

To: Urban Design Commission  
From: Bay Creek Neighborhood Association, Bay Creek, Madison 53715  
Re: 1202 South Park Street  
Date: September 27, 2018

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According to a survey conducted by BCNA in early 2018, 69.1 percent of Bay Creek neighbors believe it is important to have permanent supportive housing in the Bay Creek neighborhood with 17.3 percent opposed and the remainder neutral.

This should not be misinterpreted as satisfaction with Heartland's building plan, however. The following urban-design related concerns with the plans before you were communicated to Heartland and to the city prior to their submission to WHEDA.

- 1) Insufficient outdoor green space for recreational and health-related activities;
- 2) Insufficient parking for staff and residents;
- 3) Too-great density for the footprint of the development.

#### Insufficient On-site Green Space

Heartland is proposing 10,026 square feet of usable open space via a backyard and rooftop space. However, only 1,510 square feet of this open space will be grass; the remainder will be paved. The usable open space is only about 160 square feet per tenant—not much larger than an average bedroom.

In response to BCNA's survey question which asked respondents to rank the importance of including on-site green space for tenants' recreational and therapeutic uses, such as gardening at the proposed development at 1202, 62.7 percent said it was important (with 16.4 percent saying it was not important and 20.9 percent neutral). Bay Creek residents' belief that Heartland's permanent supportive housing development should include on-site green space is backed by a 2014 article retrieved from pubmed.gov entitled "The role of open space in urban neighbourhoods for health-related lifestyle." This article says that quality of life, especially from the perspective of the vulnerable users, depends on easily accessible green areas in close proximity to their homes, and that a lack of outdoor programs correlates with a poor variety of outdoor activities, limited to transition type, less time outdoors, and lower satisfaction with the home environment.

#### Lack of Onsite Parking

Heartland's proposal includes only 10 onsite surface parking stalls and bike storage for 60 bikes. Heartland suggests that most residents will use public transportation and will not have a need for parking spaces. However, at Rethke Terrace there is a demand for parking, especially when residents invite guests to spend the night. Heartland's plans also call for 1,200 square feet of store-front commercial space, which will generate the need for employee and customer parking. Bay Creek neighbors have come before the UDC again and again to speak out about the negative impact of new dense developments along Park Street on the limited and already overburdened street parking of nearby residential streets. Seventy-six percent of neighbors who responded to BCNA's survey think the parking proposed at 1202 S. Park Street is insufficient (with 17 percent neutral).

#### Too-Great Density

Current zoning for this site limits density to 8 residential units for either a mixed-use building or a multi-family dwelling. The proposed development will have 58 units (49 studios and 9 one-bedrooms), which is more than 7 times the allowed density. BCNA's survey did not include a question about density; however, neighbors have repeatedly brought concerns to the UDC about the negative impacts of too-great density on the neighborhood. The proposed density for this development translates into the above two concerns of too little parking and too little green space.

Furthermore, the density proposed by Heartland is viewed by some researchers of Housing First developments as counterproductive to integrating formerly homeless individuals into communities and to their successful transition out of homelessness because of the way in which it concentrates poverty. This concentration has led to negative consequences at both Rethke Terrace and Tree Lane, which have become troubled islands in their communities.

#### Too-Small Set Back

Heartland's February 2017 plans for 1202 S Park Street had a building setback of 8 feet from the existing 5-foot-wide sidewalk, thereby providing room for a wider sidewalk or green elements. The new plans released in August 2018 show a setback that varies from 1 foot to 2.3 feet from the existing sidewalk along the street and no terrace at all. This is not an adequate setback for this area of Park Street; nor is it in line with the emphasis of the UDC for creating a pleasant streetscape and one that is environmentally sustainable.

It is out of alignment with the prescriptions of the South Madison Neighborhood Plan and other relevant design plans to make Park Street a pedestrian-friendly street and to integrate it into the community. The Wingra BUILD plan calls for creating a wider public sidewalk space with a real terrace along this entire section of Park Street to create more pedestrian-friendly development in the future. As this section of Park Street will likely see ongoing development, it would be a mistake to have this building set the precedent for less rather than more streetside and sustainable space.

#### Back Balcony and Noise Concerns

The proposed plans show a balcony at the back of the building that directly faces private homes on Fish Hatchery Road. Neighbors who live here have come to BCNA and P&ED meetings to express their concerns about noise from these balconies having a negative impact on their quality of life. At the June 2018 Heartland Housing neighborhood meeting, the closest neighbor to 1202 S Park asked about the hours Heartland plans for the balcony to be open and the maximum number of people to be allowed on the balcony at one time. Heartland Housing had no response to these concerns.

Madison needs housing for its population that experiences homelessness. Housing First developments, which is what 1202 is supposed to be, have shown themselves to be successful around the country. But such developments must be carefully planned and must include elements, such as outdoor space, and careful, smooth integration into their communities to be successful. Heartland has not demonstrated success with its other Housing First developments in Madison (Rethke Terrace and Tree Lane). The UDC should carefully and thoroughly scrutinize the plans before you for their alignment with the South Madison Neighborhood Plan, the Wingra Build Plan, the South Park Corridor Plans, and the Urban Design District 7 Guidelines to ensure their alignment with the future we envision for Bay Creek.

## **HOUSING FIRST IN PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING – A PRIMER**

There are about 860 individuals without a home in Madison, and 270 have high needs that require permanent supportive services.

### **What is permanent supportive housing?**

Housing for people who have experienced chronic homelessness, psychiatric disabilities, or chronic health challenges, as well as for highly vulnerable homeless families.

### **How does the Housing First permanent supportive housing model work?**

Housing First is a highly successful permanent supporting housing model that moves people into housing immediately while simultaneously offering them wrap-around support. Successful programs employ highly skilled staff to encourage tenants to take part in services; however, there are no preconditions to tenancy, such as sobriety, good rental history, absence of convictions, or participation in support services. Tenants may be evicted.

### **What has gone wrong at Heartland Housing's Rethke Terrace developments?**

The majority of Heartland's tenants have been housed without receiving services. This is because:

- 1) Heartland's staffing has not been at levels sufficient to encourage Heartland's tenants to connect with intensive supportive services;
- 2) There has been repeated staff turnover; and
- 3) Heartland planned to provide the bulk of its social services to its Madison tenants through the county's Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) program, which requires recipients to be on Medicaid, have a diagnosed disorder, and a recovery plan. Many have not enrolled.

For Heartland's extremely vulnerable tenants, the failure to get the support that a successful Housing First program provides has had disastrous consequences, leading to violent behaviors and repeated police calls in an attempt to keep order at Rethke. We do not know if anyone has been evicted. Despite the fact that Heartland's developments are in violation of Conditional Use Standard #3 by "impeding the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property," the city has not yet come up with a strong enough solution to sanction Heartland's management or bring operations into alignment.

### **In Conclusion**

If permanent supportive housing in Madison is to expand to meet current need successfully, there must be significant political and economic support. Given the current uncertainty surrounding Medicaid funding, it is critical that the city and county find dollars for case managers that is diversified beyond Medicaid dollars. The city also might explore other, smaller-scale and scatter-site Housing First models to learn what these have to teach us about better integrating people who have been homeless into communities.