

To: City of Madison - Urban Design Commission, c/o Julie Cleveland

Date: May 21, 2020

We are writing regarding the proposed development at the VFW property on Sayles and Lakeside streets. We are decades long homeowners immediately adjacent to the proposed space. We would be directly affected by the proposed development. While we do not agree with the proposal as presented, we are not opposed to developments to create multiple use facilities that benefit our city as whole, and our neighborhood in specific. We want to take a moment to lay out specific concerns and suggest an alternative.

The Bay Creek neighborhood is unique, and a hidden gem among Madison's neighborhoods. There is a Montessori School a block and a half away from the proposed site serving families with small children. This real-world learning school educates children from approximately 18 months to 5 or 6 years old. Two and a half blocks in another direction is a K-2 school on Lakeside St; **Lakeside School** has been in its neighborhood location since **1895**.

The proposal as presented is comprised of studio and one-bedroom units in the \$1200-1500 range. This is designed to attract young, single, upwardly mobile individuals. However, there are other hi-tech areas of the city, some with currently developed on-site services, that are more attractive for this residential demographic.

Bay Creek is an attractive location for young families. It is a family neighborhood, where parents walk or bike their kids to school, and where families utilize the green space community offerings, or City facilities like the Goodman Pool and Recreational complex, or the ice rink. There is easy access to transportation options whether these are by foot, bike, bus, or car. One of the reasons that property values have risen in Bay Creek, and realtors are anxious for any properties that become available, is because of the smaller, family-friendly aspect of this cradled neighborhood.

To request zoning changes to create something that does fit with the long-term structure of the neighborhood is objectionable. As proposed, it appears that the benefits of the development accrue to one or a few private individuals, with the City receiving some ancillary benefits, such as tax revenue. The costs and the burdens are placed on the neighborhood residents, and if there are benefits to the neighborhood residents, we don't see them. Residents, and the families that use the schools, would be affected.

We personally, and our neighbors as well, would be the most heavily impacted by the proposed development. In photo 1, our house is two houses below the house with the green roof. Immediately behind the site are 3 non-owner occupied, multiple dwelling-space rental properties, a single owner occupied house, and ours. On the other side of our house are some retired homeowners, at least one of which is not even aware of the development. While the non-resident owners of the rental properties may have no personal impacts from the development, the renters and homeowners do.

The five-story building would require rezoning. While the developer would pay off their costs of development and start generating significant profit quickly if able to fill the units proposed, current residents are negatively impacted. We expect our property values to fall significantly as this would lead to similar development along all of Sayles Street. Our ability to sell our home and pass on our improvements to a new generation of ownership would be much lower. A high density, gigantic building with 106 residents would infringe on our privacy, since they would literally look into our rooms and currently semi-secluded backyard. We chose to purchase our house long ago because of the privacy afforded in the neighborhood. The proposal also has a rooftop park/recreational area planned. While I have no issues with younger

folks having fun and partying, it does not fit into the family orientation of this neighborhood. Lots of noise and light pollution is inevitable. Refuse collection and people impact would increase, at different hours of the day. Again, there are already current areas of the city where this type of development would be a better fit both for the proposed resident demographic, and the communities they are situated in.

This brings us to the other area of concern. At a meeting with the developer, when requested to point out benefits for the neighborhood from the development, we heard about Madison's need to accommodate projected growth. Things were stated like "nobody wants to have development near them, but the city needs it. The edges of neighborhoods are best for development. John Nolen Dr is being looked at as a feeder development corridor. The city has to plan and accommodate an influx of 70,000 people by a certain time. We will end up with property costs like California."

Since no neighborhood or resident benefits were given, let's look at the city benefits from our neighborhood in the perspective of the city as a whole. One of us is a 30- year Madison resident, the other a life-time resident, and we are active community members with a deep love and caring for this place, and a shared sense of responsibility. The Bay Creek area, and especially the area immediately adjacent to the proposed development, bear an inordinate share of responsibility and sacrifice for our Madison community. We will list a few, but all could be elaborated on significantly. We also invite you to contact us for a walk around the neighborhood to view these matters first-hand.

