

Members of the Board of Park Commissioners,

December 12, 2018

It is not appropriate to approve the James Madison Park Master Plan tonight. Your referral is the appropriate, positive action, reflecting the importance and legacy impact this plan will have on the entire city. As an architect in my 11th year of service on city committees, we are being asked to review an over 200-page document, dated today, that has been compiled over the last year. Prior to its posting on Friday, stakeholders were provided different documents on the website that have been removed. Your 2016 Statement of Policy and Guidelines for Master Plan Activities within the Madison Park System **requires you ensure individual park master plans are consistent with the most recently adopted [City of Madison Park and Open Space Plan](#) and [Comprehensive Plan](#)**. Both plans have been recently updated and adopted, by this Commission at the end of October and by the Common Council in August, respectively. I have found a draft of the adopted copy of the Park and Open Space Plan available online. **This individual park master plan cannot compromise goals in adopted plans of community members citywide.**

The inclusive outreach of all three of these planning efforts has gained a more diverse input from residents to ensure decisions, and designs, represent the entire Madison community. This public greenspace on the lake is used and celebrated by a diverse user group including **>10,000 residents within a half mile*** and an iconic vista that welcomes those entering the city on Gorham Street and from the Capitol Square.

My concerns are with the placement of program elements in the proposed plan, not any of the diverse program functions. What I am hearing is that participants support and celebrate the diversity of uses. The locations proposed on the plan do not meet their needs.

Take steps by allowing time for what the master plan draft report provides: the program uses desired by the community and the opportunity to **ensure the locations in the park are consistent with the [Park and Open Space Plan](#) and [Comprehensive Plan](#).**

Take steps to [Provide opportunities for cultural interaction by facilitating community and events and through the display of public art](#). Allow transparency and for people to remain engaged in this process now that we have a draft report. This could be something informal or we ask the Parks Foundation to have Makeshift Festival in James Madison Park, with food carts where there would be a cafe, have Learn to Row Day, visit Gates. Create an art installation of parked cars where proposed. Easily, inexpensively, we as a community need to be given the opportunity to evaluate if that this layout **before design in this contract proceeds.**

Take steps to issue RFPs for operators of the café and paddleboat rental. Operators were selected and became a critical part of the design process for The Beacon (operated by Catholic Charities), the Henry Vilas Zoo Restrooms and Concessions and the Park Edge Park Ridge Employment Center (operated by the Urban League of Greater Madison). The expertise of the operators will answer questions that impact policy, maintenance, design and placement of program elements. Is a seasonal or year-round café viable without visibility from the street? Are beer sales being proposed? A paddle sports vendor indicated water is too rough, but pontoon boats may be possible.

Take steps to provide the recommendation(s) for change(s) in maintenance practices required by your 2016 Parks Master Plan Report Format.

Since Friday, I have reviewed the plan for consistency focusing on your Parks and Open Space Plan Goals, the Comprehensive Plan and the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Plan. Each of the following goals are met by locating the new shelter at the west end of the park.

