



July 31, 2015

Village of Maple Bluff Plan Commission  
 c/o Tim Krueger, Village Administrator  
 18 Oxford Place  
 Madison, WI 53704

Re: Review of Planned Unit Development District (PUD) General Development Plan (GDP) for Maple Bluff Residences

Dear Plan Commission:

This letter reviews the proposed 38-unit apartment building at the southwest corner of Roxbury Road and North Sherman Avenue. The project has been reviewed with respect to the Village's PUD-GDP ordinance (§ 225-43.1 of Village ordinances) and for general compliance with the Village's Comprehensive Plan.

**Project Overview**

The applicant proposes to construct 38 dwelling units in a 3-story building on approximately 0.9 acres. The adjoin table contains the proposed residential unit mix. The project also contains 39 sub-grade parking stalls and 22 surface stalls, for a total of 61 vehicle parking stalls.

Unit Type	Proposal # Units
1 BR Loft	1
1 BR	19
1 BR+Den	1
2 BR Loft	4
2 BR	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>

The proposal illustrates a three story building along North Sherman Avenue, stepping down to two stories with a roof deck along the west side of the building. The building is set back 18 feet from Roxbury Road and 11 feet along North Sherman Avenue. The two-story portion of the building is set back approximately 25 feet from the westerly property line and the three story portion is setback about 48 feet from the westerly property line. Natural greenspace comprises the majority of the buffer between the building and the adjoining single-family properties. Residents would access the common building entrance from Roxbury Road to the north and the surface parking lot to the south. The site and building plans also illustrate eight units with separate exterior first floor entrances. Access to the sub-grade parking is from a ramp along the southwest edge of the building. The applicant also submitted building floor plans, site plans, parking plans, and landscape plans in accordance with the PUD General Development Plan (GDP) requirements. Page 3 of this letter summarizes the GDP submittal in a comparative review of § 225.43.1 of the municipal code.

**2025 Village Comprehensive Plan**

The Village Comprehensive Plan, prepared by Schireber/Anderson Associates and adopted in May 2003, contains goals, objectives, and policies for housing and land use that are relevant to the proposed project. Specifically:

### Housing

Goal: New residential development in the neighborhoods will be designed to incorporate or improve upon essential existing positive qualities—such as proportion and shape, pattern of building and yards, orientation to street and building materials and styles.

- Objective: To promote a high quality of site planning and architecture.
- Objective: To plan for a variety of housing choices, including senior housing, empty nester housing and condominiums.
- Policy: Amend existing zoning to allow for developments that include multi-family units where appropriate.

### Economic Development

- Objective: Upgrade commercial properties, as they represent the gateway to the community.
- Objective: Use landscaping to enhance the commercial area, including its parking lots, and buffer neighboring residences.
- Policy: Prohibit suburban style strip developments along Sherman and N. Sherman Avenues.
- Policy: Consider providing financial incentives to property owner to redevelop or renovate existing commercial properties along N. Sherman Avenue through the creation of tax incremental financing districts.

### Land Use

Goal: The Village will promote an overall pattern of development that reflects the vision of the community by maintaining a visually appealing, safe, walkable and bicycle friendly atmosphere.

- Objective: To structure future development to facilitate bicycle and pedestrian travel.
- Objective: To plan and maintain Maple Bluff's streets and walkways as attractive public spaces.
- Objective: To ensure that all new residential and commercial development will contribute to the character of Maple Bluff as a unique place and complement existing surroundings.
- Policy: Commercial, mixed use and infill projects shall consist of high quality designs and building materials, and be pedestrian-scaled and compatible with adjacent land uses.
- Policy: Redeveloped and expanded commercial/mixed-use areas shall be subjected to high standards of site design in relation to surrounding areas so as to provide safe, visually pleasing vehicle and pedestrian access without compromising the character and appearance of the built and natural environments.
- Policy: Mixed-use developments along Sherman Avenue and N. Sherman Avenue should include uses specifically supportive of the surrounding neighborhoods such as small retail stores, offices, coffee shops, restaurants or similar uses. These land uses shall be generally compatible with the scale and intensity of existing commercial/mixed use development in the Village and shall enhance or improve the architectural and visual quality of the Village.

