

Zoning and Human Compression: 820 Park Street

We, the Near Neighbors living adjacent to the proposed 820 Park Street development, remain united in our support for affordable housing on the block bounded by Park, Haywood, Brooks and Delaplaine. It matters very much to us that this is a quality building — good for its future occupants — and good for us as neighbors.

We note that under MGO 28.004 sub (2); “Where the conditions imposed by any provision of this ordinance are either more restrictive or less restrictive than comparable conditions imposed by any other law, ordinance, statute resolution or regulation of any kind, the regulations which are more restrictive or which impose higher standards or requirements shall prevail, unless an exception to this provision is specifically noted.”

A. We object to TSS zoning and the Conditional Use applied to this residential project. We view it as a subversion of the Zoning Code.

- The Developer calls this an “Affordable Housing Project.” Logic would indicate it be zoned residential. But by adding ONE PRIVATE OFFICE that comprises 2% of the building (2,000 square feet of 113,000 square feet), the Developer is able to obtain mixed-use zoning — allowing for measurably higher human compression. Though this building certainly could be zoned residential and given a conditional use for an office, residential zoning would prohibit the severe human compression that mixed-use allows.
- Conditional Use has been green-lighted by City staff and the Plan Commission that reduces retail space from a expected minimum of 15,000 square feet — to 2,000. With only a private office making this “mixed-use” the TSS zoning offers NO shopping to the neighborhood, while severely limiting space for residents.
- When Conditional Use is applied for the express purpose of nullifying the intent of a zoning type, (as it is in this case by nullifying the retail/shopping purpose of Traditional Shopping Street by obtaining Conditional Use to NOT provide shopping); and when there are correct options available, the City should insist that a developer use the correct zoning type. In this case, the project is a residential project. It should be zoned residential

B. We are appalled by the disregard the Developer has shown our Greenbush Neighborhood Plan — and of the City’s reward for it.

- The Developer plans 95 units with 155 bedrooms — on land that now holds eleven homes and one small business. This degree of density is not contemplated in the Greenbush Neighborhood Plan. Beyond the Park Street corridor, the Plan intends this block to be zoned low-density residential — not 98 units per acre as this project specifies.
- In defiance of the Greenbush Neighborhood Plan which calls for preservation of housing (once the St. Mary’s Hospital Campus had been completed), the Developer purchased single family homes with the intent of tearing them down.
- The City plans to grant the Developer \$1.25 million in zero percent and 2.7 percent loans for 30 years. From our perspective, this looks like reward for egregious action.

- City Staff and the Plan Commission have greenlighted Conditional Use for four and five stories in a neighborhood with 1.5 story homes.
- The Developer and his team have repeatedly referenced the St. Mary’s Hospital outpatient center and garage as the basis for a five-story claim, but the Greenbush Neighborhood Plan and the Park Street Corridor plan indicate that the hospital is a distinct entity, with its own campus and conditions. The Hospital should not be used as a “comparable” because it is not.

C. There seems to be willingness to accept a lower standard of space for low-income households, including people with disabilities and veterans — to enable the Developer to increase profits. If this building complex were zoned residential, inhabitants would have:

- 500 square feet of lot size per apartment for lot area. Under the proposed Traditional Shopping Street (TSS) mixed-use zoning, these residents are entitled to ZERO.
- At least 140 square feet of Usable Open Space per dwelling unit required in the stingiest of residential zoning types allowed outside the Capitol District. Most multi-family residential buildings require a minimum of 320 to 500 square feet per dwelling unit. TSS zoning allows a minimum of 40 square feet per dwelling unit.
- There are only 25 square feet per dwelling unit of walkable, outdoor ground space in this building complex — about 17 square feet per bedroom. The building complex covers more than 80% of the lot. For veterans, people with disabilities who may have limited mobility, and families with children, this ratio is EXTREME.

Madison’s zoning and neighbor plans are the City’s covenant with its people. We believe that TSS zoning, with these conditional uses and lack of open space are a bad choice for a City with a Progressive tradition. We urge you to avoid these negative human consequences for generations of Madison residents by applying residential zoning to residential projects.

Respectfully,

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