

Nov. 16, 2007

Dear members of the Plan Commission,

Members of Friends of Starkweather Creek have been meeting with city Planning staff for the past year to discuss the Pumpkin Hollow Neighborhood Development Plan. Overall, we feel this plan is fairly good, but we still have some concerns. This letter first sets out some general comments and then lists some specific text changes we would like in the plan.

GENERAL COMMENTS

1. Starkweather Creek section

We are surprised that the Open Space section of this plan (starting on page 39) does not have a section about Starkweather Creek. We ask that one be added. Recommendations should be consistent with and/or refer to: Friends of Starkweather comments below; the goals of the existing city Starkweather Plan; the UW Water Resources Management study on Starkweather, and the background information (page 6 and 7 of this Plan).

In addition, the board of Friends of Starkweather Creek would like to see a draft of this section and/or meet with city Planning staff about it before the plan is approved.

2. Open space buffer

For many years, Madison city plans called for an open space buffer between Madison and Sun Prairie in this area. This important permanent open space was to be ¼ to ½ a mile wide (See the 1990 PADP). We regret the demise of this goal. We ask that some elements of the goal of community separation and environmental corridors be maintained as much as possible in the Pumpkin Hollow plan.

One way to increase the amount of open space is to increase housing density in other locations in the plan.

3. Buffers for wetlands and creeks

There are many important wetlands, creeks and tributaries in the Pumpkin Hollow planning area. The Plan recommends good protections for Token Creek. However, there are spots where the protection is inadequate, especially for Starkweather Creek.

Creating environmental corridors along creeks and wetlands is valuable for many reasons:

- (1) it protects water quality;
- (2) it creates continuous habitat corridors for wildlife;
- (3) it provides a desirable location for recreational (bike and walking) trails.
- (4) a wooded buffer creates a visual and noise barrier for adjacent properties. All of these facets create community assets, which in turn increase property values.

There are some "pinch points" where the Plan shows corridors as narrow as 70 feet. (See Map 6). We would like to see these bottlenecks removed to create continuous corridors as wide as possible.

4. Infiltration

Starkweather is a creek in trouble. Because of development, the base flow in the creek has dwindled. (Base flow is the amount of current when it is dry). Storm surges after a rain have increased dramatically. The result is flooding and increased pollution downstream.

When you consider development in Pumpkin Hollow, think about the water quality in Lake Monona. If we are serious about improving the water quality of our lakes, we need to improve development plans in places like Pumpkin Hollow; every development here has a direct effect downstream.

We are very concerned about City Engineer Larry Nelson's staff comments about infiltration. We support the stormwater recommendations in the plan. (See page 59). If these are not feasible with the development that is proposed, we urge you to modify the plan to make it possible.

5. Location and design of neighborhood center

We support the creation of a mixed-use neighborhood center as this Plan recommends. We have two concerns:

(1) This center must have a traditional neighborhood design (TND) and be transit-oriented (TOD), with a higher-density pedestrian-oriented center. It must not be allowed to include typical strip malls, big box retail, gas stations, or drive-thrus, even though there will surely be economic pressure to do so. Instead, it must be truly mixed-use, designed to meet the needs of the immediate neighborhood. The Plan is good but should be more strongly worded.

(2) We do not believe that right next to Starkweather creek is the best place for this neighborhood center and highest density housing.

Our concerns here are based on water quality: a development with a lot of parking lots and other impervious surfaces immediately next to the creek will limit the options for infiltration of stormwater and keeping pollution out of the creek. In addition, this site has steep slopes, which will mean more erosion and property that is harder to develop.

SPECIFIC TEXT COMMENTS

We have included a copy of Map 6 marked with the locations of the specific comments below.

1. Please widen the creek buffer on the Starkweather branch between Hoepker and Anderson roads. The map shows the corridor as narrow as 80 feet total, minus a 10-15 foot wide bike path (or just 30 feet on either side of the creek). This corridor should be more wild and vegetated than just a drainage ditch or mowed swale.
2. There is a spot that a branch of Starkweather crosses Portage Rd south of Hoepker where the buffer is also too narrow. Please widen it as above to eliminate this bottleneck.
3. There is a spot where a coldwater tributary of Token Creek crosses a future subdivision road, west of Portage Rd, where the buffer is also too narrow. Please widen it as above to eliminate this bottleneck.

4. Sommer Valley Circle is surrounded by Token Creek Park and is very close to Token Creek wetlands. We disagree with the Plan recommendations (page 31) that would allow one additional subdivision of each parcel. Instead, the properties on the west and north side of the subdivision should be left as they are. Additional subdivision could be allowed in the rest of the parcels.

In addition, we believe the word NOT was left out of one sentence. Our text suggestions are as follows:

*The street configuration provides limited access and does **not** lend itself easily to much additional subdivision, in any case. For these reasons, it is recommended that Sommer Valley continue essentially as present, but that over time, properties of a least five acres **on the eastern half of the subdivision** may be divided to create one additional lot, consistent with a more...*

5. It may be desirable to provide pedestrian access to Token Creek Park from the southern end of Sommer Valley Circle, depending on the future site of the park entrance.

6. To reduce the impact of the neighborhood center on Starkweather Creek (see above), we suggest moving the high-density development east along Hoepker Road. Splitting Hoepker Road into two one-way pair streets here (as in the Pioneer neighborhood) would slow traffic and help create the feeling of an urban pedestrian friendly "downtown" center.

A different option would be to move the neighborhood center near the corner of Hoepker and American Family Parkway.

7. In no cases should stormwater be allowed to flow directly from streets and developed areas into Starkweather Creek. While the section on open drainageways (page 58) suggests that swales will be used, we suggest the addition of a clear, concise sentence to clarify.