### Land Use Plan

The Village's Future Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan identifies surrounding area in question for future commercial/mixed-use development.

### **Village Gateway Redevelopment Concept and Implementation Strategy Plan**

The Village Gateway Redevelopment Concept and Implementation Strategy Plan, prepared by Vandewalle & Associates, Inc and adopted in May 2008, contains conceptual redevelopment visions the Village Gateway area immediately adjacent to the proposed site. The plan did not create specific policy recommendations for this site, but it did make several references to the site as a possible future mixed-use redevelopment sites.

Vierbicher notes that not each property within the comprehensive plan and gateway plan must be a complete mix of commercial and residential uses. The Village simply needs to be mindful of the greater mix of uses within the redevelopment area; therefore, the construction of multi-family units does not preclude the upgrading of commercial properties immediately surrounding the site to mixed use. Holding the corner with residential uses could provide a buffer to the single family neighborhood to the

west and would spur additional redevelopment to the northeast in the Village Gateway area. Generally the proposed apartment project is responsive to the goals, objectives, and policies contained in the Village's Comprehensive Plan and Village Gateway Redevelopment Concept and Implementation Strategy Plan.

### **Proposed Project Development Site**

The Village's PUD ordinance requires a two-step zoning process where an applicant provides general information as part of the GDP and additional details in the required Specific Implementation Plan (SIP).

### **Existing Site**

A vacant parcel and a vacant building currently make up the existing site. The vacant building is old and approaching obsolescence in today's commercial market. The site does not contain greenspace, has two large curb cuts, and does not have a buffer between customer parking and the sidewalk that creates a dangerous situation along the Sherman Avenue frontage. A former gas station on the corner lot caused soil and groundwater contamination, while the site has received a cleanup closure letter from the DNR, residual contamination and the site's brownfield status presents additional barriers to redevelopment even beyond typical challenges. Any redevelopment must comply with DNR regulations pertaining to disturbing a capped brownfield site (i.e. proper soil removal and disposal).

### **General Overview**

The proposed building elevations and materials list are generally consistent with other recent apartment redevelopment in and around the Madison area. The site plan illustrates eight first floor/private entrance units. This design feature helps lessen the massing impact and creates a space that is pedestrian friendly and at a neighborhood scale.

Section 225-43.1C(2) requires certain information to be submitted as part of a PUD application:

(a) An informational statement containing the following information:

[1] *Total area to be included in the PUD, area of open space, residential density, proposed number and type of dwelling units, projected population, availability of or requirements for municipal services and other similar data pertinent to a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed development.*

This information is included within the July 9, 2015 cover letter.

[2] *A general outline of the organizational structure of a property owners' or management's association, which may be proposed to be established for the purpose of providing any necessary private services.*

The cover letter lists the project team, including property owner, land planner, architect, geotechnical engineer, civil engineer, and environmental engineer.

[3] *Any proposed departures from the standards of development as set forth in this Chapter, Chapters 90, 115, 192 and 218 of the Code and any other Village ordinances or regulations or administrative rules, or other universal guidelines.*

The applicant provided a summary of the departures from "Business A" zoning (the current zoning for the properties) under Part 3 of the cover letter.

- A higher floor area ratio of 110%<sup>1</sup> compared to the 40% maximum under the B-A zoning district.

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<sup>1</sup>The three main floors of the residential building account for a FAR of 1.1, but the zoning code is unclear as to whether sub-grade parking facilities would be counted towards the FAR.

- Attached and detached parking structures are counted towards the FAR,
- Standard residential basements are not counted towards the FAR; however, walkouts are counted at 50%; therefore assuming the intent of the FAR calculations to have a "livability" component and not simply storage (ie. basement storage or basement parking).

