

202 Davidson Street

Proposed Elimination of Parking Lots

On February 1, 2018, the Madison Department of Public Works issued a notice for a neighborhood meeting regarding a proposed project for street, sewer and other construction impacting Davidson Street and much of the surrounding neighborhood. Although, the proposal detailed street, curb, sewer, water main improvements and the inclusion of one sidewalk fronting part of the north side of Davidson, it made no mention of the elimination of the parking lots in front of 108 and 202 Davidson which provide spaces for eight vehicles. Although the plan was developed over a period of a year, no communication or discussion with the owners or residents of these buildings or other properties was conducted during the development process, and elimination of the spaces was only discovered when the owner of 108 Davidson made a follow up inquiry regarding the construction.

Background:

The 4-unit apartment building at 202 Davidson was constructed in 1964. The current owner, David Schallhammer acquired the building in 1997. At the time of acquisition, the parking lots were already old. A survey which was done for previous owner Myrtle Jacobson in March 1974 shows the parking lots and they also appear on an aerial photo from 1968. The buildings were designed for full access only from the front and it is likely that the lots were approved by Blooming Grove at the time of construction, and may even have been put in by the town. There is no record of either Blooming Grove or Madison ever having raised any issues or objection to the lots. Since the lots are in front of the buildings, the municipalities were aware of their existence for at least 50 years and had ample opportunity to object if they had any concerns related to their presence.

Community Impact:

202 Davidson is a small building with large (1,000 Sq. Ft.) 2-bedroom apartments. During the 21 years under current ownership, it has provided homes for a diverse group of generally long-term residents. The longest tenancy exceeded 35 years and another lasted 25. One current resident has 17 years and one family is at 12 years. Two families have two children each ranging in age from 1 to 10. Over the years residents have ranged in age from 1 to 85. The building is attractive to young professionals, families and seniors. The parking lot is particularly important to the families and seniors. Off street parking in front of the building allows parents to safely unload young children, carry in groceries, etc. For seniors, the parking has been essential. As the residents grew older, even a short walk was an effort. Often cars remained parked for extended periods, particularly in winter. These residents would not have been able to move their vehicles for street snow removal and would have been forced to move without the parking lot. When families or seniors inquire about the building, one of the first questions is whether off street parking is available.

Traffic and Parking Impact:

In 1964, when the building was built, the average was one vehicle per household. Now it is much more common to have two cars, particularly when both parents or occupants work outside the home. Some residents might also have vehicles provided by their employers. With four apartment buildings on the north side of the street, there are often visitors and guests parking on Davidson as well. Though the eight spaces provided by the parking lots can't meet all the needs of residents, it does at least allow one vehicle per apartment to be off the street.

Davidson Street is not a wide street, and the parking lots are at the T intersection where Hegg dead ends into Davidson. Having the parking lots off the street has allowed a wider section at the T and still provided parking at the T. When the lots are removed no parallel parking will be permitted at or near the T intersection. There will be eight more cars on the street with fewer parking spaces. Alternate side parking during snow season will create even more hardship, since there will likely not be enough space to accommodate everyone on just one side.

In recent years, parking at the end of Davidson has also been impacted by another factor. The commercial businesses on Monona Drive like Java Cat have brought more traffic to the neighborhood and it is not unusual for customers to park on Davidson and Hegg and walk to those businesses. Additionally, people from other areas sometimes park their excess vehicles on Davidson.

Parking is already tight, and the parallel parking in front of the two buildings to the west of 202 Davidson is restricted (no parking between 8 am and 8 pm). This pushes cars further down the block, forcing residents from 202 now to park second cars further away. Taking away 8 perpendicular spaces will only exacerbate the problems residents face.

Public Safety Impact:

Real or perceived, people are more concerned about crime in Madison. In recent years liquor bottles and drug paraphernalia have been found around the neighborhood. Residents are concerned about walking down streets at night. If they have small children or are carrying a baby, they feel very vulnerable. More cars parked on the street makes the potential for ambush greater since someone can hide in or behind a car. Parking in front of the building greatly enhances safety and the sense of security.

Conclusion:

The parking provided by the two parking areas on Davidson continues to be needed. It enhances the lives of many who live on the street and makes it possible for families and seniors to live there who otherwise wouldn't. Removing the lots will increase congestion on the street and raise public safety issues. In the 50 plus years of existence no issues related to perpendicular parking were raised by the city. The city will not provide grandfathered status for the lots, nor will they allow the building owners to construct new lots away from the Hegg intersection because private lots are no longer allowed on the parkway. We would propose that the city install angle parking on the parkway in front of these buildings to alleviate congestion and enhance the safety and quality of life in the neighborhood.