

TO: Madison Food Policy Council
FROM: Martin Bailkey, Chair, Urban Agriculture Work Group
DATE: November 2, 2018
RE: Urban Ag Work Group Recommendations for
Milwaukee Street Special Area Plan

In March 2018, the Common Council authorized Planning Division staff to prepare detailed land use and transportation recommendations for the Milwaukee Street corridor generally between Fair Oaks Avenue and Highway 51. The largest individual property is the Voit Farm property, just east of Starkweather Creek on the north side of Milwaukee Street. A total of 65 acres, approximately one half of the land, is considered developable while the northern portion is largely comprised of wetlands, floodplains and a quarry pond. Currently a portion of the site is being farmed for row crops, and the remainder is part of a quarry operation.

Planning staff engaged in a series of community engagement activities during the spring and summer. During this period the Madison Food Policy Council's (MFPC) Comprehensive Plan Work Group was focused on creating food system recommendations to the Imagine Madison process, and was not aware of the Milwaukee Street plan effort until Martin Bailkey attended a public input meeting on July 25th. In early August, the draft Milwaukee Street Plan documents were distributed to the Urban Agriculture Work Group for review. The Work Group determined that the draft plan lacked strong adherence to the urban agriculture recommendations recently adopted by the City in the new comprehensive plan (initially generated by the MFPC Comprehensive Plan Work Group). Given that the land within the Milwaukee Street planning area was both historically and perceptually linked with farming, the Urban Agriculture Work Group strongly believed that stronger language supporting market farming and community gardens needed to be in the final plan recommendations.

At the September 5th MFPC meeting, Dan McAuliffe from Planning presented a progress report on the Milwaukee Street Special Area Plan, and members of the Urban Agriculture Work Group, supported by other MFPC members (including alders), stated their concerns. During September and October, members of the Urban Agriculture Work Group, along with Food Policy Director, George Reistad, held additional meetings with city staff. This led to the MFPC becoming one of four formally designated referral bodies for the Milwaukee Street Special Area Plan, along with the Board of Park Commissioners, the Transportation Policy and Planning Board, and the Plan Commission. At its November 7th meeting, the full MFPC will act on the following recommendations from the Work Group that, if enacted, will be provided to the Plan Commission at its November 19th meeting.

Recommendations

The Urban Agriculture Work Group's proposed recommendations to the final Milwaukee Street Special Area Plan involve strengthening the draft plan's existing language on market farming and community gardens in a manner consistent with the supportive language for farms and gardens in other recent city plan documents – the Darbo-Worthington Neighborhood Plan and, in particular, the new City of Madison Comprehensive Plan, on which the Milwaukee Street Special Area Plan's goals and recommendations are organized. A final recommendation, for

later consideration outside of the current area plan process, suggests exploring the use of a city zoning designation to facilitate the future establishment of market farming within the plan area.

The recommendations are as follows:

- Under the Area Plan draft's "Green & Resilient" group of recommendations, the mention of community gardens in Goal 1, Recommendation 5 (p. 25), should be removed from that recommendation and re-inserted within a new, separate recommendation to "Explore the establishment of market farms and community gardens throughout the plan area."
- Under the "Culture & Character" group of recommendations, Goal 1, Recommendation 1 (p. 26) should be changed from "Consider reflecting the existing rural/agrarian design of the Voit Farm area in new development patterns" to: "Look to reinforce the site's history and longstanding public perception as an agricultural site through new development patterns reflecting the concept of *agrihoods*, similar to Troy Gardens on Madison's Northside."
- Under the "Culture & Character" group of recommendations, Goal 1, Recommendation 4 (p. 26) should be changed from "Support community events, i.e. food carts, farmer's markets, and community gardens" to "To promote local food security and food businesses, encourage opportunities for the direct sale of fresh food grown either within the plan area or from nearby farms and gardens, through an onsite seasonal farmers market or farmstand."
- Finally, use this opportunity to explore the future feasibility of using the city's Urban Agricultural District zoning designation for the facilitation of market farming within parts of the plan area. The stated purpose of the Urban Agricultural District is:

...to ensure that urban garden and farm areas are appropriately located and protected to meet needs for local food production, and to enhance community health, community education, garden-related job training, natural resources protection, preservation of green space, and community enjoyment. (MGO 28.093)

This purpose is seen by the Urban Agriculture Work Group as highly compatible with the community aspirations currently in the Area Plan draft; for example, its "Green & Resilient" and "Culture & Character" goals. According to city staff, the Urban Agricultural District designation has been underutilized since its inclusion in the 2009 Zoning Ordinance, with Troy Gardens being the only existing application.

Conclusion

The Urban Agriculture Work Group sees the Milwaukee Street Special Area Plan as a continuation of its advocacy for the inclusion of community food system recommendations in the city's planning and visioning efforts. The Work Group respectfully requests that the MFPC consider the recommendations in this memo, and, if agreeable, formally approve them for submittal to Planning staff and the other referral bodies.