For future clarification, Vierbicher recommends the following options to amend the code or create a defined policy.

- Clearly define that sub-grade parking does or does not count toward the FAR
- Define a certain portion of the sub-grade parking to count (ie. equal percent of floor height above grade).

- A smaller per-unit square footage (1,033 sq ft/ unit) than would otherwise be required under B-A zoning (1,500 sq ft/unit).
- A smaller amount of parking (61 stalls) than would otherwise be required under the B-A zoning district (71 stalls<sup>2</sup>)

[4] *The expected date of commencement of physical development as set forth in the proposal and also an outline of any development staging which is planned.*

The applicant anticipates a November 2015 start date with completion in August of 2016.

(b) General development plan containing:

[1] *A legal description of the boundaries of the subject property included in the proposed PUD District.*

The applicant did not include the legal description with the GDP application.

[2] *An accurate site plan showing the boundaries of the subject property that includes the location of the proposed buildings, landscaping, public and private roads, driveways, sidewalks and parking facilities.*

The applicant provided a site plan illustrating the building location, driveways, sidewalks, parking, and landscaping.

[3] *Adequate information to present the relationship of the proposed improvements to surrounding properties which shall include photographs and the locations of existing buildings located within 300 feet of the site.*

The applicant provided an air photo and two pages of context photographs illustrating the property's relation to surrounding development.

[4] *Schematic architectural plans showing the character of the proposed buildings.*

The applicant provided building elevations on sheets A-2.1 and A-2-.2.

[5] *Schematic floor plans that are adequate to demonstrate the intended use of the buildings.*

The applicant provided floor plan layouts showing the sub-grade parking level and three floors of residential units on sheets A-1.0 through A-1.3.

### **Basis for PUD-GDP Approval**

Section 225-43.1D discusses the basis upon which the Plan Commission and Village Board should consider approval of a PUD application. The criteria below should be the focus of the Commission in reviewing and discussing the PUD proposal. The criteria are reviewed and discussed below:

- (1) *Character and integrity of land use. In a PUD District, the uses proposed and their intensity and arrangement on the site shall be of a visual and operational character which:*
- (a) *Are compatible to the physical nature of the site and surrounding land uses.*
  - (b) *Would produce an attractive environment of sustained aesthetic and ecological desirability, economic stability, and functional practicality compatible with the general development plans for the area as established by the Village.*
  - (c) *Would not adversely affect the anticipated provision for municipal services.*
  - (d) *Would not create a traffic or parking demand incompatible with the existing or proposed facilities to serve it.*

#### *Building Height*

The maximum proposed height of the apartment building is five feet more than the maximum height in the adjoining Residence-B zoning district and one foot less than the maximum height of the Business-A district. Specifically, the site plan and elevation drawings illustrate a two story-building (23 feet in height) located 25 feet from the westerly property line. The proposed building

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<sup>2</sup> 66 stalls would be required per standard zoning.

then increases to three stories (32 feet in height) 45 feet from the westerly property line and finally increases to the full height of 39 feet for the five lofted units positioned 59 feet from the westerly property line. The plans then illustrate the building height reduced slightly as the majority of the street facing façade ranges from 32 – 36 feet in height<sup>3</sup>. The building would shield traffic noise for the single family residential neighborhood to the west.

#### *Materials*

The concept building elevations and listed materials are generally consistent with other recent apartment redevelopment in and around the Madison area, though the material for lofted space on the third floor is not specifically called out, it is assumed to be of composite siding. Vierbicher does have concern the entire western façade of the structure is composed of composite siding (Sheet A-2.2) and recommends four-sided design for all infill projects and structures. The Village should anticipate concerns from the neighboring public regarding the façade facing their side and rear yards.