- 1. Water Quality.** The location of the outfall provides a full city block of park west of Hancock Street. A west shelter location and stormwater management are not mutually exclusive. **Take steps, immediately, to define scope and begin an interdepartmental stormwater management project.** One feature that has gained overwhelming support is the stormwater management component. Only this issue merits urgency tonight.
- 2. This design does not Connect the community to water by designing areas for increased water access on public lands, including access for low income populations.** The proposed pier is boat traffic, located in the one existing lake access point for paddle sports. This is unsafe and congests multiple community uses. Seasonal courtesy dockage should be a safe distance from swimmers and paddle sports by being located west of the Emergent Wetland. A west shelter better connects users to the water without a road passing between the shelter and the water.
- 3. This plan does not provide Safety.** The proposed shelter location is not consistent with 2 of the 5 top opportunities identified by the City of Madison Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design officer, and the neighborhood officer: **reducing blind corners, and making any future building entries (e.g., for a café) visible from the street.** All 5 opportunities were posted in the 'What informs this plan' document. A west shelter allows visibility from to all building entrances from Gorham Street.
- 4. Water Quality,** again, should be the priority. With rooftop access at the Gilman Street Overlook, a new west shelter would be a greater distance from the water than the proposed shelter now pushed away from the street and toward the water at the narrowest point of the park. The proposed shelter effectively bisects the park requiring all sport courts and their many users to be congested.
- 5. Park and open space serve a significant role in the promotion and protection of public health for those who live, work, learn and play in the City of Madison.** The existing lawn provides over 130,000 s.f. of uninterrupted green space and serves diverse users. From the sidewalk people enjoy the benefits of being in the park and have access to nature in this urban location. I estimate the largest uninterrupted green space provided in the plan is approximately 88,000 s.f. (including the green space offset by the basketball court relocation, not parking changes). **I estimate the contiguous green space is conservatively a 70% REDUCTION** despite being cited that the parking lot redesign 'creates more contiguous green space for the large open space area'.
- 6. This plan does not Preserve landmark vistas from public access areas.** No new buildings or parking lots should be located within a designated Priority Viewshed, Vista or View To Lake in the Comprehensive Plan. **City of Madison Comprehensive Plan** indicates to **Preserve defining views of the lakes, downtown skyline, and Capitol from publicly accessible locations.** "Some of these views are shorter, more intimate views of the lake that reinforce people's connection to nature and the city, but all of these views are important. **Once they are lost, they are impossible to recover.**"

Alder Zeller's letter included in public comment states: 'The designers noted that lake views would not be significantly diminished since the new parking will be put in at a level lower than the sidewalk and thus will not diminish sight lines appreciably from what exists currently given the on street parking.' Respectfully, the proposed design submitted is only partially lowered. The design team has also said they raised portions of the parking to allow pedestrians to enter the park from Gorham Street. Vehicles and the proposed enlarged shelter will undoubtedly negatively impact every view identified in the Comprehensive Plan, **not only from the street, but from the publicly accessible sidewalk along the park. This is a legacy decision that will impact generations.** A west shelter and reconfigured parking preserve all landmark vistas from public access areas.

7. Preserve and promote City of Madison park's historic legacy as well as its future legacy. A west shelter location supports the park's legacy as the oldest section of the park which was originally proposed as the shelter location in 1940. Pedestrian scale lighting on Gorham would visibly connect these districts, calming traffic and provide uninterrupted views between two Landmarks, the Gates of Heaven and the Boathouse. This park physically connects the Mansion Hill Historic District and the Fourth Lake Ridge National Historic District. The park is two blocks from the East Dayton Street National Historic District, the site of Madison's first African-American neighborhood.

8. Locate a new shelter at the west end to reduce paved surfaces and support preserving the urban tree canopy contributing to our emotional and physical well being.

9. This plan does not Provide an accessible path system to the entrance of the building and all accessible areas is required. The proposed elevator is not a universally accessible route by forcing some users access by elevator rather than an accessible path system. I estimate the elevator is over a \$100K investment and is unnecessary. This location for a shelter is inappropriate. The west end of the park allows more space to provide universally accessible paths.

Gates of Heaven must have an accessible restroom closer to the building. This also supports a new shelter at the west end. The scale of event space in the new shelter, regardless of location, must be compatible with both Gates and the Boathouse. An appendix of cost estimates provided verbally are not included for development of timelines and prioritization of goals per the 2008 adopted Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Plan.

Gates of Heaven must have adjacent parking. A parking lot that circles, not dead ends, functioning like the future McPike Park lot proposed. My comparison to McPike Park and Breese is that cars should be predominantly on the street. Zoning and Traffic Engineering do not require parking in parks. Those nearby parks and they are highly visited and successful.

