

February 25, 2017

Alder DeMarb:

We live at 801 Douglas Trail. Several blocks of Douglas Trail, along with two other streets, one perpendicular (Kvamme Lane) and one parallel to Douglas Trail (Acacia Lane), are to have curb, gutter and sidewalks installed. We oppose the installation of sidewalks on these streets. We have been told that sidewalks will be installed as a recommended by the Rural to Urban and Safe Route to School programs that are being imposed on our neighborhood. Our Douglas Trail neighbors opposed to sidewalks include other retirees, three widows, a young couple who just had a child, a teacher and a police officer.

Just eight months ago, in August 2016, we were told that the city was recommending the work and that "it wasn't a done deal." In November 2016 another meeting suggested "it wasn't a done deal" and we'll have more "concrete" information for you in February 2017. In February 2017 we were informed that it "is a done deal." In eight months, the city has had a drastic impact on our neighborhood and turned our world upside down.

My spouse and I would define ourselves as progressives and have supported most of the initiatives of progressives. We try to be informed. We should have been paying more attention to the development planning that has been going on since 1997, when Sue Baumann was Mayor. I guess we are too much of the average citizens and weren't paying ENOUGH attention to every detail. Well, the county and city have our attention now.

My spouse and I are both retired from the UW. For the last 20 years we have owned only one car. For the four years, prior to my retirement from the U.W., I commuted by bus, walking to the bus route on Pflaum and Joylyne, morning and night, rain, snow, or shine. I never had a problem walking in the street. In fact, I slipped and fell on an icy sidewalk on Pflaum. We often take leisure walks in the neighborhood, sometimes to access the Edna Taylor Nature Park and we have never had a problem with walking in the streets.

This sidewalk dilemma led me to thinking back to when we bought the house and how my own childhood impacted our decision. We chose the Glendale neighborhood because it was very much like the neighborhoods we had grown up in. Homes were moderately priced, something we could afford and within walking distance to schools and bus stops. Our realtor was a family friend who

assured us there would never be sidewalks installed on our street. We were young, naïve home buyers.

My family insisted it was a starter house and in a few years we would want to "move on up." Well, we decided to stay in our starter home and we've been very happy here. We've worked hard at making our yard a beautiful place with several gardens. Our neighbors tell us how much they enjoy walking by our house (using the street). We have two mature trees remaining in our front yard (two others both lost to disease) that will be removed, along with twenty seven others in the neighborhood, if sidewalks are installed on the three streets.

Then I started to think about where we are as a world and country on issues of health care and physical fitness. I remembered back to my elementary years and the physical fitness tests that we took as part of the President's Council on Physical Fitness program. The program still exists today but has been changed to the President's Council on Physical Fitness, Sports and Nutrition. The program was first initiated in 1953 under then president Dwight Eisenhower who was advised of the poor state of youth fitness in America as compared with some European countries. Statistics since then have sounded an alarm that we still have that problem today.

Statistics to support the new Safe Route initiative in the U.S. state that prior to 1969, about 48% of children in our country walked or biked to school. I was one of them. I walked to school until I attended LaFollette and had to bus as it was too far to walk. I walked to the bus stop which was at least a half mile from my house. SRTS (Safe Routes to School) stats indicate that as of 2009 only 13% of school children walked or biked to school.

Does the city of Madison really think we are ignorant enough to buy their reasoning for sidewalks in our neighborhood? Just look at our culture and how it has changed and why walking just isn't used for commuting very much. Here are just a few reasons that I can think of as to why that isn't happening:

- Both parents working with children in day care centers that provide busing to school and back to day care at the end of the school day
- Fast paced lives. Little time to walk to pick up our children from day care or home and transport them to extracurricular activities.
- Eating fast foods on the run.
- Teenagers with cars.
- Children spending an average of about seven hours a day in front of a TV or computer.

Higher taxes were imposed on the liquor and the tobacco companies to help pay for rising health care costs that we attribute to use of those. If that is an appropriate response, then how about we put a surcharge on unhealthy food served in restaurants (particularly fast food) and a surcharge on unhealthy foods sold in grocery stores? Next, go after the automobile industry for marketing cars to our youth. Finally, let's take on the tech industry for providing all of us with too much distraction. The revenue generated from this could pay for much more pressing issues than retrofitting our 1950's neighborhoods with sidewalks.

Ultimately, it appears it is easier to come up with sidewalks and let the middle class people pay for them, isn't it? Right up there with banning soda in schools when students can buy it during their lunch at fast food restaurants or convenience stores within WALKING distance to their school.

My spouse and I voted for you. Our vote was based on statements you made but even more on who supported you. It appeared you would represent our interests and hopefully the interests of the majority in our district. Maybe the majority of voters in the district support sidewalks but we'll never know because our neighborhood was never presented the Master Plan or the Safe Routes information and allowed to weigh in on the impacts it would have on our little world. Don't you think that elected officials could do a better job of telling us about proposed changes to our neighborhood and their impact on our neighborhood, even if those changes are ten or twenty years out? We have talked to many residents who have been here for at least twenty years, including some who have been very active in the neighborhood association, and none of

Denise DeMarb  
Page 4

them can recall that the Master Plan and the probable impact was ever shared with our entire neighborhood.

It's a MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD city!

Your sincerely angry and disappointed constituents,

Shari Cnare and Paul Powers