#### *Screening and Landscaping*

The property line contains a large amount of existing trees acting as natural screening the Village could request additional screening be installed as part of the SIP (if desired). Generally, the landscape plan provides a suitable amount of landscaping comprised of hardy, low maintenance species to compliment the building. If budget allows, landscaping along the west side of the building would add an amenity for the building residents, even if it's not highly visible to the public from the street. This is reflective of the four-sided design approach stated above. The applicant should also address the following in the SIP:

- Check plant labeling and plant codes used vs. the plant list. Several plants along the north side of the building appear to be missing labels, and the code "RRD" does not appear in the plant list. It appears that perhaps another version of daylily was substituted for Pardon Me, as the code PMD appears in the list but not on the plan. The code ISLT also does not appear in the plant list.
- The Crabapples along the north side of the building may not get enough sun to thrive in this location. Flower and fruit display will likely not be as ornamental as intended, and mildew may be a problem. The applicant should consider replacing with a more shade-tolerant species, such as Serviceberry or Pagoda Dogwood (which would require regular pruning to maintain small-scale tree form).
- Perennials generally do not thrive in stone mulch, due to soil compaction and heating from the stone. Species that will naturally spread and fill in, such as the ornamental onion and daylily, will fail to do so in this situation, or growth will be greatly slowed. The applicant should consider using lighter mulch around perennial plantings, such as shredded bark or even a smaller stone/gravel, and forego the weed barrier fabric in areas where plants are intended to fill in.
- Depending on the building siding material, the applicant should consider moving plants away from the building to allow for air circulation and avoid trapping moisture against the siding. A 24" clear zone between the foundation and the mature plant crown is generally sufficient, and will also make maintenance activities such as window washing less detrimental to the landscape.
- Additional screening and parking lot buffer should be in place where the surface parking spaces are within 25' of adjoining residentially zoned parcels. This would impact the westerly four parking stalls. The buffering shall be consistent with section 225-73(c) of the municipal code.

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<sup>3</sup> Height measurements are approximate as they were measured and not listed with the application packet

- The site plan and sheet drawings do not illustrate the location of exterior utilities or mechanicals. These would need to be screened through means identified in § 225-30 of the zoning code.

#### *Population*

A Vierbicher analysis of similar infill residential projects elsewhere in the surrounding Madison area show a population range of 1.55 to 1.83 residents per market rate rental units<sup>4</sup>. Given the project location and proposed number of units, Vierbicher would anticipate a population range of 59-70 additional residents. This is consistent with the application listing a potential population of 60-75 residents.

#### *Population and Services*

According to the Wisconsin Department Administration, the 2014 Maple Bluff population estimate was 1,303 residents. The development would result in an approximate 4.53-5.37% increase in the Village's population. The Village's population has been roughly steady at around 1,350 residents since 1980, though the Village population was at 1,974 in 1970.

Generally speaking, the demand for emergency services (police, fire, EMS) by multifamily dwellings is less on a per-unit basis than single-family dwellings<sup>5</sup>.

As stated above, the project does not include parking sufficient enough to meet the Village's ordinance requirements (66 required). The project provides 61 vehicle parking stalls. Given the bicycle friendliness of North Sherman Avenue and the Madison area in general, the 30 additional bicycle parking stalls should account for the five less vehicle parking stalls that would be required under the standard under section 225-69 of the municipal code.

#### *Traffic*

The proposed project is located along a minor arterial road that carries approximately 14,100 - 15,500 vehicles per day<sup>6</sup>. N Sherman Avenue is an appropriate road within the Village to handle the traffic volumes generated by the proposed redevelopment.

- (2) *Economic feasibility and impact. The proponents of a PUD District application shall provide evidence satisfactory to the Plan Commission and Village Board of its economic feasibility, of available adequate financing, and that it would not adversely affect the economic prosperity of the Village or the values of surrounding properties.*

A short description of the economic feasibility of the project was provided, but did not include detailed supporting information. At the time of the drafting of this review, the Village has not received a formal financial assistance request from the applicant.