A substantial new opportunity is not reflected in the master plan graphic. Page 44 of the report: 'Conversations with City of Madison Traffic Engineering identified the **potential to add ten new parallel parking stalls along Butler Street.** This opportunity is not reflected in the master plan graphic.' Locating the new shelter at the west end allows a more efficient parking lot serving both buildings. This will elevate congestion at the Boathouse to better serve the Mendota Rowing Club. This allows contiguous greenspace to be maintained and experienced from the sidewalk in a designated priority viewshed.

10. This report clearly acknowledges the inability for this plan to meet the adopted Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Plan Parks and Open Space Goal 4: Protect parks and green spaces from encroachment by public infrastructure such as parking lots and paved areas. Add buffers of green space when parcels next to parks are developed or become available for public purchase.

The proposed parking lot clearly does not meet this goal. In addition, the current damaged concrete retaining wall does not provide an appropriate buffer between the developed Verex Building site and the park. A sustainable, green shelter located at the west end of the park with a preserved and enhanced urban forest would provide this buffer.

The 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design by Terrapin Bright Green includes people's desire to have prospect (an unimpeded view over a distance) and shelter (a place for withdrawal, from environmental conditions or the main flow of activity, in which the individual is protected from behind and overhead). This supports a new shelter located in the wooded hillside of the base of Mansion Hill offers that shelter and prospect over the lake and the large common greenspace to the full length of the park.

Please take steps by not approving this plan tonight. Referral is a positive action for the planning process. **Provide an exceptional system of safe, accessible, well-planned and maintained parks, facilities, public cemetery, natural areas, and public shorelines.**

Thank you,

Dawn O'Kroley

646 E Gorham Street

Attachments:

Pages 82 and 83 of the Comprehensive Plan

My email from yesterday requesting calculations. This attachment includes my calculations that the contiguous green space is conservatively a 70% REDUCTION.

My email from May 1, 2018 that has been twice been omitted from public record.

Also attached are a copy of two documents approved by Parks Commission On February 10, 2016:

Parks Master Plan Report Format

Statement of Policy and Guidelines or Master Plan Activities within the Madison Park System

***This font references the draft 2018-2023 Park and Open Space Plan.**

From: Dawn O'Kroley

Sent: Tuesday, May 01, 2018 8:16 AM

To: zia@urbanassetsconsulting.com; 'Sarah Lerner' **Cc:** 'Joe Porter' 'Melissa Destree' and the stakeholder group

Subject: Re: JMMP Designs & Additional Comments



Hi Zia and all, this is a sunset photo taken last Saturday, April 28, 2018 from the basketball court looking northwest. This is a spring sunset and the angle of the sun will travel east of the water tower. Placement of the shelter at the location of the basketball courts will offer a stunning lake view and opportunity to engage the waterfront. (Scroll to the bottom of this email for a shelter precedent image...)

This park is prime lakefront property – engage the waterfront is listed as the first design goal yet none of the options engage the waterfront with a new shelter. We have the opportunity to create a space at the bottom of Mansion Hill with a relationship to the water similar to the iconic Memorial Union.

The 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design by Terrapin Bright Green includes people's desire to have prospect (an unimpeded view over a distance) and shelter (a place for withdrawal, from environmental conditions or the main flow of activity, in which the individual is protected from behind and overhead). The wooded hillside of the base of Mansion Hill offers that shelter and prospect over the lake and the large common greenspace to the full length of the park.

The Option B new shelter should be located at the basketball courts with upper level access from the Gilman Street Park Overlook. Gates of Heaven should absolutely remain in the current location and the synergy with a new shelter at the Mansion Hill end of the park will result in increased reservations without the current disparity between Gates and shelter reservations. This synergy should allow for an alternate design approach to parking. Study revenue generation to make the case for improvements.

The west end of the park is the original site of the park, the 1920's era master plans locate a shelter in this location as precedent. This master plan and referendum must be rooted in the past and respectful to study integration of recent shoreline improvements or it will be perceived as unnecessary. The 60's era demolition created this great common green shared by all. Do not place any built structure in this large lawn as it will sever the sense of community and the building will block the view to the lake. The action step in the 2008 Tenney Lapham Neighborhood Plan is to remove the concrete stacks on the James Madison bathhouse to improve the view of the park. Focus on the reason given in that comment to improve the view. No new shelter or addition to the existing structure should reduce view of the park.