The neighborhood bears a substantial load for the activities on Willow Island and Olin Park. Sound systems often heavily impact the neighborhood from early until late, as do fireworks in the evening at multiple events. These events create considerable strain on traffic and street parking. Most charity walks, and various races go through the neighborhood, and some seriously affect movement for neighborhood residents as streets are closed. We have had a long-term neighborly relationship with the VFW. While many different groups rent the hall, those folks are mostly no problem for the neighborhood. The owners never let anything get too out of hand. Sometimes there is some drama outside that the residents witness, and it is sometimes fueled by alcohol, but there has never been violence or danger to our knowledge. We have had more issue with large alcohol-centric events on Willow Island or Olin Park. On multiple occasions, highly intoxicated people lean on posts or parked cars and publicly urinate at or around our house.

The neighborhood has multiple active rail lines and Olin Ave serves as a connection for emergency vehicles serving the hospitals.

The city facilities on Sayles Street are generally good neighbors. That entire area was built on land fill long after houses were constructed on Colby Street, starting with the first home in 1900, when the neighborhood was platted. The City built a drainage system to divert water to a drain on Van Duesen between Sayles and Colby streets. The city has not maintained the drainage system, which results in seasonal flooding and mosquito breeding in the back yards for most of the houses on the East side of Colby St. This was further complicated when ATT constructed a switching station that blocked the drainage ditch. We have personally hand-dug the drainage system to alleviate the issues. There have been issues regarding city facilities' snow and plant removal efforts, as well as light pollution.

Our neighborhood also bore the burden of the City's efforts to compost brush. Depending on which way the wind blows, the facility reduces air quality in the neighborhood dramatically. This increased when the City removed trees along the creek, that altered wind flow and also masked the unsightly facility at the end of Colby Street.

The point of listing all this is not to create a complaint document. We are community members. We know that living in community means making compromises for the benefit of the whole. The purpose is to show how we are already contributing mightily, inordinately so for such a small section of a small neighborhood. What we are saying is, if a development is for the city's good rather than the uplifting of a neighborhood, and we look at the city as a whole, how do we compare to other neighborhoods in the city? If we want to develop a corridor into town in this area, what about the Park St corridor that had already been slated for more development, and would be more appropriate for the proposed five-story apartment complex targeting singles?

There is also another possible option. There is a collection of buildings on the north side of Olin Ave just west of the Wonder Bar, across Olin Ave from Willow Island. Tenancy in these buildings has changed a lot over the years, and some appears unused. One of the members of city government at that meeting appeared to have some knowledge of the city's involvement in at least part of this area. Photo 1 shows the proposed site, photo #2 shows the Olin Ave site, and photos 3 is a larger scale view that shows both sites. At least part of the ownership of the Olin Ave site appears to be by long time Madison residents and community contributors, the De Havens. The family has had a successful venture with the remodel of the Sons of Norway facility on Winnebago Avenue. Perhaps they may want to join in the development?

This area is much larger than the site under consideration. It is truly an entrance into the neighborhood; immediately past this parcel is the creek beyond which the neighborhood begins and the speed limit drops by 10 MPH. The larger space would accommodate the proposed development and more. This would increase revenue significantly and likely reduce costs per square foot. It would also allow the developer to offer two or 3-bedroom units, or condos, allowing for a better fit for what people look to Bay Creek for. There would be room for more **retail** space, office space for displaced current offices, more units to better balance single and family rental space, and more potential for low-income housing. With a little effort and ingenuity, it could blend into the neighborhood environmentally and economically, showcasing existing long-term businesses like the Wonder Bar. The location also alleviates many of the concerns with the original site such as traffic, parking and potential water concerns, as well. This could be made into a gem of Madison development, showcasing neighborhood/city partnerships to the benefit of both, leading the way towards future strategic planning.

Bob, Michelle, and Sean Stone
1101 Colby St
Bay Creek
stone.mahng@gmail.com
608.215.3718

