



Madison Parks Division

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**MADISON
PARKS**

Date: March 24, 2026

To: Mayor Rhodes-Conway and All Alders

From: Eric Knepp, Parks Superintendent

CC: Finance Committee and Board of Park Commissioners

Re: Tilton Park Expansion – Acquisition of 1010 North Street

Greetings Mayor and All Alders,

The proposed resolution (Legislative File ID #92425) authorizes the acquisition of property located at 1010 North Street (“Subject Property”), which is approximately 8.86 acres of land. The proposed acquisition will result in the expansion of the existing Tilton Park. With this acquisition, the total park would measure approximately 9.19 acres. The Subject Property has long been identified as potential future parkland and staff recommend that it is in the best interest of the City to pursue its acquisition.

History of Tilton Park

The property at 1010 North Street, now making up the East Madison Little League fields, was formerly owned by Oscar Mayer. When the nearby plant was closed and sold, this property was sold, along with the rest of the Oscar Mayer holdings, to OM Land, LLC. Since 1994, Oscar Mayer leased the property to the Little League, which lease was assumed by OM Land, LLC.

In early 2024, Common Council authorized the acquisition of 2248, 2250 and 2256 Roth Street (Resolution – 24-00033, Legislative File ID 81375). This land was acquired with the understanding that, in the future, the adjacent East Madison Little League Fields would likely be dedicated for park purposes when the Oscar Mayer Factory property develops. The resulting park was officially named Tilton Park and is approximately one-third of an acre. Development of the Oscar Mayer property is underway, however a large-scale redevelopment that would be able to use the property at 1010 North Street to meet park and open space dedication requirements has not yet materialized. Rather than hold the land for this future purpose, OM Land, LLC is interested in selling the land that currently operates as East Madison Little League Fields. The City and the Parks Division have an interest in preserving this land for park and open space purposes.

Relevant Plans

Multiple plans support the City's acquisition of this land for park and open space purposes, including the Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan, the City's Comprehensive Plan, and the 2025-2030 Park and Open Space Plan. The Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan, adopted in 2020, specifically recommends that the City *"Work with the Oscar Mayer property owners, and East Madison Little League to maintain long-term public open space for baseball."* The 2018 adopted Comprehensive Plan for the City of Madison recommends that the City *"Acquire parkland and upgrade park facilities to accommodate more diverse activities and gatherings"* and that the City *"Promote the physical health and wellbeing of all residents."* In 2022, consistent with the Special Area Plan and the Comprehensive Plan, the City rezoned the land from TR-C4 (Transitional Residential-Consistent 4) to PR (Parks and Recreation) (Ordinance-22-00017, Legislative File ID #69497). The 2025-2030 Park and Open Space Plan recommends that the Parks Division, *"Promote the physical and social health of the diverse community."* The Proposed acquisition will allow for continued recreational programming for youth within the community and better serve the neighborhood as former Oscar Mayer properties are developed.

Results of Appraisal

Upon learning that OM Land, LLC was interested in selling the land, in late 2025, the City of Madison Office of Real Estate Services ordered an appraisal for the property located at 1010 North Street. Bussen Company delivered an appraisal dated January 8, 2026. The property is currently zoned PR, Parks and Recreation District, as per the City of Madison. However, at the City's request, the appraisal was developed under the hypothetical condition that the subject property is zoned TR-C4, Traditional Residential – Consistent District 4 (its original zoning). Following review of property using standard accepted appraisal procedures and requests specified by the City, Bussen Company provided the opinion of appraised value at \$1,600,000.

It is important to note that the request to conduct the appraisal under the hypothetical condition the property is zoned as TR-C4 was made by the City due to a historical relationship and mutual understanding that the Oscar Mayer properties would develop in a specific manner. Under the previous mutually agreed upon plan, this area would be developed as low-density residential as identified in the Comprehensive Plan Generalized Future Land Use Map and the land operated as a Little League facility would eventually be dedicated as parkland. In the summer of 2025, the owners of the Oscar Mayer properties expressed interest in developing a proposal inconsistent with the mutually agreed upon plans that would have otherwise resulted in redevelopment of the site for non-park purposes. Therefore, the appraised value was used as the beginning negotiating point. Following a closed session negotiation strategy meeting with Finance Committee and to secure the property without incurring significantly more financial or opportunity resources from the City or current owners of Oscar Mayer properties, the City offered the purchase price of \$1,800,000. The purchase price was accepted.