The natural shoreline treatment provides the sound of lapping waves, often louder than the noise of traffic. Provide shoreline treatments that provide that experience of sound or retain some of that existing shoreline.

Confirm all docking options still allow crew shell access to the boathouse.

The design solution cannot rely solely on the hope of finding a vendor who will create a safe space during business hours. Is there any potential vendor that would use the shelter in its current form with only improvements to safety on the lower level? This process needs to evaluate demolition of the structure as an option. Madison has not displayed a commitment to retaining brutalist structures, for example St. Paul's demolition on State Street, and the UW Master Plan shows demolition and new uses at the sites of brutalist architecture. The cost of making the intentional decision to renovate brutalist architecture with architectural integrity would be comparable to building a new, year-round community gathering space that will serve future generations and better support potential vendors. A small 'icehouse' type structure built into the hill at the current shelter location could be an option to provide additional restrooms and improve visibility from the street. A 6th grader at Hip Hop Architecture suggested two restroom locations. Beach showers should be outdoor fixtures.

A shelter in a shaded site could be comfortably naturally ventilated most of the summer without the need for air conditioning to create the strongest interior/exterior connection with the waterfront and the park. The cost and aesthetic impacts to attempt to heat or air condition existing uninsulated concrete structures are substantial with questionable results. A heated shelter would extend park use throughout the day and seasons.

Options for safe street crossing and traffic calming?

All options should have sustainable stormwater filtration. Thank you for looking at the greater area of the city that impacts the park. Design options to treat the outfall at the end of Blount Street now or as a future placeholder? All options should have Urban Forest at both ends of the park.

Urban design impacts studied? This design opportunity would/should have an impact on the neighborhood and City goals for owner occupancy, creating a welcoming, safe space for all with a positive environmental impact beyond the boundary of the park.

Thank you again to everyone for your efforts! Dawn

From: zia@urbanassetsconsulting.com <zia@urbanassetsconsulting.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 18, 2018 3:35 PM
To: Dawn O'Kroley; Lerner, Sarah; Ledell Zellers (district2@cityofmadison.com)
Subject: RE: James Madison Stakeholder Mtg

Dawn,

Thank you for coming last night and sharing these thoughtful follow-up comments – great suggestions and ideas. We'll add these to our notes/results from the evening (including the image!). Thanks for your continued involvement in this project.

Best,

Zia

Zia Brucaya, AICP
Senior Planner

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From: Dawn O'Kroley [<mailto:dokroley@dorschnerassociates.com>]

Sent: Thursday, January 18, 2018 3:22 PM

To: zia@urbanassetsconsulting.com; Lerner, Sarah <SLerner@cityofmadison.com>; Ledell Zellers (district2@cityofmadison.com) <district2@cityofmadison.com>

Subject: RE: James Madison Stakeholder Mtg

Hi Zia, Sarah and Ledell, I wasn't able to stay to the end of the meeting but hope you had a good night! The history is so fantastic.

I wanted to send thoughts on the 4 points:

Brag:

- The sunsets are stunning.
- Historic architecture instills a sense of pride to care for our environment for future generations.

Worry:

- A \$700,000 renovation of the shelter will still result in an underutilized, unsafely sited building with a road separating users from the water. A renovated shelter in the current location does not support the use of the Gates of Heaven. The highest and best use of the shelter footprint is open space. I would encourage a minimum of two master plan options deconstructing the existing shelter.
- Share budget information on ground leases, rentals and park impact fees that are generated for and by this park. Funding supports allowing the design team to create a greater vision for the shelter.
- How will weeds and debris be managed? A dumpster on the shoreline is not an acceptable solution.
- What is the footprint of the city stormwater that is drained directly into the lake in James Madison Park through existing storm lines shown on the survey?