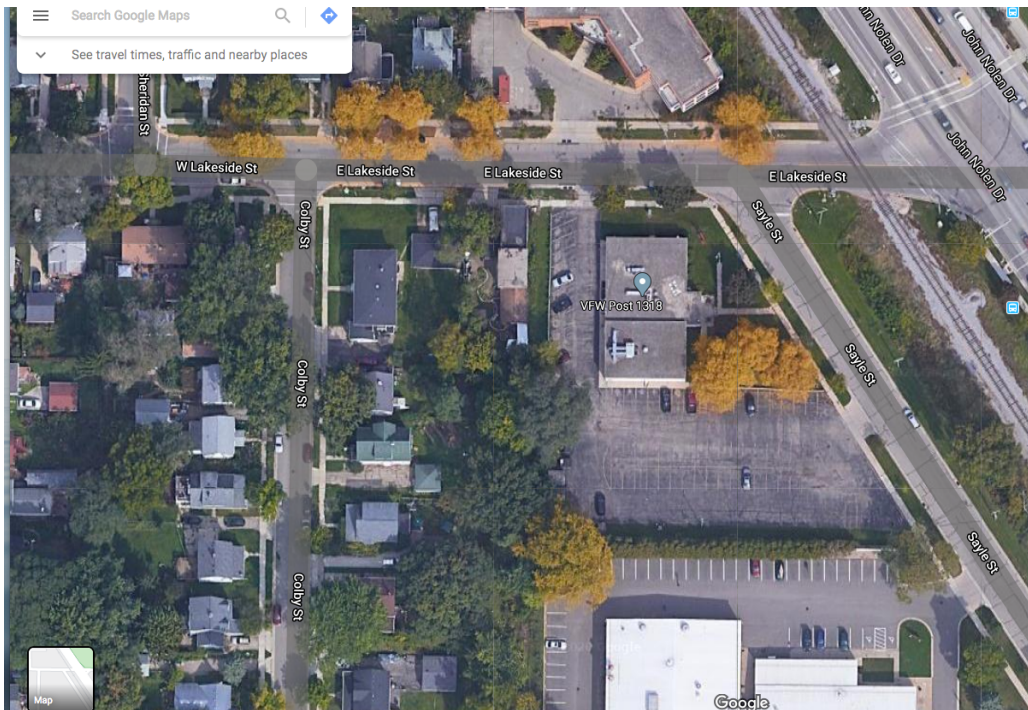


Photo #1 - the proposed site at Sayles and Lakeside, showing Colby Street homes

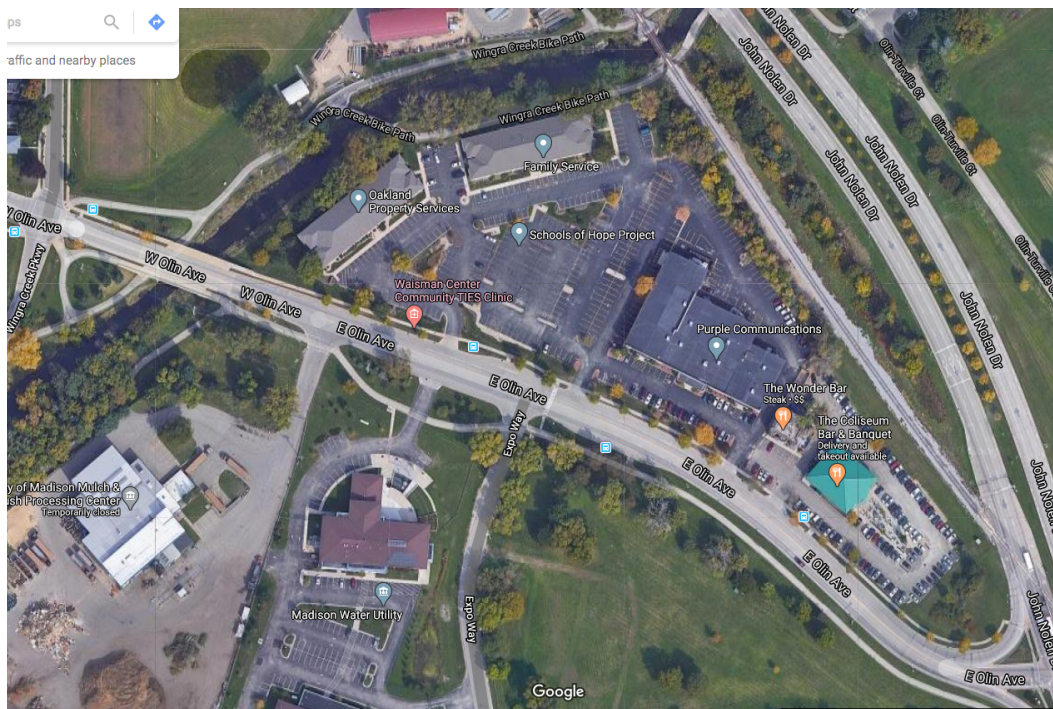


Photo #2 - showing an alternative site at Olin and John Nolan

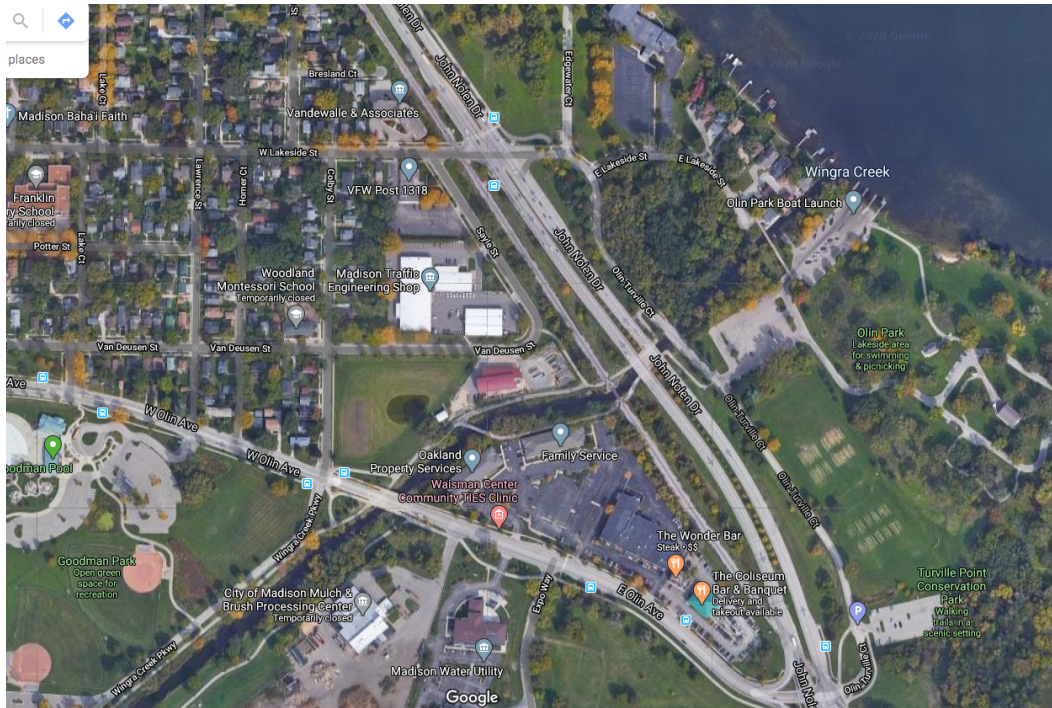


Photo #3-an overview of the area discussed

The recently revised plans are an improvement over the original plans however I still have the following concerns:

Overall exterior appearance of this proposed redevelopment

Glad to see these plans show fewer all white areas as part of the exterior of the building compared to the original plans. However, I would prefer no white and to use earth tones of tan, brown, and reddish brown for the exterior. Not a fan of white or gray bricks or buildings that are mostly shades of white and gray. Most bricks with some history behind them are cream to brown to reddish brown in color.

I am also not a fan of the many buildings being proposed and approved in Madison lately that have entire exteriors in shades of white, gray, and black. This makes the building look stark and cold. We should go back to warm earth tone colors. I don't want to live in a world that is all shades of gray. There is a reason why movies went from black and white to color. Warm earth tones make a place seem warm and alive but gray tones have a cold and dead look.