Aside from project-specific financing, the economic feasibility of the proposed project will largely be predicated on the health of the Madison-area apartment market as a whole. While there are certainly differences in services and community activities between municipalities, the apartment market generally does not pay much heed to municipal borders. Madison-area apartment vacancy rates remain near historic lows and while the growth in apartment construction will inevitably slow at some point, the continuing low vacancy rates and high rents for new buildings show few signs of changing in the near future. There is a nationwide trend in midsize and larger metro areas of the "millennial" and "baby boomer" generations seeking multifamily units in walkable and bikable areas that is anticipated to last for an extended period of time.

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<sup>4</sup> Variables include location, unit mix, and population/employment drivers located within the area.

<sup>5</sup> [http://danedocs.countyofdane.com/webdocs/PDF/capd/2015\\_Postings/Publications/Multifamily\\_Rental\\_Analysis\\_Report.pdf](http://danedocs.countyofdane.com/webdocs/PDF/capd/2015_Postings/Publications/Multifamily_Rental_Analysis_Report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> City of Madison 2013 traffic counts and 2014 DOT traffic counts

According to the data provided by Madison Gas & Electric, the vacancy rate has trended down since 2004 for both the Madison market as a whole and the north side specifically, with the north side consistently at a lower vacancy rate than the overall Madison area market<sup>7</sup>. Vacancy rates remained at historic lows for the past several years, in spite of the recent boom in newly constructed apartment units, which is why there are currently so many apartment buildings under construction and being proposed in the Madison area. The majority of newly proposed apartment units around the greater Madison area in 2013-2014 were for redevelopment projects, catering to the demand for units in more active urban areas close to transit and amenities.

The following chart compares housing tenure for Maple Bluff with other Madison-area communities from the 2010 Census.

**Maple Bluff Owner vs. Renter Comparison With Other Madison Metropolitan Area Communities**

	Maple Bluff	Shorewood Hills	Monona	Verona	Middleton	Fitchburg	Sun Prairie	Madison
<b>Owner-Occupied Units</b>	87.6%	91.8%	59.5%	71.1%	55.5%	53.0%	62.0%	49.3%
<b>Renter-Occupied Units</b>	12.4%	8.2%	40.5%	28.9%	44.5%	47.0%	38.0%	50.7%

Source: 2010 Census

Generally speaking, a diversity of housing types allows a variety of options for people who may want to live in a given community without taking on the upkeep required by homeownership. It should be noted that, since the 2010 Census, the Village of Shorewood Hills has seen construction or approval apartment projects with a total of over 249 units. Later this year Village anticipates the review of two additional development proposals proposing an additional 186 units. These 330 units would change Shorewood Hills' owner/renter ratio to about 55/45. This proposed 38-unit apartment project, if approved by the Village of Maple Bluff, will change the Village's owner/renter ratio from 88/12 to 82/18 and would still maintain Maple Bluff as the highest owner/renter ratio of cities and villages in the Madison area.

Assuming a per-unit assessed value of \$110,000, the project would increase the tax value of the property by approximately \$3.7 million, increasing property tax collections by about \$75,000, of which about \$18,000 would accrue to the Village.<sup>8</sup> The estimated per-acre taxable value of the property will exceed most of the lakefront properties in the Village. Returning a currently vacant and blighted property to active use with a brand new building would likely have a positive impact on surrounding property values.

- (3) *Engineering design standards. The width of street rights-of-way, width of paving, width and location of street or other paving, outdoor lighting, location of sewer and water lines, provision for stormwater drainage or other similar environmental engineering consideration shall be based on standards necessary to implement the specific function in the specific situation; provided, however, in no case shall standards be less than those necessary to ensure the public safety and welfare as determined by the Village Engineer.*

The design and configuration of parking meets established standards. No further public streets, streetlights, sewer lines, or water lines are proposed as part of the project. Details on proposed stormwater management, building connections to public utilities, grading, and erosion control

<sup>7</sup> Source: Madison Gas and Electric, <http://www.mge.com/customer-service/multifamily/vacancy-rates/>

<sup>8</sup> Note that the increase in property taxes would accrue to the TID. Upon closure of the TID, the increase in property tax collections would be distributed to the various taxing jurisdictions based on the ratio of tax collections at that time.

must be provided as part of the SIP, and will need to be reviewed by the Village Engineer at that time for compliance with Village ordinances.