Envision:

- Imagine an infrastructure that visibly improves water quality with influence on behavior and policy beyond the park boundary. Our care for the lake should be our first priority. If stormwater management and traffic calming are beyond Park's scope, I urge the importance of these design priorities as something to be communicated with other departments as part of the Master Plan.
- With appropriate treatment of the edges of the park, we have the opportunity to be immersed in the natural environment while the view of cars and sound of traffic fades away. Imagine a sustainable landscape that provides visual interest and wildlife habitat all year.
- The end of Blount would be a beautiful viewing platform but does not offer an accessible route to experience the water.
- Enforcement that corrects behaviors while still welcoming visitors as a positive attribute in the park.

Wonder:

- Imagine a shelter connected to nature, on or near a rebuilt shoreline, inspired by an open-air boathouse nestled into the bottom of Mansion Hill to provide access to the lake and bring people together. The slope of the hill could allow a 2 story building accessible to all without an elevator but by using the topography. The water would be accessible. This location would have a strong association with our most recognized historic district – Mansion Hill. The shelter would be rentable on the second floor with public restrooms/storage space on the first floor always visible for safety from the length of the park.

This is an exciting project. Thanks for all of your efforts. I'll leave you with one precedent image.. Lake Flato, Marble Falls:



Dawn O'Kroley

Bob Klebba
704 E Gorham St
Madison WI 53703

12 December 2018

Board of Parks Commissioners

Dear Commissioners,

I've been involved in the James Madison Park Master Plan for more than a year, first to get an RFP started and then as a participant in the meetings throughout 2018. I'm pleased with most of the features of the proposed plan. I'm excited about the storm water management and the reactivated park shelter.

However there are two salient issues that lead me to ask you to put a hold on the approval of the JMP master plan until they can be better defined.

First is the complete lack of a maintenance plan for the park. This is a required item according to the Parks Master Plan Report Format approved by the Parks Commission on 10 February 2016. The master plan recommends native plant buffer strips along the lake shore and a hillside meadow area. In the last 5 years I've watched a native plant buffer strip in JMP get planted and then get destroyed due to negligence. A large community effort was required to set up a maintenance plan to address wild parsnip in the existing meadow. The plan still requires continued tweaking.

A maintenance plan must be in place before we can even consider new features for the park. Right now any tree species chosen must be resistant to current landscaping practices. If we set up a maintenance plan, we could address these practices so that a greater diversity of trees can be accommodated.

Selection and design of hardscaping features also figure into the maintenance plan. In the planning meetings, activating JMP in the winter was one of the discussions. Are the proposed foot paths set up for easy plowing? Will they accommodate the 10-20 maintenance trucks and other vehicles that drive down them every day? Where do the maintenance vehicles access the proposed and existing structures without interfering with park activities?

Clearly a maintenance plan is required before the master plan can be approved.

The second issue is the unfortunate location and size of the parking. The location disregards the environmental sustainability goal of the master plan by greatly expanding the surface area required for a similar number of stalls. Some comments have suggested using permeable pavement, but the current technology does not provide permeability over a long term without appropriate maintenance. Furthermore, the placement of the parking at the narrowest spot in the park puts it where it disproportionately reduces the greenspace between Gorham St and the lake.

The proposed location of the parking presents a visual barrier between Gorham St and the lake. This barrier reduces the aesthetic value of the park for commuting pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. While some of the parking is lowered below sidewalk grade, it still presents a large visual and functional discontinuity between the park boundary and the greenspace. Our goal should be to welcome people into the park with few or no barriers.

The configuration of the proposed parking will not improve safety or reduce the deleterious activities we are currently experiencing in JMP. The entrance and exit on Gorham St will promote cruising through the parking area and more drive-by transactions or incidents. With cars blocking the view between the park and the street, it will be easier for young children to disappear behind cars and wander into the parking area or worse into the street.

