




## Boys and Girls Club of Dane County vying for vacant Sam's Club



The Boys and Girls Club of Dane County would like to turn a currently vacant Sam's Club into a regional sports complex.

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By Max Bayer (<http://www.dailycardinal.com/staff/max-bayer>) | February 8, 2018 8:24 pm

On Jan. 26, a Sam's Club located at 7050 Watts Road on the west side of Madison was one of 63 warehouse stores of its kind chosen to shut down.

However, the building has hardly gone unnoticed.

Since its closing, the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County has asked Wal-Mart, Sam's Club's parent company, whether they would be willing to donate the store to the organization for the creation of a regional youth sports center.

The world's largest company declined.

However, Michael Johnson, executive director of the organization is undeterred and says he's been in conversations with an executive vice president at Wal-Mart.

"That property right now looks like it might be abandoned," Johnson said. "Hopefully something good can come out of it, and hopefully he'll accept my offer."

Johnson didn't disclose the offer but he said it's reasonable. He added that when making his pitch to the retail giant, it's important they recognize that bringing the community back onto that property will not hurt the business.

"Bringing kids into a parking lot and families to participate in a regionalized sports complex should not hurt the business of Wal-Mart's customers," said Johnson. "In fact, I think it will help increase it because you're bringing activity to that immediate area."

Throughout this negotiation process, Johnson has said he's received support ranging from city council leaders to state representatives.

Ald. Barbara Harrington-McKinney, District 1, who serves the region in which the Sam's Club currently sits empty, says that the city has not made any plans regarding the site.

"The City process for property acquisition is one that is complex, takes time and input from many city departments as well as the public," she said. "At this time, any speculation about the Watts Road property from a city perspective would be premature."

Johnson says if his offer is accepted and the organization can move forward with their proposed sports complex, the new facility will be a gamechanger for the community.

"It's an asset that currently doesn't exist in this region and I just think it could be a win-win situation for Wal-Mart," he said.

Regardless, Johnson has said he will pull out all the stops if necessary to plead his case to the company's chief executive.

"If I have to go to their headquarters and camp out to get a meeting with him, I'm going to try my best," he said.

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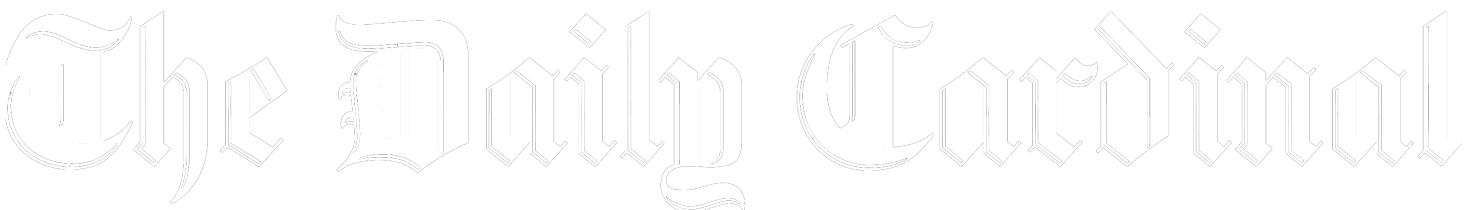
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