



Schenk-Atwood-Starkweather-Yahara Neighborhood Association

Friday, July 21, 2017

Sent by email

TO: Finance Committee, City of Madison

Dear Committee Members,

Neighbors rise up to support projects that inspire them and improve their neighborhoods. They also rise up to oppose those projects that they feel jeopardize their quality of life. Fortunately, this letter is one of support. Even more, it is another chapter in a story of support. Over two years ago the SASY Neighborhood Association wrote a strong letter encouraging the Garver Feed Mill Criteria and Evaluation Committee to choose the Baum proposal for redevelopment of that property. I write today to let you know that that support remains strong and unabated today.

On behalf of the SASY Neighborhood Association, I encourage you to support the funding proposal that is before you today for the \$1.6M in environmental remediation that is needed at the Garver site. The SASY Council voted unanimously at our July 13th meeting to send this letter reaffirming our support of the project and the remediation funding.

A skeptical person might assume that public support for this project is thin, and that this project will forever ask for more money from the City of Madison. Those of us who live in this neighborhood and who have followed this project for years know otherwise. We see the Baum redevelopment project as \$14.4M investment in the City of Madison and our neighborhood. It is an investment that includes \$2.5M in New Market Tax Credits; \$3.75M in Historic Tax Credits; \$5.825M in private debt & equity; \$500K from an Idle Industrial Sites Grant; and only \$1.825M from the City of Madison in funds that the city would have otherwise spent to raze the building and construct a cold storage shed.

Furthermore, the funding picture says nothing of the ancillary benefits that stem from this project. It will preserve and create well-paying jobs by providing spaces for local food businesses. It will create a tourism destination that is scaled properly to the neighborhood. It will create markets for other local agricultural products. And it will provide substantial revenue to the City of Madison from property, sales and tourism taxes.

SASY

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We understand that the City of Madison has always acknowledged the city responsibility for the environmental clean up of this site. This would be true regardless of what project was selected two years ago, or any project that might be selected in the future. The \$1.6M in remediation funding currently before you should not be viewed as a cost unique to the Baum project. It is a cost that has always been lurking in the background, only quantified now because there is a specific project proposal on the table. Arriving at a specific cost number only became possible once a project was selected and the details of that project examined in the context of the site. No doubt the cost would be same - possibly more - had a different project been chosen.

I wrote earlier that this letter is another chapter in a story of neighborhood support. That history is long and undiminished. The Friends of Starkweather Creek (FSC) and the SASY Neighborhood Association have worked together for over a decade to facilitate research and public engagement in issues related to the Garver Building and the land north of the Garver Building, known as the North Plat. The following efforts testify to that work:

- In 2003, FSC started a 3-year public engagement process that included hundreds of residents and partnered with the UW-Madison Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies.
- In 2006, SASY hosted a day-long public workshop to “Visualize the Issues of the North Plat for the Garver RFP,” the results of which were reflected in the first Garver RFP.
- After the demise of the first RFP, we lobbied for strategic capping of segments of the exposed walls and removal of the broken roofs to prevent further damage.
- During those years, the FSC and SASY also worked with Olbrich Botanical Gardens on a public education program specific to the Starkweather Watershed. The results of that program include the educational signs that now stand along the creek walk in Olbrich.
- In 2011, SASY partnered with a landscape architecture student named Parker Jones. His year-long senior Capstone Project offered a masterplan for the entire Garver site. His work was heavily grounded in the history and values of the neighborhood.
- More recently, when the Garver Feed Mill Selection and Evaluation Committee was formed, SASY invited all four developers to present their proposals at a public meeting in the neighborhood. Attendees did not vote, but written comments were solicited. The Baum proposal had the greatest number of positive comments and the least negative comments.
- In April of 2015, at the culmination of the RFP process, hundreds of local residents packed the Goodman Community Center for a public meeting that included the members of the selection committee. Of the many registered speakers, almost everyone spoke strongly in favor of the Baum Project.

SASY

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Almost 15 years of strong neighborhood interest in the Garver site has culminated in strong support for the Baum project. Process is important. It assures everyone involved that the support is not some thin veneer propped up by a few people. The history and process surrounding the Garver site and the Baum project demonstrates that the neighborhood support is real and that it runs deep.

In closing, I reiterate SASY and neighborhood support for the Baum project. I ask that you support the \$1.6M in funding for the needed environmental remediation of the site. That cost is the city's responsibility, not some scheme for more money. I also ask that you consider again the \$14.4M investment in the local economy that this project represents. This project is not a drain on city resources; it is an opportunity.

Thank you for your time, your service and your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Hinkfuss". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font. The first part of the signature is "BRAD" in all caps, followed by "Hinkfuss" in a more fluid script. There is a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right and then curves back up towards the end of the signature.

Brad Hinkfuss
President – SASY, Inc.

Cc: SASY Board of Directors, Baum Development, David Schmiedicke