

TO: City of Madison Plan Commission
FROM: Nan Fey, Chair, Madison Food Policy Council
Martin Bailkey, Chair, Urban Agriculture Work Group
DATE: November 14, 2018
RE: Milwaukee Street Special Area Plan Recommendations, Legistar 53472

In March 2018, the Common Council authorized Planning Division staff to prepare detailed land use and transportation recommendations for the Milwaukee Street corridor generally between Fair Oaks Avenue and Highway 51. The largest individual property is the Voit Farm property, just east of Starkweather Creek on the north side of Milwaukee Street. A total of 65 acres, approximately one half of the land, is considered developable while the northern portion is largely comprised of wetlands, floodplains and a quarry pond. Currently a portion of the site is being farmed for row crops, and the remainder is part of a quarry operation.

Planning staff engaged in a series of community engagement activities during the spring and summer. During this period the Madison Food Policy Council's (MFPC) Comprehensive Plan Work Group was focused on creating food system recommendations for the Imagine Madison process, and was not aware of the Milwaukee Street plan effort until a work group member attended a public input meeting on July 25th. In early August, the draft Milwaukee Street Special Area Plan was distributed to the MFPC's Urban Agriculture Work Group for review. That group determined that the draft plan lacked adherence to the urban agriculture recommendations recently adopted by the City in its new comprehensive plan. Given that the land within the Milwaukee Street planning area has been both historically and perceptually linked with farming, the Urban Agriculture Work Group believed that stronger language supporting market farming and community gardens needed to be included in the final plan recommendations.

At the September 5th MFPC meeting, Dan McAuliffe from Planning presented a progress report on the Milwaukee Street Plan, and members of the Urban Agriculture Work Group, supported by other MFPC members (including alders), stated their concerns. During September and October, members of the Urban Agriculture Work Group, along with Food Policy Director, George Reistad, held additional meetings with city staff. This led to the MFPC becoming one of four formally designated referral bodies for the Milwaukee Street Plan, along with the Board of Park Commissioners, the Transportation Policy and Planning Board, and the Plan Commission. At its November 7th meeting, the full Madison Food Policy Council approved the following set of recommendations.

Recommendations

The Madison Food Policy Council urges those responsible for planning this area to recognize that issues and interests within the Milwaukee Street Area Plan do not have to be either/or choices. For example, any future market farm within the plan area need not only result in profits going directly to the farmer, but can also have multiple social benefits as outcomes (such as youth development, job skills training and environmental stewardship) along with the food that is produced and marketed. In addition, maintaining farmland within Madison's city limits honors the Comprehensive Plan's stated goal of farmland preservation.

The proposed recommendations involve strengthening the draft plan's existing language on market farming and community gardens in a manner consistent with the supportive language for farms and gardens in other recent city planning documents, e.g. the Darbo-Worthington Neighborhood Plan and, in particular, the new City of Madison Comprehensive Plan, on which the Milwaukee Street Special Area Plan's goals and recommendations are organized.

The recommendations are as follows:

1. Under the Area Plan draft's "Green & Resilient" group of recommendations, the mention of community gardens in Goal 1, Recommendation 5 (p. 25), should be removed from that recommendation and re-inserted within a new, separate recommendation to "Explore the establishment of market farms and community gardens within the plan area, including designation of the area as a potential Urban Agriculture District."

The stated purpose of an Urban Agricultural District is "to ensure that urban garden and farm areas are appropriately located and protected to meet needs for local food production, and to enhance community health, community education, garden-related job training, natural resources protection, preservation of green space, and community enjoyment." (MGO 28.093) This purpose is seen by the MFPC as highly compatible with the community aspirations currently in the Area Plan draft -- for example, its "Green & Resilient" and "Culture & Character" goals -- and the Voit Farm offers a perfect opportunity.

2. Under the "Culture & Character" group of recommendations, Goal 1, Recommendation 1 (p. 26) should be changed from "Consider reflecting the existing rural/agrarian design of the Voit Farm area in new development patterns" to: "Look to reinforce the site's history and longstanding public perception as an agricultural site through new development patterns reflecting the concept of *agrihoods*, similar to Troy Gardens on Madison's Northside."
3. Also under the "Culture & Character" group of recommendations, Goal 1, Recommendation 4 (p. 26) should be changed from "Support community events, i.e. food carts, farmer's markets, and community gardens" to "To promote local food security and food businesses, encourage opportunities for the direct sale of fresh food grown either within the plan area or from nearby farms and gardens, through an onsite seasonal farmers market or farmstand."

Conclusion

The Madison Food Policy Council sees the Milwaukee Street Special Area Plan as a perfect venue for continuing its advocacy for the inclusion of food system recommendations in the city's planning efforts and promoting an awareness of the broad set of social benefits that can result from community-focused food production activities such as community gardens and market farming. The MFPC respectfully requests that the Plan Commission consider the recommendations in this memo, and, if agreeable, formally approve them for submittal to the Madison Common Council.