

To: Regent Neighborhood Association, Alder Shiva Bidar-Sielaff

Re: University Avenue Corridor Comments

I have lived in the University Avenue corridor for 29 years. I lived three years at 2120 University Ave. from 1978-1981. I've lived twenty-five years at 1910 Birge Terrace. I work on the UW-Madison campus. I walk, take the bus or occasionally take a cab for transit.

Age of buildings: Many older buildings in the University Avenue corridor were built in the 1920's. If they've been reasonably kept up, these may be better quality construction than later buildings, even if they lack some amenities. They are also part of the look and charm of the area which ties in with the beautiful, historic residences in University Heights and the First Congregational Church. The UW-Madison campus is preserving its' older buildings and knocking down the buildings built in the 1960's which were built fast and cheap (and before the energy crisis of the 1970's).

Business/Retail: Small, owner-on-site businesses seem to do well. There seems to be a lot of empty retail space in the new buildings. My guess is the rent is too expensive for a new start-up.

Competition for renters: There have been 4 large new apartments buildings built in the corridor since I've been here, plus the new construction currently going on in the 1800 University Ave. block. In addition, there have been several large buildings built in the area near Gorham and State St, plus several large, new dorms on the UW-Madison campus.

Cost/Act 10: Many people living in the University Avenue corridor are renters who are UW-students (especially graduate students) and UW or state or UW-hospital employees. These people took a financial hit during the last state budget cycle, especially those making lower salaries. A 12% pay cut is much worse if you make \$25,000-\$35,000 than if you make \$70,000. This is particularly true for single people living on one income. These people are prime renters for one-bedroom or studio apartments in the corridor.

Cost/Heating: When I lived in a building built in the 1960's, I had electric baseboard heat. It was expensive; in addition, I was always cold in the winter. I also lived in two different houses in the Vilas/Regent neighborhood. They were rentals and they were never insulated. I was always cold in the winter. The heat is included in the rent where I live now. Even though the steam heat is dry, I'm generally warm. The UW-Madison uses steam heat. It's more efficient.

Cost/ Parking/New construction: Rent is not cheap in this area, but I do not own a vehicle. The new zoning which took effect in January 2013 allows for bigger buildings. These buildings usually include heated underground parking. Even if you don't own a vehicle, you will still subsidize this type of parking.

Flexibility/Landlord: One way my landlord adapted to the increased rental competition was to allow dogs about 10 years ago. Currently three out of five renters in the building have a dog. All of them are

larger breeds. There is always one Vet Med student in the building. Most renters do not have the option to have a dog, especially a larger animal.

Front-yard parking. Our building sits behind a closed circle - Birge Terrace. Parking is in front. Eliminating this could make it much harder to rent the building. Even if parking were moved to the back, there's not enough space for a stall for each apartment. It makes a difference where the lot line is. Also, the underground gas pipes prevent covering the parking area with a uniform asphalt drive.

Greenspace/Animals/People: There is greenspace NOW along Campus Drive and the along the backs of several buildings at Birge Terrace. There are always a pair of cardinals living in the area. I see lots of squirrels and birds in the trees along Campus Drive. I have seen a red-tailed hawk fly over hunting for food while I was sitting in the backyard reading. The zoning plan doesn't specify building setbacks for Campus Drive, only for the south side which faces the University Heights area. This current greenspace will be lost under new construction.

There are small yards in the back of some of the buildings. In the summer, people are out grilling and enjoying the little bit of yard available. Our building, in particular, has a nice patio in back. There is more privacy since the traffic on Campus Drive is blocked off and we are not right on University Avenue.

Landlord: My landlord has owned the building about 30 years. He has personally lived in the building at different times, but currently owns and lives in a house on the east side.

Livability: I've spent 25 years in the same one-bedroom apartment versus three years in a studio down the street. Guess which one is more livable? Location and bus service are similar for both. My current apartment was built in the 1920's. It has beautiful hardwood floors (although it lacks other amenities like a dishwasher and air conditioning). The apartment has a lot of natural light. There is a window in every room.

Noise: In my building, the people on the Campus Drive side get the worst of the traffic noise. I live on the road side of the Birge Terrace circle. I get the noise from residents pulling into or out of their parking space. On the weekends, we can hear night traffic on University Avenue on the next block over.

There is also noise from the large UW Foundation building - the building's HVAC compressors are on the back/side of the building adjacent to the Birge Terrace circle. My upstairs' neighbor moved a year ago due to this noise. He was home during the day trying to study and couldn't have his windows open during the summer. Since this is the south side of the building, it can get quite hot.

