

# Green-roof site downtown eyed

*Swimming pool also in works*

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Under a green roof planted with trees and bushes, downtown Madison could be getting its first indoor pool along with a gym where exercise bicycles would be connected to small generators.

These elements are part of a revised environmentally friendly design for 425 W. Washington Ave., where optometrist John Bonsett-Veal proposes to dramatically renovate his property with developer Erik Minton.

The site is now a single-story office surrounded on three sides by parking lot asphalt. But soon it could be an eight-story building combining a fitness gym, health offices and residential apartments with an overall theme of healthy, sustainable living, said Michael Quigley of Solution Strategies LLC and Sonja Newenhouse, president of Madison Environmental Group.

Newenhouse and Quigley have been employed as consultants for the project's development team. This morning the two presented a vision of the building they hoped "in some ways would raise the bar for Madison development."

To begin with, the project would actually increase the area of greenspace on the site - from 1,300 square feet to 5,000 square feet - by using a large portion of the roof to hold a thick mat of soil capable of sustaining trees and shrubs. This type of roof - called an intensive green roof - is catching on in many urban areas. If enough buildings have them, proponents say, there would be less reflected heat from rooftops, and city centers would be more comfortable in the summer.

The rooftop garden at 425 W. Washington would be open to those who have access to the building, including apartment residents, office workers and members of the gym that planners say would occupy the first two floors.

"You could have a yoga class in the morning up there," Quigley said. "It doesn't make sense not to have community access."

Newenhouse said that in addition to concentrating on design and construction elements that would make the project more environmentally sound, residents will be invited to participate in a program called EnAct, which stresses a sustainable lifestyle through water and energy conservation, waste reduction and efficient transportation.

"I think that most people want to improve the environment," Newenhouse said, discussing the market for apartments in an environmentally conscious building.

"It's a matter of assuming that everybody cares" and is looking for ways in which to contribute, she added.

Quigley said that Bonsett-Veal plans to house his optometry offices on one of the middle floors of the building and to have other health professionals as his neighbors. Talks with a physical therapist are ongoing, Newenhouse said, as well as with an acupuncturist and others in related fields.

The project timeline involves continuing talks with the neighborhood for the rest of the summer before submitting plans this fall and maybe breaking ground in the spring to open the building about a year later in 2007.

There is no request for public assistance or tax incremental financing for the project, and 15 percent of the apartment units would be dedicated to affordable housing under the city's inclusionary zoning ordinance.

So far, Quigley said that in response to neighborhood concerns, the development team has shortened the design by two stories and brought its height to within four feet of a neighboring office. The team has also worked to break up the mass of the building, making it less monolithic by introducing corner balconies and a varied roofline.

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