- (4) *Preservation and maintenance of open space. In a PUD District, adequate provisions shall be made for the permanent provision and maintenance of open space either by private reservation or dedication to the public.*

The project proposes a significant amount of open space, especially when compared to other recent redevelopment projects in the Madison area. The building is surrounded by a green buffer, with the most prominent setback along the western lot line, between the proposed multi-family building and the adjoining single-family homes. While the total lot coverage calculations listed on page 2 of the submittal do not add up to the total lot coverage listed on page one, it can be assumed the total greenspace is approximately 1/3 of the site area. The plan also includes a roof deck area providing an outdoor amenity for the residents.

- (5) *Implementation schedule. The proponent(s) of a PUD District shall submit a reasonable schedule for the implementation of the development to the satisfaction of the Village Board, including suitable provisions for assurance that each phase shall be brought to completion in a manner that would not result in an adverse effect upon the Village as a result of termination at that point. The Plan Commission and Village Board, in making their respective recommendation and determination, shall consider the reasonableness of the proposed construction schedule and any staging plan for the physical development of the proposed PUD, commencement of the physical development within one year of approval being deemed reasonable.*

The time period for construction appears to be reasonable for a project of this size.

- (6) *Residential PUD considerations. The Plan Commission and the Village Board, in making their respective recommendation and determination as to a proposed residential PUD, shall further consider whether:*
- (a) *Such development will create an attractive residential environment of sustained desirability and economic stability, including structures in relation to terrain, consideration of safe pedestrian flow, ready access to recreation space, and coordination with overall plans for the Village.*
  - (b) *The total net residential density within the PUD will be compatible with the Village Master Plan or components thereof, and shall be compatible with the density of the neighborhood wherein located.*
  - (c) *Provision has been made for the installation of adequate public facilities and the continuing maintenance and operation of such facilities if privately owned.*
  - (d) *Provision has been made for adequate, continuing fire and police protection.*
  - (e) *The population density of the development will have an adverse effect upon the community's capacity to provide needed municipal service facilities.*
  - (f) *Adequate guarantee is provided for permanent preservation of open space areas as shown on the general development plan either by private reservation and maintenance or by dedication to the public.*

These elements have been discussed in previous sections of this review letter in respect to Village's Comprehensive Plan.

### **Process and Conclusion**

The proposed project is on par with other residential redevelopment projects in the general Madison area. It provides an urban front to North Sherman Avenue, consistent with Village plans for properties across the street. At the same time, the site plan provides a significant greenspace setback from the single-family homes to the west, along with a "step down" from three stories to two, which, combined with existing screening, minimizes the visual impact on adjoining homeowners. The number of units in the project, in comparison to the overall number of units in the Village, should ensure that there is little impact to the provision of Village services.

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The Plan Commission should review the proposed PUD-GDP with respect to the criteria outlined in the "Basis for Approval" section above. If the Commission feels that all elements have been adequately addressed, it should consider finding that the proposal meets ordinance requirements and recommend approval to the Village Board. Approval may be recommended with conditions, if necessary. If the Commission feels deferral for further discussion is required the Commission should list what information is required or why deferral is required. If the Commission feels recommending denial of the project is warranted the Commission should forward the recommendation, with said reasons, to the Village Board.

I will be attending the Plan Commission meeting on August 5<sup>th</sup> and will be available to discuss this letter and any questions the Commission may have on the PUD review process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel J Lindstrom", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Daniel J Lindstrom, AICP

CC: Tim Fenner, Village Attorney  
Joe McCormick, JD McCormick Co.