

From: [Kristen Slack](#)
To: [Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: In response to public meeting on 1/13/22, Lake Mendota Drive project (sorry, typo in last email)
Date: Friday, January 14, 2022 3:58:48 PM

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

Hello, members of the City of Madison Transportation Commission.

I am a resident of the Spring Harbor neighborhood of Madison, and live on the stretch of Lake Mendota Drive that the City plans to reconstruct in 2022-24.

I just watched the video of the Transportation Commission meeting from 1/13/22. The discussion on LMD reconstruction starts at 1 hour 13 min (1:13) through 1:48. There are some encouraging aspects of the presentation by City engineer Jim Wolfe related to the preservation of trees, a MAJOR concern of the neighborhood residents, but I take strong issue with Alderman Furman's characterization of the feedback he has received from residents (watch from 1:35). He chose to highlight what he presented as an offensive comment that absolutely does not represent the views of this neighborhood, sidewalks or no sidewalks, which clearly affected the Commission's discussion. Keith intentionally twisted something a resident said to him. He told you *"I had one resident tell me that people who use a wheelchair can't afford to live in the neighborhood anyway and therefore we shouldn't worry about that."* Here is that resident's response to the comment Keith altered:

"I'm the guilty party making the statement about not being able to afford living in this neighborhood in a wheelchair because that's exactly what happened to my neighbor and my elderly parents. All of them ended up moving because taxes rates here are prohibitive to people on disability payments or fixed income. I was speaking from my own experience. Apparently I should have clarified that in my email to him since he used it as a negative example of our neighborhoods unwillingness to accommodate someone with a disability. That is not my view or what was intended. For him to characterize it as such was low."

Keith has been non-transparent, divisive, and insulting toward residents throughout this process, including calling people names who are requesting that alternatives to sidewalks be explored. I also want to say, given the alder's choice of an example of the comments he has been hearing, that in a survey circulated by the Spring Harbor Neighborhood Association to which nearly 200 residents have responded so far, those in the neighborhood with household members (including themselves) with disabilities or conditions that limit mobility have a nuanced view of the project. Yes, increased safety is a desire for some, but for most, not at the expense of trees and environmental concerns, and many report that the hardships of cost and maintenance outweigh a need for sidewalks. And the group least in favor of sidewalks? Those age 70 and over.

There are many points of agreement among respondents to the neighborhood survey so far, like concern about tree loss and net increase of hardscape, and the desire for speed calming measures, whether or not people are in favor of sidewalks or not. But there has been no leadership from the City (most importantly from our representative to the City) seeking to collect this kind of information broadly and build off of points of agreement. I am willing to trust Jim Wolfe, the engineer on this project, to take these kinds of things into consideration as a first design iteration is developed. Good leadership from our alder would have involved outreach efforts to learn what residents' views are, well in advance of the project's now imminent start date, identifying points of alignment, and building on those commonly shared values and views wherever possible. But instead we got an approach that was completely the opposite.

To be transparent myself, my personal view is not for or against sidewalks per se, but in strong support of not extending the current hardscape footprint we have and wanting to elevate the importance of considering any environmental impacts of sidewalk installation, including the loss of grand old trees that literally define the character of this neighborhood. And of course cost and maintenance, although my family could ultimately deal with this if the assessment is not sky high (we have a lot of linear feet given where our particular property is situated). But I also have *empathy* for those in the neighborhood for whom the cost to homeowners is prohibitive and for whom maintenance of sidewalks would be a severe burden. Leaders on this project have shown a complete lack of empathy for such residents and instead have chosen to call them "selfish". A totally unproductive approach to this project. I just wanted the Commission to know that Keith Furman's characterization of the residents' views in this neighborhood was wholly (including the one person he chose to highlight) incorrect, disingenuous and harmful, and has created a lot of anger and resentment in and among residents that didn't need to be there if this had been handled very differently.

Kristen Slack

█ Lake Mendota Dr.