The final comments below are suggestions we had while studying the draft Plan, and Friends of Starkweather does not have strong opinions on these items.

8. A street connection between two loop streets west of Portage and south of Hoepker would create better neighborhood connectivity instead of isolated developments.

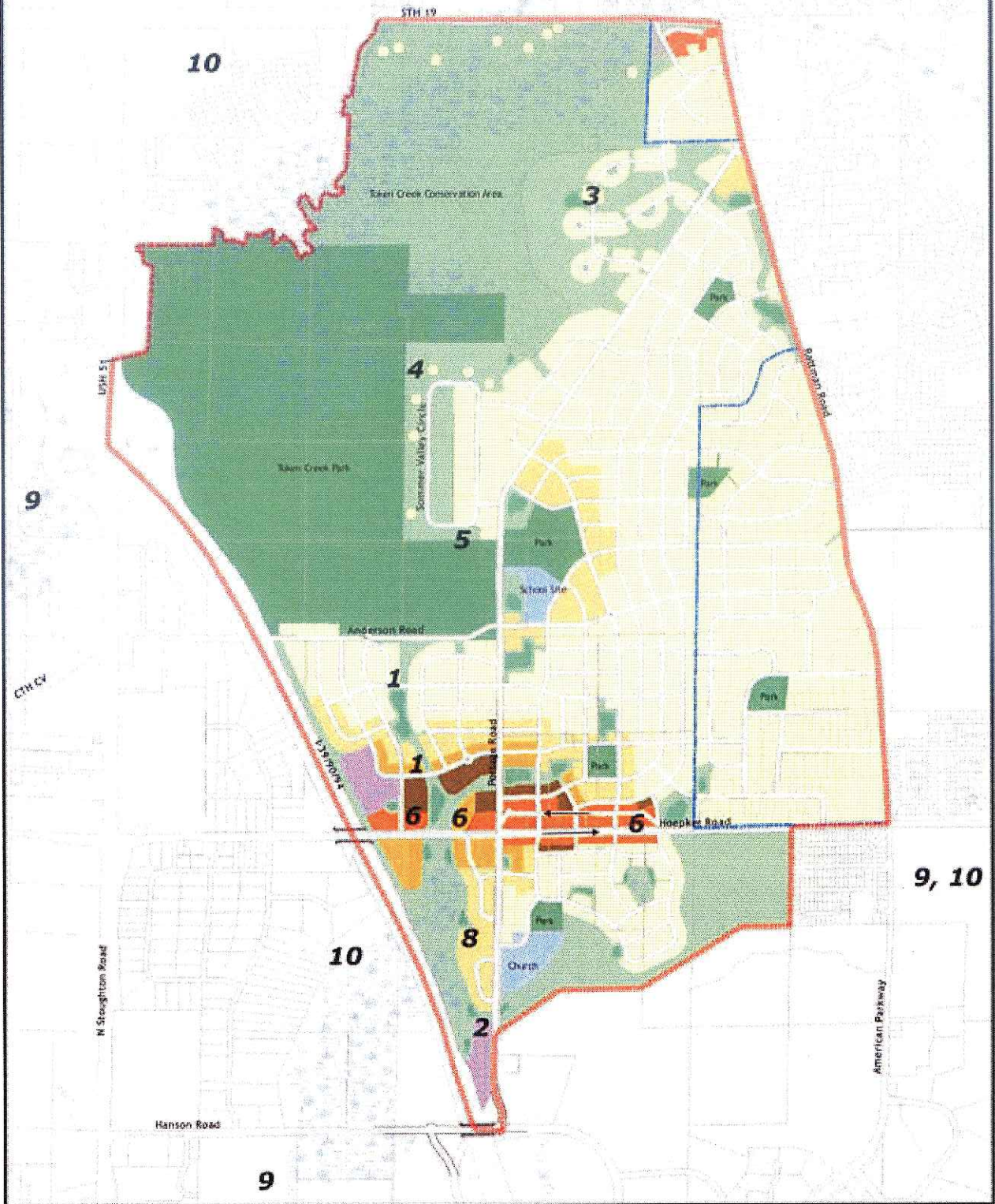
9. It would be helpful to include a map that better showed the context of the Pumpkin Hollow neighborhood and adjacent open space. Two options would be a section of the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan map or a wider view of the Madison Comp Plan map.

10. On Map 9 it would be helpful to show where bike paths would continue outside the neighborhood.

Thank you for your hard work!

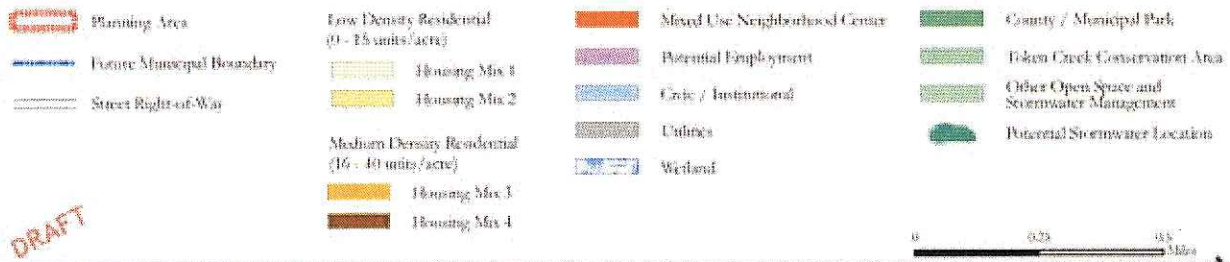
Sincerely,
Michael Forster Rothbart and Scott Taylor
for Friends of Starkweather Creek

Comments from Friends of Starkweather, 11-07



Map 6: Land Use and Street Plan

Pumpkin Hollow Neighborhood Development Plan
October 2007



DRAFT

