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We attended the July 16 meeting for the East Madison Business District Land Use Analysis and are excited about the zoning changes proposed for this increasingly vibrant neighborhood.

### **Area 9**

We bought our house in Area 9 four years ago because we loved the location, and the small, densely-packed early-1900s houses. Unfortunately, many of them have been neglected, including ours, which was a crack house before we bought it. In addition, the layout of most homes in the area includes little space by today's standards for such things as kitchens and bathrooms.

We have, coincidentally to the rezoning proposals, been planning a remodel for our small 1907 house. Since the lot is only 30 by 70 feet, typical for our block, current SF5000 zoning does not allow best use of the space. Our house is only allowed as is because it was there before SF5000 zoning was imposed. Our plans would get a huge boost in flexibility by the four extra feet of backyard lot coverage allowed under RSL.

SF5000 zoning is much more appropriate for less dense, newer, more outlying areas than the heart of the Central Area Residential Urban Village. As demand for this rapidly developing neighborhood increases, so will demand for restorations with modest additions to add space for today's lifestyles. RSL is a perfect complement to this need.

Not only does RSL anticipate and allow for future needs, but it also acknowledges the historical land use patterns in the area. Most homes are built closer together and often on smaller lots than even this modest zoning change would allow. It is silly for our zoning to pretend we have 5000 square foot suburban lots in the center of what has been a dense urban neighborhood for a hundred years.

For the same reasons it was built densely in the early 1900s – inexpensive homes close to downtown and capitol hill – it makes even more sense now that typical commutes have stretched into hours per week and cause major congestion on overused roads. My wife and I both walk to our downtown jobs every day. We could not afford to buy a home that close if we had to purchase more than twice the lot to do it.

An additional component of the zoning proposals calls for T and C designations for RSL. Tandem and Cottage housing are perfect complements to the existing character of the neighborhood. One of the most appealing things about our block, and a major reason we were attracted to it when we bought it, is the Pine Street Cottages condominium project. As I mentioned in the meeting, I have met people who have tagged notes on every cottage door hoping to find an owner willing to sell – with no success. That proves to me they are no blight on

our neighborhood. In fact, they show the questionable wisdom of our current Texas-sized-lot zoning requirements.

Some neighbors along 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue seemed amenable to the RSL designation, but opposed to the T and C amendments. While I disagree that the tandem and cottage housing would have a negative impact on our neighborhood overall, allowing them is less of a priority than allowing better use of the residences already here. There are only a few lots that would even be big enough to divide as cottages or tandem homes anyway, so the likely impact will be small no matter what. Even so, it makes more sense to allow more smaller houses than to have the old housing stock on large lots torn down to make way for the inevitable McMansions that would otherwise be built.

### **Areas 8 and 10**

Areas 8 and 10 are both on arterials with many larger sized lots. Upzoning to L3 is a good idea to encourage density close to the Madison business district. Area 10 makes more sense, because of the major arterial 23rd provides, than area 8, which has a much more residential minor arterial on 20<sup>th</sup>. Both seem like good candidates, though. Some of the homes on 23<sup>rd</sup>, although otherwise lovely old houses needing various amounts of repair, seem out of place on such a busy street. Allowing the less valuable, presumably more run-down homes, to be replaced by structures that better conform with the existing use of the street would be a good idea for future development.

### **Area 4**

Area 4 is so close to the main business corridor, it makes sense to allow denser development, if for no other reason than to transition to the less-dense adjacent areas. NC2/R-40 is a better fit than L4, because of the possibility of including businesses that tie in with Madison. The area bounded by 20<sup>th</sup>, Madison, and Denny is especially appropriate for density, and wouldn't be out of line as NC3-65. Due to the speed of the growth that is planned or otherwise bound to happen, other neighbors may be opposed to that radical scope of change, however. NC2/R-40 is probably a better transition to the adjacent areas.

### **Area 2**

I am softly opposed to rezoning Area 2 down from NC3-85 to NC3-65, although most people we know support it. We may well have bought our house next to a Lower-Queen-Anne- or Broadway-type neighborhood if it were available. As it stands, we live in an area that could soon have many of the vibrant, pedestrian-oriented businesses that make a destination neighborhood vital and fun. Higher buildings allow for the scale of housing that supports that kind of neighborhood without necessitating destruction of the existing scale of surrounding areas. We are already getting what appears to be an attractively-designed project that takes advantage of the entire height allowance, although we sympathize with the homeowners directly to the North, who will lose almost all direct sunlight as a result.

That said, community consensus, including Mica and our neighbors, is for the lower zoning. The area has been dormant to new development for years, and it seems a little disingenuous now for landowners to suddenly want the entire development potential. Sixty five feet is still pretty tall, and allows a lot of flexibility.

### **Area 3a**

Because of the massive shadow that will come from developing Area 2, Area 3a could use an upgrade to build at least up to the shadow line. It is hard to accept that some of the beautiful old homes there will probably be torn down, since they could really shine with nice restorations, but

they are probably doomed anyway in the long run. The area will just be too valuable to support them after Madison is redeveloped.

### **Area 3b**

Area 3b is clear of the shadow line imposed by Area 2, and is already zoned L-3. Most of the current housing there is pretty run down, but represents some really nice old architecture. Zoning too high may doom those old houses unnecessarily, which would be a shame. A big part of the appeal of the Central Area is the old architecture. Preserving some near the Central Area urban village would be an asset. As the area gets more attractive, there will be greater incentive to renovate the existing houses as well as replace them.

### **Areas 5 and 6**

The proposals for these areas are natural extensions to existing land use codes.

### **Traffic**

One of the main reasons this stretch of Madison is so ripe for development is that it is already a nice four-lane arterial, connected to 23<sup>rd</sup>, also a nice wide arterial. Madison could use more parking and wider sidewalks, but it is quite adequate for traffic growth even as it is.

Unfortunately, small, one-lane, two-way neighborhood access streets are currently carrying an undue amount of burden from existing traffic, and will almost certainly get more as development continues.

It is critical that traffic planning be done to funnel cars onto the major arterials, and off of the side streets. That is the single biggest challenge facing this neighborhood as it faces an otherwise bright future.

### **Conclusion**

Sprawl is bad, and density is good, even within built-up neighborhoods. The affluence and quantity of traffic coming through the section of Madison being reviewed, as well as the density of neighboring areas, combined with easy access to downtown, Capitol Hill (including the newly bustling Pike/Pine corridor), and both 90 and 520, make it a natural and inevitable future center of culture and commerce for the city as a whole.

Infill development has reached a critical mass, making the time for change now. Wise zoning could make or break this development, and the changes being proposed are good overall.

There are some property owners in the neighborhood who will have their views or parking adversely affected because of adjacent development, although it is not clear the proposed changes will cause more harm than is allowed under current zoning. In any event, the likely reduction in crime and increase in convenience and enjoyment allowed by the scale of development already going in will result in an overall gain.

Others will be forced out as prices rise to meet the new desirability that will come with this change. Allowing denser development creates the potential, at least, of adding some affordable housing to offset this loss. It is reasonable for the people living here to give up some of the space we have enjoyed in order to accommodate the needs of the people who will pay for our increased convenience and property values. This is not a time to play the NIMBY game about density, especially as we stand to benefit greatly from it.

We are encouraged that the DCLU has taken the initiative to tackle this issue. The department deserves a lot of credit for it. We will continue to follow the zoning changes as they occur, and we trust our input will be considered.

Thank you.

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