



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Planning Division

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Milwaukee St. Special Area Plan Plan Commission introductory discussion

Project Background

The Milwaukee Street Special Area Plan study area extends approximately one mile from Fair Oaks Avenue to Stoughton Road/ Highway 51, and extends from Highway 30 on the north to 300 feet south of Milwaukee Street. The area includes major properties, including the Voit Farm, Duren property, the former Swiss Colony, and East Transfer Point on the north side of Milwaukee Street, and Woodman's on the south. The Voit family has signaled its intention to sell the 65-acre farm, and the 8-acre Duren properties are currently listed for sale. The Swiss Colony has moved operations to Sun Prairie, and its lease expires at the end of June. The Swiss Colony property is zoned Industrial-Limited (IL) and its owners are seeking new tenants for the existing 200,000 square-foot building. The Woodman's store is 40 years old, and has undergone multiple expansions in its history. Woodman's is exploring options for a new store in the vicinity. The East Transfer Point provides some of the best transit access in the City, with more than 200 busses per day serving the area. The 2006 Comprehensive Plan discussed this area as appropriate for transit-oriented development, with mixed-use and the highest intensity of development surrounding the transfer point.

The northern portion of the study area approximately a quarter-mile north of Milwaukee Street is largely comprised of wetlands and floodplains, and more than 100 acres will remain as open space. Within that open space, the City of Madison Engineering Division is pursuing a water-quality improvement project utilizing the quarry pond on the Voit Farm. Under their initial plan, water from Starkweather Creek will be diverted to the pond and mixed with a coagulant that will bond to phosphorous in the water, causing it to sink. The clean water will then be discharged back to Starkweather Creek.

Public Outreach and Engagement

Planning staff recently completed the initial phase of public involvement to gain different perspectives on the issues, opportunities and visions for potential development within the study area. Public involvement included meetings and discussions with property owners and representatives in the planning area, a large public open house on April 12 at Schenk Elementary/Whitehorse Middle School, a pop-up meeting at the East Transfer Point during the evening rush hour on May 1, and meetings in early May with the Eastmorland Community Association, Schenk-Atwood-Starkweather-Yahara (SASY) Neighborhood Association, and Friends of Starkweather Creek. Efforts were made to make meetings more accessible, such as providing translation services at the large open house. On online survey was also used (the questions and results are available on Legistar).

Throughout the public engagement, a few themes emerged with broad support. There was strong support for improving Milwaukee Street itself and establishing a street design that is pedestrian-friendly, easy to cross, and appropriate for an urban neighborhood. There was also strong support for improving park and

open spaces in the area. Eastmorland Park, for example, is located between the back of Woodman's and homes on Dawes Street and has very limited visibility from outside the park, which can be problematic at times.

Many participants supported a greater mixture of uses on Milwaukee Street, especially neighborhood-serving retail, services and restaurants. Exploring a mixed-use transit center, including ground floor commercial with residential above, was also well received by many.

Data obtained from the online survey confirms what staff heard in previous meetings, particularly as it pertains to residential development. There is more diversity in opinions as to the scale and intensity of development that should occur. Most individual building types have some level of support if located properly. However, there is significantly less support for buildings taller than five stories.

There were several commenters who did not want to see any change and for the area to remain in agricultural use. While economic factors make this possibility unlikely, if the Voit's or subsequent owners wish to continue farming, they have a legal right to do so and the special area plan recommendations will not impact that right.

Woodman's

As previously mentioned, Woodman's is exploring options for a new store in the vicinity of its existing location on the south side of Milwaukee Street. The presence of low-cost full service grocery store provides benefits not only to the neighborhood, but users of the transfer point as well. Transit commuters can stop for groceries easily, and the 13 weekday routes stopping at the East Transfer Point means the store is accessible by a single bus trip from a large area of the city. While renovating the existing location is possible, staff from Woodman's has indicated that it would likely be difficult and expensive to do so while keeping the store open.