I do not like the look of the fake varnished wood metal panels on this building. Would prefer siding styles that blend with the character of this neighborhood. There are numerous other styles of durable metal siding for urban buildings that are attractive. As the son of a carpenter and woodworker myself, I can't stand all the fake woodgrain that is being used in the world today. Fake painted wood siding with an imprinted wood grain is more tolerable but the proposed imitation varnished wood siding just screams fake.

Windows and doors

The design calls for composite windows but does not specify the type of construction. Composite windows with aluminum clad exteriors would be much more durable. Dark colored composite exterior windows can be more prone to accelerated deterioration due to solar radiation. For that reason, aluminum clad composite windows hold up better in the long run compared to composite windows having fiberglass and resin based exteriors. Some cheaper composite windows even have a vinyl exterior cladding and should be avoided.

Rooftop lookouts

Why are there lookouts on the roof of the 4th floor? This rooftop is not designed for use by tenants. I don't even see a stairway or elevator to this rooftop on the plans. How do maintenance workers get up there? My guess is these lookouts serve no use other than to attempt to accent the corners of the building. But I feel these fake lookout areas and support structures are ugly and unnecessarily make the building about 6 feet taller in these areas. I suppose these lookouts could be used someday to mount machine gun nests to protect this building from marauding criminals when this country decays into anarchy and civil war due to the incompetence of our current leaders. But really, I feel these lookouts are totally unnecessary and should be eliminated.

