

CIRCULATE &
RETURN to Tim P.

RE: Ideal Body Shop Redevelopment proposal

Madison Plan Commission

October 1, 2012

2 community cars
bike racks

major concern about parking

The only thing we have ever asked for is 4 stories

St. Mary's + Meritor, were exceptions because we got Arb Coho + its for the public good.

When our alder wrote to the Greenbush Neighborhood regarding the Ideal Body Shop redevelopment proposal, she asked: "Why are five stories more offensive than four stories?" She noted that the two hospitals fronting Park Street, Meritor and St. Mary's are both higher than five stories. I have adapted my response to present to the Plan Commission this evening.

Here is why I think five stories are more "offensive" than four:

mass cuts deeply into the neighborhood

The majority of homes surrounding are 1 + 2 stories

Very simply, five stories would cause greater harm to my neighbors who live near the proposed project site.

As a neighbor, I desire a vibrant Park Street commercial district, and as a business owner myself I fully appreciate the need for investors and owners to realize a reasonable profit. However, that profit should not be made by harming others.

There are residents with two story frame homes that immediately abut the proposed development site or are otherwise located close enough to be significantly impacted by increased height. These homeowners will face immediate negative impacts – foundation cracks during construction, reduced sunlight, and the feeling of being overwhelmed by a huge looming building. There may also be negative impacts related to traffic flow, increased parking demand, and increased lighting and noise. Furthermore, homeowners will suffer economically in the long term because these impacts will make their homes less attractive to future buyers.

The Greenbush Neighborhood Plan and the Park Street Revitalization Plan both explicitly recognize this potential for harm to area homeowners. That's why both documents call for Park Street building heights of four stories or less. These plans recognize that Park Street commercial development must be carefully balanced with the need to foster a healthy central city residential neighborhood.

While it is true that the two hospitals on Park Street are greater than five stories, they don't have residential neighbors immediately adjacent to their tall buildings. With respect to St. Mary's, the

neighborhood worked very hard to ensure that increased height was limited to the Park Street side of this expansion, with as little additional height as possible where the development meets the residential part of the neighborhood. Plus, the neighborhood negotiated other critical concessions in exchange for height. The current development proposal offers no qui pro quo.

Greenbush neighbors have pointed to recent development on Monroe Street where four or fewer stories appears to be economically viable and provide a return to investors. Monroe Street is a model for us specifically because the street's commercial development backs up to older residential neighborhoods, both on the east and west ends.

The most important issue for me is how Park Street development transition into the adjacent residential neighborhood. Five stories (or higher) may be possible along Park Street where there is no adjacent residential development. Where commercial parcels are immediately next to homes, development should ideally (no pun intended) step down to meet the scale of the homes. If that is not politically possible, limiting height to the Park Street Plan's maximum four stories would at least cause less harm to adjacent homeowners than five stories.

Furthermore, developers must minimize or mitigate adverse impacts related to lighting, traffic flow, parking, and noise. There should be a mechanism for the neighborhood to work on these issues with the developer before and after construction. Developers should be liable for damage that occurs during construction. The owners of nearby commercial property would expect such accountability and might have the financial resources or force accountability if needed. Homeowners are far less able to do so.

I don't live adjacent to the proposed development. However, I do care about my neighbors and the overall health of my neighborhood. My neighborhood is increasingly anchored by owner occupied housing, but promoting commercial development at the expense of nearby homeowners will reverse this trend and will be an unfair balance of interests.

Leslie Fields

Erin Street