

I'm here this evening as the Chair of the Farmland Preservation Task Force. In recent years, some of you may know that I have chaired the Madison Food Policy Council, the Plan Commission and the Community Gardens Committee; I also served as interim director of the City's Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development from 2019-2020.

As described in the Report, our process involved a hard-working and highly-focused group that met over 30 times in the last 7 months. Members were chosen for their expertise in farming, sustainability, land use planning, conservation, and real estate development. Everyone participated in full Task Force meetings as well as working on smaller teams to research specific topics.

Purpose of the Task Force – to provide tools for City decision-makers to address the obvious tension between the desire to develop buildings and tax base with the need to maintain community and climate resilience by growing food. The City has recognized this tension in its adopted plans, and made significant efforts to support growing food on public land for decades. It has also provided zoning categories for urban agriculture that respect nearby uses, but there has been no clear guidance on the value of maintaining farmland in the community or factors identified for evaluating development proposals on productive soils.

Indeed, it was the Raemisch Farm development proposal that highlighted the need for guidance on this topic and prompted the resolution establishing this Task Force. The only opposition I am aware of has come from Smart Growth Inc. which objected to its formation from the outset and has attempted to influence its work along the way – but our goal has been to provide a policy framework that can help to avoid what they view as “wasteful controversy” in the future.

Accordingly, our Report sets forth RECOMMENDATIONS – ideas, suggestions, tools that could be helpful – along with over 200 pages of resources and research provided to educate City staff, members of relevant Boards and Commissions, and elected officials like yourselves about evaluating land in our community that can be used to grow food.

I am pleased to see so many of you listed as sponsors, and the recommendation to ADOPT. While we might wish an affirmative vote conveyed support for our recommendations, we understand that it “merely signals the completion of the requested work” in the words of the City Attorney's office. Discussions of its recommendations will be appropriate later....

We hope your vote this evening is a unanimous acknowledgement of our work, and we wish to thank Heather Stouder and Jeff Greger for their invaluable staff support during this process.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have at the appropriate time. Thank you.

## SMART GROWTH CORRESPONDENCE:

May 10 letter to Task Force: covered the following points:

- Appreciates recs re: farmland the city already owns
- Notes that new devmts have requirements for greenspace, allows for gardens
- Appreciates incentives that provide “bonuses” that would benefit developers
- Strongly objects to the “late-addition” **due to a staff vacation, fully explained in the public meeting** recommendation regarding annexed lands
  - Invites controversy each time a developer applies for rezoning, e.g. Raemisch
  - Requested a language change in the recommendation that this be done “exclusively through framework area plans, neighborhood development plans or other plans approved by the Common Council and incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan” **which would delay the process until 2028**
  - Believe it envisions an entirely new planning process
  - Fair market value should be paid to acquire parcels
- Believes there are strong public policy reasons for NOT preserving farmland in cities
- Believes only dense development along corridors reduces GHGs
- Asks a bunch of (largely zoning) questions that are both premature and silly

May 15 emails to Steinhoff: If the Common Council endorsed this recommendation (zoning #6), it could set Madison on the road to preserving farmland within the city limits (current and future), which would force more housing development on farmland farther out in Dane County. This appears to be contrary to CARPC’s regional planning framework. **Both the City and CARPC planning documents favor locating housing on transit and utility corridors and building density there. Dane County actively preserves farmland for its value to the community and the planet. Collaborative planning can meet both goals, e.g. with agricomunities, that are described in the Report, Bt Farms off East Buckeye Road.**

May 15 email to EDC:

“As noted in my earlier letter to the task force, the following recommendation in the task force's report is particularly problematic: "Evaluate land added to the city through recent annexation and anticipated future annexation for potential urban agriculture preservation/protection" This recommendation is vague and will invite wasteful controversy each time a developer requests rezoning and approval of a plat for a new residential subdivision on land recently annexed or annexed in the future into the city. Madison needs more housing, not more obstruction to housing. I urge you to include in your motion an expression of concern from the Economic Development Committee to the Common Council about this vague, controversy-creating recommendation.” **EDC failed to make quorum, provided no input on the Report.**

Add comments to Mayor 6/5/23