

From: [Maureen Rickman](#)
To: [Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Lake Mendota Drive
Date: Thursday, March 10, 2022 7:49:07 AM

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

To the members of the Transportation Committee

I very much appreciate having had the opportunity to provide commentary to all of you last night about the Lake Mendota Drive plan. I know that you all work very hard and put in long hours, so may not have been at your best.

It saddens me that the appreciation and respect shown to you by speaker after speaker expressing appreciation for the City's work was not reciprocated by all members of the committee. It has taken a full night's sleep to digest the insults directed at me and my neighbors last night. I have yet to absorb what it means that members of my City government can so easily impugn my character and question the motives of me and my neighbors.

The first assault came from the Committee member who 'called me out' for ableist thinking. They do not know my heart. And in the very few minutes I had to speak, I was judged as personally flawed for asserting that my neighbor in a wheelchair felt safe on LMD and for asserting the LMD can provide more accessibility if re-developed in line with its history as a parkway. There is evidence that other City parkways provide just that.

Words matter. The City's policies are documents created by sifting and winnowing of ideas, and are subject to the kind of flawed thinking that can arise from a narrow focus on a single issue. Narrow thinking is worsened by creating a specter of fear for the safety of vulnerable people. The people who developed policies related to accessibility are not personally flawed. They are deeply empathic. I have to believe that their human-centric thinking is a consequence of the lack of awareness of any other way to approach this issue. There is no room for personal attacks. It is the policy that is flawed. Not the people who developed it.

The second assault came in the vocal assertion that I and my neighbors are proposing self-serving arguments akin to other neighborhoods that want to preserve the character of their neighborhood for their own benefit. That sweeping characterization dismisses the decades long work of the stewards of this part of the City that have struggled to preserve our groundwater, protect our lakes, and bring forward the historical and cultural value of this area.

It was not without a fight that my backyard was placed on the State and National Register of Historic places. It was not without a fight that Merrill Spring Park was re-developed so as to improve its long-term viability and bring forward its connection to our contemporaneous Ho-Chunk neighbors. It was not without a fight that the 9 public lake access courts along LMD were subject to signage and property management so as to increase their use for non-residents. These were not fights for me and my neighbors to have a prettier place to live. Even though LMD is already a destination unto itself, with no active canvassing there are already 50 people who have signed onto a petition to improve LMD as a parkway. Our stewardship of this land serves the broader community. It is hurtful to impugn the validity of our motivations.

And finally, I would like to point out that our Alder's lack of understanding about the historical significance and ecological fragility of this region is not a personal flaw on his part. It is a consequence of the marginalization of those concerns in the development of City policies. When he took on the civic duty to represent our neighborhood to the city, he had to rely on written policy. Even if he had walked along LMD past the springs and through the historic section, he would not have known their importance. He would have had to walk with me or one of my knowledgeable neighbors to appreciate their value.

This is the problem with oral history. It relies on personal connection. The city can do better than that. If done well, the LMD re-design can connect us more deeply to our history, to our place in the natural world and to each other.

Thank you sincerely,

Maureen Rickman