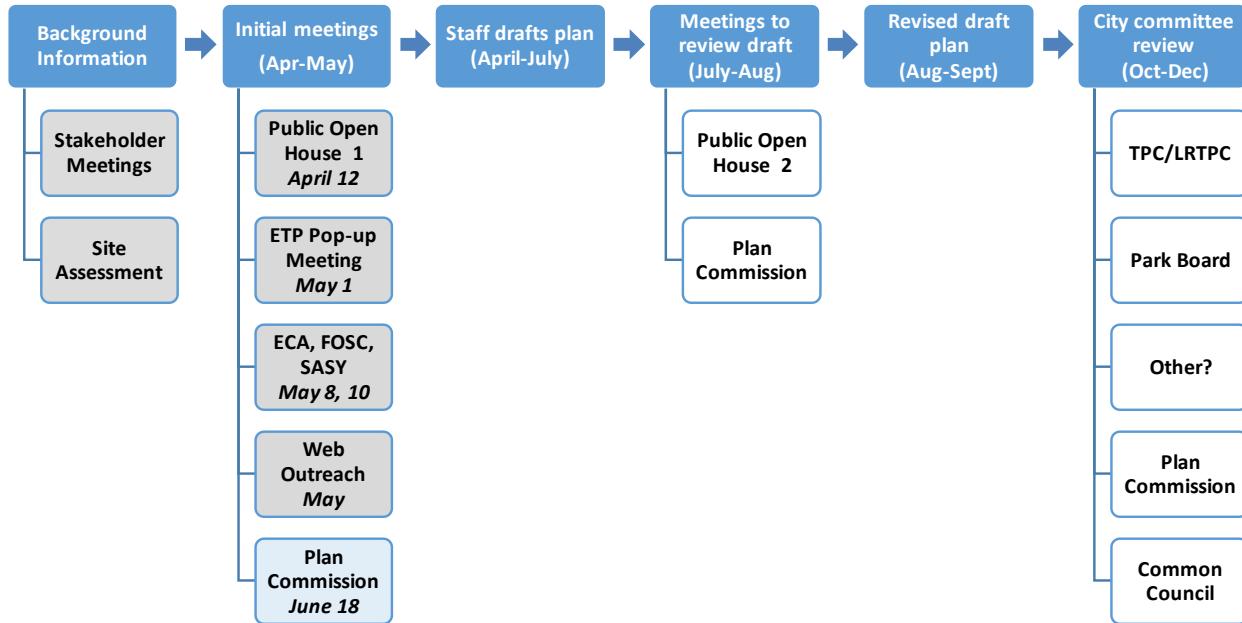
Staff would like the Plan Commission to provide some initial thoughts on the appropriateness of incorporating alternative sites for Woodman's in the study area. Staff's initial analysis of potential alternative locations identified the Swiss Colony site and possibly part of the Duren property as the most conducive to locating a large retail use such as Woodman's. The 2018 draft Comprehensive Plan identifies this area for Community Mixed Use (CMU) development, while other areas are designated Medium Residential (MR). By itself, a large retailer like Woodman's may not be consistent with the development pattern envisioned for CMU, although it may be possible to incorporate other uses to create a mixed-use node that meets the spirit and intent of CMU. A mixed-use, multi-story transit center could be one such approach. Woodman's often include a separate gas station/oil change and a convenience store, which would also not comport to the recommendations for CMU development.

From a transportation perspective, the highest traffic volumes exist between Stoughton Road/ Highway 51 and Corporate Drive, with lower volumes further west on Milwaukee Street. Maintaining Woodman's in the eastern half of the study area would help limit traffic volumes increase further west on more residential sections of Milwaukee Street.

Woodman's relocating would allow for redevelopment of their existing parcel, potentially including enhancements of Eastmorland Park, improved connections with the neighborhood to the south, and better routing for Metro Transit (the lack of a left turn option for northbound traffic on Dempsey Road at Milwaukee Street prevents better utilization of that transit corridor).

Next Steps

Staff has begun drafting concept plans and is planning on a public meeting to discuss the draft in late July or early August, with follow-up discussions with property owners and neighborhoods as necessary. Following that meeting, the draft plan concepts will be discussed with the Plan Commission. Staff anticipates introduction of a resolution adopting a full draft special area plan this fall for adoption in late 2018 or early 2019.



Draft Comprehensive Plan (2018)

Study Area

City of Madison Boundary

Building footprints

Madison Parcels

Blooming Grove Parcels

Low Residential (LR)

Low-Medium Residential (LMR)

Medium Residential (MR)

High Residential (HR)

Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU)

Community Mixed Use (CMU)

General Commercial (GC)

Employment (E)

Industrial (I)

Parks and Open Space (P)



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