Clearly we need some parking for the park shelter, the boat house, and for Gates of Heaven. In addition to a limited number of parking stalls in the park, we can easily add 10 stalls on Butler St and we can designate areas on Gorham St for accessible parking only. The front door to Gates of Heaven is about 300 m or a 4-minute walk to the nearest municipal parking garage. We do not want the Parks Division to be in competition with the Parking Utility.

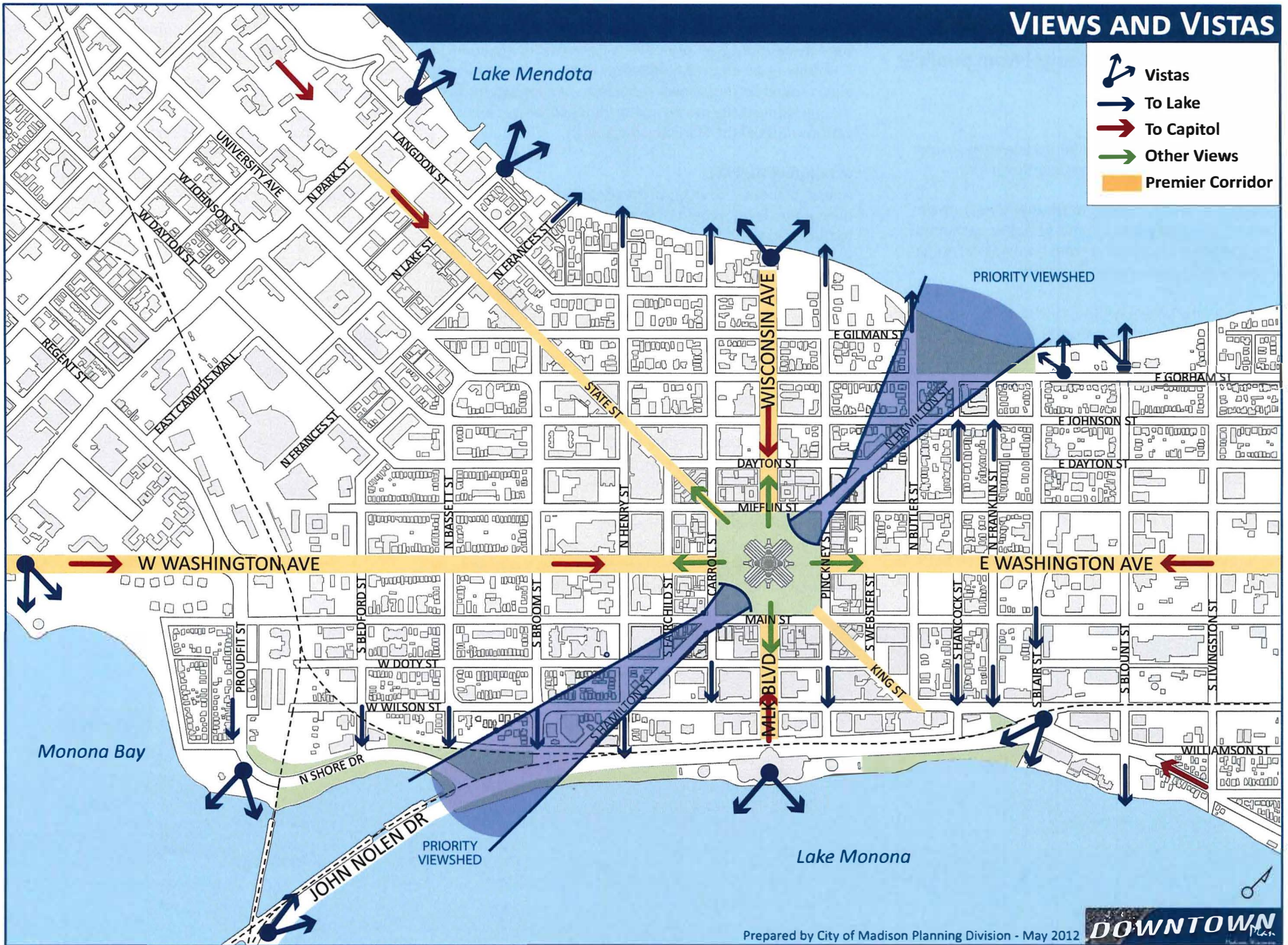
Nowhere in the Parks Division Vision Statement, Mission Statement, or Value Statement is parking listed as a priority or requirement. The majority of JMP users arrive by foot. Bus stops in the park serve 5 bus routes. Within 4 blocks there are over 20 bus routes and the proposed BRT route. There is a heavily used BCycle kiosk in the park. There will eventually be bike parking in JMP. With an abundance of transportation modalities, the JMP master plan should not prioritize cars.

