

From: [Phillips, Robert](#)
To: [Pien, Janet](#); [Hacker, Marsha](#); [Bachmann, Christy](#); [Hannan, LeAnne](#)
Subject: FW: Sommers and Center Reconstruct: Raingarden/Green Streets
Date: Tuesday, March 03, 2015 11:34:10 AM

Please provide for the BPW members. The Mayor would also like to have this on the PWI agenda for Thursday.

From: Michael D. Barrett [mailto:mikeb@urbanthoreau.com]
Sent: Tuesday, March 03, 2015 10:18 AM
To: Mayor; Rummel, Marsha; Phillips, Robert; brad hinkfuss
Subject: Sommers and Center Reconstruct: Raingarden/Green Streets

Dear Mayor Soglin, Alder Rummel, Board of Public Works Commissioners, SASY President Hinkfuss,

This letter is in regard to the proposed reconstruct of Sommers Avenue and Center Avenue. We oppose the project until it is improved to protect our aquifer, pedestrian safety and the historic character of our neighborhood.

The Schenk-Atwood-Starkweather-Worthington Neighborhood Plan, adopted by the city, states as a major component of its vision:

"Neighborhood parks, waterways and rail trails are linked by park-like neighborhood streets."

This neighborhood has long demonstrated that it cares about its environment and the healthy function of natural processes in our well-being. As a member of the committee that wrote the neighborhood plan, I know that "park-like" was meant to capture this sentiment. More recently, one of our neighbors, Anne Walker, has been very pro-active in implementing this vision through street reconstruct practices that are more friendly to the healthy function of a more natural hydrologic cycle than current standard city practices rooted in the sheet & pipe ideology of the 1950s. Another neighbor, Twink Jan-McMahon, has built an entire movement dedicated to protecting our urban trees. Their work is mutually supportive of each other and the interests of the neighborhood at large. We strongly support the efforts of Ms. Walker, Ms. Jan-McMahon and others who have led in these efforts. We want their ideas applied here, and in reconstructs throughout the city.

Specifically, we propose that the Sommers and Center project include:

1. Raingarden streets. We have heard that there is a city standard of a minimum of 10' to implement raingardens in curb terraces. This is arbitrary. Every inch of space could *and should* be used as a raingarden. These terraces are plenty wide to accommodate a healthy infiltration of a significant amount of water. Our soils are very conducive to healthy infiltration, even in a small area (I know, I've done it on my own property). The city should, as a rule, avail itself of these natural services rather than sheeting & piping water to kill the Gulf of Mexico, murdering lakes, streams & rivers along the way. Furthermore, this arbitrary 10' standard means that green-minded neighborhoods such as ours will always be shut out of the raingardening of our streets. Why? Because hardly any of our curb terraces meet this capricious standard. Once again, see the "park-like" reference in our neighborhood plan.

2. Dark sky/ped-scaled/moderate lighting (not those acorns that send more light to Mars and 2nd floor windows than the street)
3. Burying power lines to allow for healthy growth of trees
4. A safe ped crossing connecting Helena-Sommers. Citizens were ignored--as was the city's adopted Pedestrian Plan--in the Division St. reconstruct, leaving no safe crossings of Division to connect Sommers and Helena.
5. Prevent the pizza-delivery-driver-speedway-effect on Sommers, which has become a high speed bypass of Atwood. Use traffic calming methods to force traffic from Sommers back onto Atwood. For example, build bulb outs preventing entry of Sommers from Division (but keep 2-way bike access as on Kendall). Relatedly,
6. Put parking on both sides of both Sommers and Center. Not only would it support local businesses, the neck-down effect would significantly calm traffic.
7. Keep trees growing full & tall. Establish root protection during construction all the way out to drip line, and perhaps beyond. It is routine to unnecessarily hack at roots during reconstructs. We don't want that here. Furthermore, our city's adopted Pedestrian Plan emphasizes the importance of a healthy tree canopy as a major component of pedestrian infrastructure.
8. No flared driveway aprons! Driveways must maintain their historical configuration entering the curb at 90 degrees. No widening of driveways. It is more pavement, and thus bad for our aquifer. Bad for on street parking availability (not that I really care about that, but others, such as local businesses, might). Perhaps most importantly, it is terrible for pedestrians--wide aprons promote speeding across crosswalks. This is one of Madison's classic neighborhoods, not a car-oriented suburb.
9. Maintain the unintentional speed bump where the old & new pavement comes together at Dunning. This is not something to "correct" because it serves a good traffic calming purpose. This is not a place to aim for Interstate Highway Perfection.
10. Combine utility, lighting & sign placements such that structures in the curb terrace can be minimized.
11. No single property frontage should be overburdened with more than one sign/pole/hydrant/other infrastructure. This is to allow for a continuous tree canopy and to maintain property values for all.
12. Keep all curb radii at intersections tight; no wide sweeping curb radii. This is for pedestrian safety and maintaining the historic look of our neighborhood.
13. Incentivize the contractor to work every day, weekends included, to shorten total duration of the project. Projects are going on entirely too long, unnecessarily, given known climatic conditions here (e.g., biblical rains in early summer).
14. Any other good ideas that Ms. Walker and Ms. Jan-McMahon have promoted for safe, healthy, green streets.
15. Delay the project a year because of lack of notice, and lack of planned green infrastructure as noted above.
16. These proposals should be instituted on all projects throughout our older neighborhoods, and hopefully throughout the city.

Mr. Phillips, please ensure that this is entered into the record and delivered to the Board of Public Works in a timely manner for the public input on the Sommers & Center reconstruct project (I will be out of town on the date of the public hearing.)

Sincerely,
Michael D. Barrett and Pamela S. Barrett
2137 Sommers Ave
Madison, Wisconsin 53704