandview Commons Retail Area - Bldg. A (Mixed Office/Retail)	2nd - 3rd Floor F-F:	12' 0"
Capitol Point Condominiums / Mixed-Use	1st Floor Retail F-F:	12' 3"
Renaissance, Williamson Street	1st Floor Commercial F-F:	13' 0"
Schroeder Ct Retail/Commercial Development	1st-3rd Commercial F-F:	13' 0"
Metrotech Office (Far East Side)	2nd - 3rd Commercial F-F:	13' 4"
Dayton St Apartments: Trio Project	1st Floor Retail F-F:	14' 10"
Kennedy Place, Atwood Ave	1st Floor Commercial F-F:	15' 4"
Grandview Commons Retail Area - Bldg. B (Mixed Office/Retail)	1st Floor F-F:	16' 0"
Metrotech Office (Far East Side)	1st Floor Office F-F:	16' 6"
Grandview Commons Retail Area - Bldg. A (Mixed Office/Retail)	1st Floor F-F:	18' 0"
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<u>Commercial / Mixed-Use Developments - Residential Components</u>		
Dayton St Apartments: Trio Project	Residential F-F:	9' 10"
Renaissance, Williamson Street	Residential Building F-F:	10' 0"
Kennedy Place, Atwood Ave	Residential F-F:	10' 8"
Capitol Point Condominiums / Mixed-Use	Residential F-F:	11' 0"
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<u>Residential Developments - Residential Components</u>		
Hamilton Place Apartments	Residential F-F:	9' 4"
UW Dorms, Dayton St	Residential F-F:	10' 0"
Grandview Commons Residential Gemini Apartments	Residential F-F:	10' 0"
Promenade Place, 420 W Gorham Student Apartments	All Residential F-F:	10' 0"
Aberdeen, 437 W Gorham Student Apartments	Residential F-F:	10' 0"
335 W Doty Condominiums	Residential F-F:	10' 5"
Maywick Dr (suburban Apartments)	Residential F-F:	10' 8"
Old Market Row, 20 N Blair Apartments	Residential F-F:	10' 8"
Odessa, 12 N Butler Apartments	Residential F-F:	10' 8"
Grandview Commons Residential Gemini Apartments	Residential 1st Floor F-F:	11' 0"
Third Lake Ridge Condominiums	Residential F-F:	11' 0"
Metropolitan Place	Residential F-F:	11' 0"
Maingate Meriter Retirement Apartments	Residential F-F:	11' 2"
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<u>Residential Developments - Non-Residential Components</u>		
Odessa, 12 N Butler Apartments	Parking F-F:	8' 6"
Old Market Row, 20 N Blair Apartments	Parking F-F:	9' 0"
UW Dorms, Dayton St	1st floor lobby F-F:	15' 0"
Aberdeen, 437 W Gorham Mansard Room Student Apartments	1st Floor Lobby F-F:	16' 0"

Avg. 13-9

Avg. 10.5

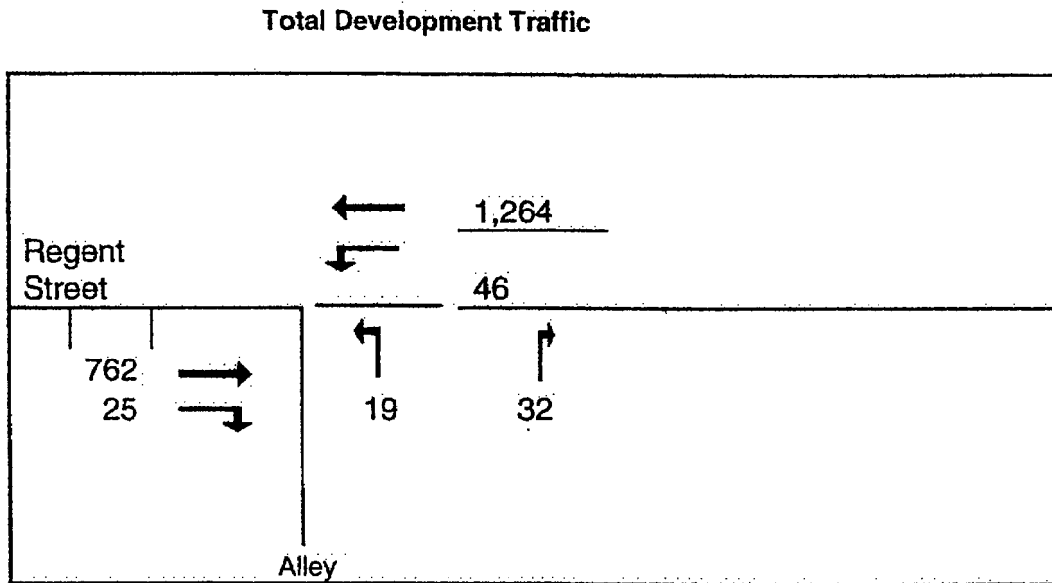


Figure 3

Capacity Analysis

Synchro (Version 6.0) was utilized to analyze traffic operations at the intersection of Regent Street and the alley accessing the proposed Fieldhouse Station development. The base numbers assume from full build-out and occupancy of the building. Level of service (LOS) is a letter grade assigned to a transportation facility to designate the quality of operations or extent of delay. Very good operations with little or no impedance correspond to a LOS A, and very poor operations or conditions exceeding capacity correspond to a LOS F.

The results of the unsignalized analysis show that the northbound alley approach to Regent Street is expected to operate at level of service E with an average delay of 38.2 seconds/vehicle. The remainder of the movements operate at level of service A.

In order to verify the results of the Synchro analysis, a "gap" study was performed at the alley entrance to Regent Street.

Gaps, or the time between vehicles, were measured electronically for vehicles traveling eastbound and for vehicles traveling in both directions. If the vehicles were traveling in a queue or platoon of closely spaced vehicles, gaps were generally in the 2 to 4 second range. If the eastbound vehicles were traveling with a 6 second distance between them, but a westbound vehicle passed the alley in the time between two eastbound vehicles, the measured gap was probably less than 3 seconds. In this study, the number of gaps and their duration were measured and recorded during the p.m. peak hour.