An easy solution would be to eliminate the parking along Gorham St, to reduce the parking behind Gates of Heaven, and to provide a few stalls at the new shelter. This would require revisiting the neighborhood's proposal for addressing the safety issues behind Gates of Heaven.

Please keep in mind your mission statement: "To provide the ideal system of parks, natural resources and recreational opportunities which will enhance the quality of life for everyone." There are more ideal alternatives to the proposed parking. I strongly urge you to reject approving the James Madison Park Master Plan until the issues I present here are corrected.

Sincerely,

Bob Klebba



Strategy 5 Preserve defining views of the lakes, downtown skyline, and Capitol from publicly accessible locations.

Actions:

- a. Adhere to the Maximum Building Heights Map and Views and Vistas Maps in the Downtown Plan.
- b. Conduct a viewshed study of the lakes, downtown skyline, and Capitol from vantage points within the city and beyond its borders and implement zoning restrictions to preserve these views.

Key views of the lakes, skyline, and Capitol, from both near and far, are important contributors to the character and identity of Madison. As stated in the Downtown Plan (adopted 2012), “A city’s skyline often serves as its signature – an identifiable perspective that is unique to that community. That is true for Madison, where Downtown’s location on a narrow isthmus between two lakes, coupled with an iconic Capitol building on its highest point, provides many opportunities for ‘postcard views’ of the skyline.”

Preserving the many unique and engaging views of Downtown has long been a goal of the City, and preserving views of the Capitol has long been a desire shared by both the City and the State. The view of the Capitol dome from afar

is protected by a State statute and City ordinance that limit the height of buildings within a one-mile radius. In 1966, the City adopted the Capitol View Preservation Ordinance. The State enacted the Capitol View Preservation Statute in 1990. Together these laws provide a mechanism for protecting some of the most striking views of the Capitol from various parts of the Madison metro area.

a. Building Heights

A study of views and vistas in the central city was conducted during the development of the Downtown Plan. Key views to the lakes, Capitol, and other views within the Downtown were identified, and the Plan then recommended measures to ensure that the most important views remained. Many of those measures were subsequently incorporated into the Zoning Code in the form of maximum building heights and building setback and stepback requirements for new development.

b. Viewshed Study

There are many important views of the lakes, skyline, and Capitol from outside of the downtown area. Some of these are iconic long views, mostly of the Capitol, from vantage points that are near the edge of or even beyond the City limits. Some of these views are shorter, more intimate views of the lake that reinforce people’s connection to nature and the city, but all of these views are important. Once they are lost, they are impossible to recover. A comprehensive views and vistas analysis will identify these long and

short views, prioritize their importance, and explore ways for them to be preserved for current residents and future generations to enjoy, in balance with redevelopment goals.

The Views and Vistas Map from the Downtown Plan on the following page provides an example of a similar study done within the downtown during the development of that plan. That map helped inform the maximum building height recommendations in the Downtown Plan that were later codified in the Zoning Ordinance.

“No other city of the world, so far as I know, has such a unique situation on a series of lakes with an opportunity for so much and such direct relationship to beautiful water frontages. The physical situation is distinctly individual.”

— John Nolen

