

11/29/2016

VILLAGE OF ELM GROVE  
AD HOC COMMITTEE & tad  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Adam Berger  
925 Katherine Drive  
Elm Grove, WI 53122

Dear Ad Hoc Committee and Board of Trustees:

I have grown very fond of this town since I first came here in 1998. I love our identity and find amusement in the lack of understanding north shore friends and city dwellers have in our secret hideaway.

We're feeling an onslaught from three sides now and each has direct and measurable impacts on our Village. These include 1) the widening of North Avenue to 2 lanes in each direction all the way to Calhoun Road, 2) the proposed connection of Wisconsin Avenue straight through Elm Grove and dead-ending of Watertown Plank allowing more Brookfield traffic into town and through town and 3) the massive proposed Reinders/Wangard development with 5 buildings, most of which are 55' tall. We lose a bit of the essence of Elm Grove with each project. That's the funny thing about identity - if you try to do what everyone else does, you lose yourself in the process.

Lest my comments be construed as anti-development, they are not. The multiple projects are inter-related and inter-dependent. We can't rely on traffic studies that are clearly wrong and ignore major proposed changes to our thoroughfares. They also failed to collect data this summer and rely on 2011 data. They do not account for the proposed projects and the increased traffic and drive-through status our Village would take on.

If I close my eyes and imagine what could be on the Reinders site, a 55' tall, 250' x 60' building is not what I imagined. Adding 5% to the Village population in 170+ apartments isn't either.

Reviewing the survey results and listening to public comments, the developer appears to be ignoring our strongest points related to SIZE, DENSITY, AND HEIGHT of these buildings. The Reinders/Wangard group has shown little willingness to decrease unit count 182, 176, 174 units. I have to conclude that the Reinders/Wangard team just isn't listening where it hits their wallets.

They heard people and made the easy changes - road alignment, path, green space and some very nice changes were made, but they have intently ignored the third story that needs to be eliminated on these buildings. Elm Grove wants development, but we don't want this development as proposed. This is loud and clear and we should all continue to ensure that the message remains above the fold. In the end - we want the right development. The initial Reinders/Wangard redesign was well-received but it addressed what we can call "B" issues, not the "A" issues. The Village wants tax revenue as there are few developable sites. The developer seems rushed to put the shovels in the ground in the spring in a community where it takes a year to design a satisfactory house. The developer's requested timetable is incongruent

with where we are at this time, the level of opposition to the proposed scale and height, and the aesthetic and environmental concerns.

The proposed project clearly fails to meet the statutory requirements for building quality to achieve approval for increased density. The developer has already acknowledged this fact. Any attempt to spin the definition of building quality to include commercial properties or condominiums is outside of the statutory requirements and should be quickly stopped.

I want to see a maximum two-story development that is architecturally consistent with the nicest residential housing in Elm Grove and respects our trees, the safety of our drinking water, our views, and our safety.

Reinders owns a hazardous waste site, certainly not the worst possible, but certainly of concern to residents who share a very shallow water table and drinking water supply. We must not use TIF to remediate an obvious lack of due diligence on their part in acquiring the property. We should insist it is correctly remediated and removed from the site. The implied value of the real estate to the Reinders/Wangard 50/50 partnership should take into account the remediation costs against the land value. Neighboring businesses downgrade of this site have told me they see and smell waste after a heavy rain. They see oil sheen's, smell chemicals. Lest we forget, there was a 600 gallon fuel tank that spilled during a flood many years ago and other tank damage.

We must remember this was a site that stored industrial chemicals, restricted use chemicals in paper bags for use on golf courses and other commercial sites. This is in our soil and we must protect our water and our safety. The development plans to "cap" the site to seal the contaminants. They plan to drill hundreds of micro pilings to support the structure and possibly contaminate our water. This developer has not performed a phase 2 environmental study of this site and was reluctant to offer DNR-prescribed well-monitoring before and after development to protect us and our water.

Can we sell them the soccer park on Bluemound where apartment residents have rapid access to Bluemound and we can approve a 3 story complex among commercial properties like UPS. The proceeds could be used to acquire and develop this site as a promenade with shops and a center park with features like Millennium Park on a smaller scale - fountains, sculptures, sitting areas? This could put Elm Grove on the map of destinations for families and adults. Such a plan was proposed by TB John in 1982 for this very site.

If a project proceeds on this site, we need every verbal promise, written assurance, I dotted, and T crossed as part of the formal developer's agreement. Residents deserve the time it takes for due diligence and this development does not deserve special fast tracking or accommodation as has been eluded to in prior meetings. We do not need to allow special meetings to be called by the Village President to speed this along. We need our clearest messages heard and acted on if this project is to move forward. We can not rest on our laurels assuming people watch the Village website. More ACTIVE communication methods should be employed as demonstrated successfully by Wangard with the postcard campaign. Reinders likely needs to hear it and make concessions. Both firms need to adjust expectations and see if the economics are viable. We're not looking to maximize their return. We're looking for maximum value-add to our village on many levels.

We deserve to be heard and the developer deserves to hear the messages. I'm pleased we have this forum tonight. Thank you and thank you for your service to our town.

Sincerely,

Adam M. Berger