

Kyle Kroening
1868 Lenwood Ave.
Green Bay, WI 54303

Village of Howard Plan Commission
Howard Village Board of Trustees
President Burt McIntyre

November 15, 2011

Dear President McIntyre, Plan Commissioners and Trustees,

I am writing to ask you to consider implementing a temporary moratorium on multi-family housing construction. We have lived in our home on Lenwood Avenue since 2001. We purchased this home because of the traditional neighborhood, larger residential lots, walkability of the area and the quality of parks.

When we first moved here, it didn't bother us to own a home sandwiched between apartment buildings on Roland Lane and Memorial Drive. The traffic on our streets was reasonable, and we felt safe walking our dog – and later pushing a stroller – throughout the neighborhood. Our love affair with our new dwelling began to decline a few years after we purchased our home as more and more apartment buildings started popping up at the end of Lenwood, on Moraine Terrace, and behind the existing buildings on Roland Lane.

With such a concentration of multi-family housing, traffic started to increase, and it was evident criminal activity was now a huge problem, proven by the frequent speeding police cars and the sound of sirens throughout the night. Now, as our children reach the age when most kids should be able to ride their bikes to the park by themselves, walk to their friends' homes, and experience other childhood rites of passage, we don't dare let them go more than two blocks in any direction.

The most disheartening change for us has been in our kids' school. Howard Elementary was a huge attraction for us when looking for a home to settle and raise children. It is the smallest elementary school in the Howard-Suamico School District, so it didn't feel like we would be sending our kids to a warehouse for the majority of their day. The tiny school has a capacity of 330 students. When we moved here in 2001, it had 195 students enrolled. When our eldest child started kindergarten three years ago, that number had climbed to 283. This year, the school exceeded its capacity and now has 333.

Even more disturbing is the school's 2011-12 poverty rate (62%) and transiency rate (47%). The school is now not only Title I, but it's also considered "at risk." How did a school go from a poverty rate of 22% when we purchased our home in 2001 to 62% only a decade later? If you ask School Superintendent Damian LaCroix, he will tell you the simple answer is the growing number of apartment complexes that the Village of Howard continues to allow, despite the district's "obvious preference" for single-family home construction.

Howard Elementary is not the only school being negatively affected, which is why I write imploring you to implement a moratorium on apartment buildings. This year, Meadowbrook Elementary School, the nearest neighboring school to Howard Elementary, also has seen dramatic increases in enrollment and an associated increase in poverty (now exceeding 23%) and transiency rates. Meanwhile, Bay Harbor and Suamico Elementary School have remained fairly steady in those numbers, which are 11% and 7% respectively. That's a remarkable difference from the schools located in the Village of Howard, and it's likely no coincidence that the Village of Suamico does not have nearly the rate of multi-family development that Howard does.

Howard is experiencing a trend of developing more large apartment buildings, which are known to contribute to transiency, than either single-family homes or duplexes, which tend to bring more stable families to the village. According to 2010 building permit statistics, 161 multi-family buildings and 80 single-family homes were constructed – a 2 to 1 ratio. The 2011 numbers through October are 160 multi-family to 37 single-family permits – more than a 4 to 1 ratio! For the first time in Howard's history, the village is over the the identified balanced market of 65-70% owner-occupied and 30-35% renter-occupied housing ratio (per Sec. 1.1 Demographics and Economic Profile of current draft Comprehensive Plan). With the 2011 building permit statistics, Howard now sits at a 61% owner-occupied to 39% renter-occupied housing ratio AND other previously approved multi-family projects in Cardinal Crossing and the Toonen Complex still are pending with permits not yet pulled!

On Monday, the developer of the Toonen Apartment complex on Frederick Court will be asking to approve another 88 units in the already massive multi-family complex. When the Toonen apartment development originally was approved, it was understood the complex would have a commercial and/or retail aspect to it. Now, instead of sticking with the original plan, Mr. Toonen is asking to forego the commercial/retail aspect and build more apartment units. This not only goes against the mixed-use neighborhood development called for in the village's comprehensive plan, but it also adds more apartments to an already inflated multi-family ratio. Furthermore, the Toonen apartments lack character, green space and curb appeal and feed the already overwhelmed Meadowbrook Elementary School. This is not a quality project worth approving at the expense of our schools and children!

I am very concerned about the Village of Howard's multi-family housing trend, and I encourage you to at least implement a temporary moratorium in order to provide an opportunity for single-family home construction to catch up. This also will be a beneficial break for the school district, which is hesitant to re-draw the elementary school boundaries because Howard's surge in apartment development has made it impossible to predict the areas of student concentration.

As you know, the Howard-Suamico School District is an excellent school system and a major attraction for young families. If we don't stop the dramatic decline in the transiency and poverty rates, which are bound to affect student performance, there will be lasting impacts to the Village of Howard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kyle J. Kroening', written over a horizontal line.

Kyle J. Kroening