Parking: Parking is a major issue in this area. This building was built in the 1920's when the area was much less congested. There are five apartments and four parking spots (in the front of the building). The only reason the parking works is because I do not have a vehicle. My neighbors usually own cars and if it's a couple, they usually own TWO cars. They do walk, bike and take the bus, but they always have the car. The expectation that people are not going to own cars is unrealistic. International students tend to be the main exception-they don't already own a car when they come to town. In

addition, if you have guests, parking is frequently an issue - especially since the space behind the small UW building next to the UW Foundation was blocked off. This used to be available at night and on weekends.

Traffic: During the 29 years I've lived in this area, traffic has increased substantially. I think it's due to several things: 1) increased building on the west end of campus, 2) increased development on the west side of Madison 3) increased development in the Univ. Ave. corridor itself. The road improvements last summer have helped. It's easier to cross the street in the crosswalks, but there's still heavy traffic. The bus stop going west is also less convenient. The new zoning which took effect in January 2013 allows for bigger buildings. The traffic will only get worse. Has there been any kind of city traffic survey before and after the improvements? (I just got a card Saturday, March 9 about a traffic survey).

Zoning: My block was scheduled to change zoning in January 2013 to a higher density which I did not even realize until I ran across the Regent Neighborhood Association plan last fall just before Christmas. This block in particular seems to be the block "the neighborhood" is willing to sacrifice. With higher density buildings, parking and traffic problems will only get worse.

Suggestions:

Bike Traffic Using the Corridor:

1. I don't use my bike for transit, so there are many people who do who would have better suggestions. I usually bike out towards the Lakeshore Path or the Southwest bike trail. City bike racks in the business areas are a good idea. New larger buildings should have interior dedicated bike storage.

Car/Vehicle Traffic Using the Corridor:

1. The corridor needs highway signs near the Univ. Ave. /Campus Drive/Breese Terrace intersection indicating the route to UW Hospital - and along University Avenue. I am often stopped on the sidewalk by people in cars asking for directions to the UW Hospital. They usually seem to be coming from the east and get confused once they are on University Avenue. I noted that there are blue signs coming from the west pointing to the UW Hospital parking (Walnut St.)
2. Map and/or information kiosk accessible by car (with car turn out?) somewhere in the corridor.
3. Large vehicles. There is traffic going to the Vet School clinic. These people are pulling big animal trailers behind their vehicles. There is a lot of small and large truck traffic during the day delivering to local businesses. There are a lot of pickup trucks and moving vans during August move-out, move-in. Occasionally, there is a very large commercial moving van in the corridor. Recently, there have been a lot of large construction vehicles due to the construction on the 1800 block. I don't have a suggestion for this large vehicle traffic, but I don't think you can get it off University Avenue. There's nowhere else to go. For many vehicles, their destination is somewhere in the University Avenue corridor.

Foot Traffic Using the Corridor:

1. Walnut Street overpass. IMPROVE LIGHTING. Don't spend money on a mural (I like art, but it's wasted here). A nice two-tone paint color could brighten and beautify underneath the overpass and is much easier to maintain. Foot, bike and car traffic has increased a lot over the last 30 years. I don't like walking under this overpass at night because it's so dark, even in early evening during fall and winter.
2. V - intersection of Campus Drive and University Ave. at west end of corridor (2500N block). I walk by this area frequently. There is a lot of fast traffic on Campus Drive. I suggest a low flower planting at the point of the V. Planting flowering trees similar to the trees near the First Congregational Church and Latter Day Saints buildings would screen some of the Campus Drive traffic, lower the noise and also reflect the plantings at the other end of the corridor. Some benches would make a nice lunch spot in the summer.
3. Alicia Ashman bridge. This would be a nice spot for any sculptural artwork. A campus map/info kiosk would be good here. Benches and flower plantings would be inviting. I do not think food carts are a good idea. I doubt there is enough traffic. Many people in this area live close enough to go home for lunch. Why spend additional money to eat out? I eat in one of the campus delis or take lunch (the latter a lot more since Act 10).
4. There was a second bridge over Campus Drive planned some time ago. I don't think the original spot on Birge Terrace was a good idea. The bridge needs to be further west (about halfway between the Alicia Ashman bridge and Walnut St.) It's a long walk around.
5. It's hard to make suggestions for the mid-section of the corridor without knowing who owns what and what their plans are. I'd like to note the Octopus car-wash has the best flowers along the University Ave. corridor. Their effort is very much appreciated. The area next to Lombardino's also has nice flowers. The Sushi box added a small outdoor dining area for summer. The Blue Moon has a nice outdoor dining area. The Best Western has a great outdoor dining area, but they are not open as late for breakfast on the weekend as they used to be. Maybe this will change with the new UW-hospital ownership.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I will plan to come to the Tuesday, March 12 meeting at West High School.

Patricia O'Callaghan
1910 Birge Terrace
Madison, WI 53726