Environmental Considerations of Site

In 2024, the City ordered a Phase 1 Environmental Site Analysis (ESA) when acquiring the Roth Street properties, which are now Tilton Park. Adjoining properties are always considered when conducting Phase 1 ESA. There were no recognized environmental concerns as a result of the Analysis. Two nearby properties (Oscar Mayer to the west across Packers Ave and the former Burke Wastewater Treatment Plant to the north across Aberg Ave) are contaminated. These sites are well investigated and have groundwater contamination, but after reviewing reports on Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources databases, the plumes do not appear to impact the Subject Property.

A review of topographic maps illustrates that the Subject Property and the adjoining Eken Park neighborhood appears to be wetland that was filled in the early 1900's. Historic urban fill may consist of a heterogeneous mixture of refuse, construction materials, and coal or fly ash, which may contain contaminants. Aerial photographs and insurance maps show the Subject Property as an agricultural use until 1949 when a skating rink and parking area were built north of the current Tilton Park. These were removed by 1968 when Aberg Ave was built. There is some risk of contamination associated with vehicles parking next to the skating rink, especially if it was not paved, but they may be minimal since the area has been improved with baseball fields.

In the future, as the City considers redevelopment and other improvements to the Subject Property, additional environmental investigation will be required. Site remediation may be necessary to address potential soil contamination associated with historic urban fill and the skating rink parking area. As per discussions with the Finance Committee and understanding of the results of Phase 1 ESA conducted for the current Tilton Park and other relevant information provided, the City is forgoing a Phase 1 ESA for the Subject Property in favor of the agreed upon purchase price of \$1,800,000.

Funding for the Acquisition & Ongoing Maintenance

The proposed acquisition will be entirely funded through Park Land Acquisition funds, which can only be used for acquiring parkland. Sufficient authority exists within the Land Acquisition Major (MUNIS Major #17128) of the Parks Division's Adopted Capital Budget. The Lease with the Little League allows for the expansion of parkland to address recreational needs of the community with relatively low operational costs as the operational responsibilities are addressed by the Little League under the current lease. No additional appropriations are required at this time for the acquisition or operations. Future improvements to the park would be addressed through the Parks Divisions Capital Budget request. In addition, contributions from the Little League or future partner(s) may potentially be negotiated as part of the Lease renewals in the future.

Implications of Existing Lease

The Subject Property has functioned as Little League fields for decades. The Seller has maintained a lease with East Madison Little League, Inc. for programming, maintenance and improvements necessary to support youth baseball programming since 1994. The lease is in its second renewal period, in which the term runs through 2034. The lease contains a termination clause that requires 18 months' notification to terminate the lease. As such the proposed resolution authorizes the City to, at least initially, assume the lease with East Madison Little League, Inc. In the event that plans move forward for redevelopment or improvements to the land, the Parks Division and Board of Park Commissioners would need to evaluate possible options to continue the existing lease, solicit other programming partners or pursue other alternative park uses.

The matter of the acquisition has involved only conversations between the current owner and the City. There have not been any substantial discussions with organizers of the East Madison Little League, Inc, which is a non-profit organization. As the proposed acquisition progresses, the Parks Division will engage in conversations with representatives from the East Madison Little League. The Parks Division is committed to providing equitable access for all to the park system. As such, the Parks Division will continue to work with organizers of the East Madison Little League to understand their membership and how their program is operated, as well as ensure alignment with the City's goals for equitable access to recreation services and programs.

Future Development of Tilton Park

The Parks Division has no immediate plans to redevelop or reprogram the space. Any redevelopment of the space will require significant financial resources. Significant public engagement would be required to plan for any future improvements. The primary goal of this acquisition is to ensure that the land is preserved for parks and recreation purposes to meet current and future recreation needs of the community for generations to come.