

To: Truman Olson Selection Committee

From: South Madison Unite

Re: South Madison Food Access

Date: April 3, 2019

As little as three weeks ago, most of South Madison did not know that it faced the loss of its only full-service grocery store. Now more than 100 residents and a growing number of nonprofits have joined the call to “Save Our Supermarket” through South Madison Unite!

The issue of food access has sweeping impact for many residents of Bram’s Addition, Burr Oaks, Leopold, Arbor Hills, Capitol View Heights, Bay Creek, Greenbush, and Vilas. *Fifty-two percent of those polled in 2018 shop at the only full-service grocery store currently on Park Street five times or more per week.*

Healthy food access for all Madison residents is supported by the mission of the City’s Food Policy Council to achieve “equal access to healthy, culturally appropriate food, nutrition education, and economic opportunity.” This is in alignment with the goal established by the *Race to Equity* report to “reduce the profound and persistent racial disparities in health for low-income communities and communities of color in Madison.”

The availability of good food correlates directly with the health of a community. Food access is a health, social justice, and financial issue.

According to the city-funded 2015 *Southside Grocery Store Feasibility Study*, South Madison can support not just a supermarket in the vicinity of the current Pick ‘N Save, but an additional grocery store, if done properly.

We are thus frustrated that our community faces the imminent destruction of its only full-service supermarket with no clear plan for replacing it in a timely manner. The proposed solutions we’re aware of for mitigating the impacts of Madison’s soon-to-be-newest low-income food desert—free taxi service to retail food operations, food vans or farmer’s markets, and delivery services. All these have either already shown themselves to fail in other neighborhoods or are impractical in South Madison.

We all want what is best for South Madison. We ask that the City invest in whatever it takes to avoid creating any food access gap. Steps might include:

- 1) Working with SSM to delay development of its clinic until a new full-service grocery store is operational, while also allowing Kroger’s to operate the Pick ‘N Save under its current three-year lease.
- 2) Working with Welton to find a way to subsidize construction on the Truman Olson site, per the City’s Food Access Improvement Area goals. (Welton’s request to postpone the City’s decision on its proposal by 30 to 60 days should not be allowed to widen the gap between their construction agenda and SSM’s timeline.)
- 3) Taking steps forward without delay to having a full-service supermarket operational along South Park, per the conclusions of the City’s 2015 *Grocery Store Feasibility Study*.