Patio area and greenspace

I certainly hope that the commercial area is not allowed to use the patio space on top of the parking structure as outside seating space. This patio faces the back yards of single family homes on adjoining lots and would not be an appropriate location for commercial outdoor dining or entertainment. The patio area over the parking structure is also much higher in elevation than the adjacent homes allowing any noise from the patio area to carry further.

The usable greenspace for this project is improved slightly from the previous plans. The greenspace along the west property line should have a walkway leading from the back plaza area rear stairway to the surface parking lot and also from this stairway southward and around the southwest corner of the parking structure to the parking ramp entrance. This will allow tenants to actually access the rear greenspace and walk around without causing muddy foot trails in the grass. If this apartment complex allows dogs then this area will be heavily used. Also, if dogs are allowed, please put dog waste stations near the main and secondary entrances.

The greenspace along Sayle Street consists mostly of groupings of tiny shrubs and bushes set in beds covered with 1-1/2 inch diameter stone as a ground cover. This is your typical sterile commercial landscaping. Not much green about it at all at ground level. For all proposed tree and shrub plantings please use sufficient black topsoil over a permeable clay subsoil to provide sufficient soil structure for the growth of healthy plants. I prefer real grass or shredded bark mulch as ground cover instead of 1-1/2 inch stone along Sayle Street.

The 8 massive stairways to heaven, I mean main entrances to the 7 first floor apartment units and one stairwell on the Sayle Street side of the building, are overpowering in their presence and height. It looks like the architect made a mistake and built the basement level too high and they just decided to add the massive stairways and call it good enough. But consider this. If the developer and the city could work together to master plan this entire block of Sayle Street and regrade the street along with the intersection with Lakeside Street the huge stairwells could be eliminated or reduced to one or two steps. If the grade of Lakeside Street would rise from elevation 850 at the northwest corner of the VFW property to elevation 854 at the railroad tracks more quickly so that most of the regraded sidewalk along the north property line is around elevation 852 or higher and around 854 or higher along the east property line then the stairways don't need to be so tall. This regrading of the surrounding area and streets could make the area look less like a rural railroad crossing with a hump at the tracks. The weed filled ditch on the east side of Sayle Street could be filled and replaced with a culvert and this whole area would look more appealing to the eye.

Parking Structure

If pets will be allowed, a dog washing station in the parking structure would be a great addition and are becoming a standard feature in new multi-unit residential buildings. Consider the water damage that could result if all the dog owners use their bathtubs or shower stalls for dog baths instead.

Where will the parking exhaust fans be located? Please find the quietest parking garage fans known to mankind to install here. These fans should not be audible to building tenants or nearby neighbors who choose to have open windows during nice weather. Same advice goes for the HVAC units on the building roof. Low noise units are more expensive but worth it for both the building tenants and neighbors.

The John Nolen Drive Corridor needs a new master plan to guide redevelopment in this area

The design and construction of any proposed building at 133 E. Lakeside should be postponed until the city finalizes a new master plan for the JND corridor. The city is proposing to reconstruct JND from Law Park over the causeway and as far as the Olin Avenue intersection and perhaps further south in the near future. Piecemeal redevelopment over the past 15 years has already compromised the potential redevelopment of this gateway to Madison. I ask that the developer postpone redevelopment of this land parcel until a new master plan for the corridor is completed.

I believe a much better redeveloped Sayle Street area could materialize if the developer could be patient and wait for the city to relocate the traffic engineering operations on Sayle Street to another location in the city. The potential of both parcels joined together as one planned development is huge. Picture a grouping of multiple mixed use buildings of various heights from three stories up to 8 stories or more all utilizing one larger and more efficient parking structure this is incorporated into the mix of buildings. The taller buildings would be constructed of concrete and steel and rest on steel piles that would be driven into the sandstone bedrock that lies about 30 feet below the ground surface in this area. The taller part of the complex would be located near the intersection of Sayle Street and Van Duesen to be further from the single family homes on Colby Street. The traffic engineering storage building along the creek could be converted into a canoe, kayak, and bicycle rental facility.

It is important to include a mix of housing in this area that includes both affordable housing and market rate housing. Madison needs to do better at providing affordable housing and developers need to help make that happen. I believe a larger planned redevelopment that utilizes both properties on Sayle Street would be far superior to the current redevelopment plans in reaching that goal.

Thank you for your time to review my concerns,
Ron Shutvet
Madison WI
July 29, 2020