



Summary of Comments Received and Staff Response – January 30, 2020

The following is a summary of comments received to date on the draft development comments originally presented on October 16th at the Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan public input meeting at Warner Park.

Hartmeyer Property:

The property should be acquired for a nature preserve.

Staff Response: Staff agrees that open space should be a component of development on the Hartmeyer property, but does not support the acquisition of the entire property for the purposes of a nature preserve. The public comment and feedback that went into the [2018 Comprehensive Plan](#) overwhelmingly preferred future growth be accommodated through infill and redevelopment, rather than outward expansions, with the highest densities along major transit corridors. This site has excellent transit access, is close to current and future employment areas and is a quick bike or walk to a full service grocery store. Past plans, including the [2009 Northport Warner Sherman Neighborhood Plan](#), have anticipated development on the site along with preservation of the wetlands.

The [2018 Parks and Open Space Plan](#) did show this area to have deficient access to small neighborhood parks based on existing parks locations and their estimated service areas. As a result, a new 5-acre neighborhood park was included in initial concepts, in addition to preserving the 3-acre wetland (total of 8 acres). This was enlarged and reconfigured in response to feedback on the draft, with the development concept showing a total of 13 acres of open space. This is approximately the amount of park land dedication required based on the projected dwelling units, thus would not require the use of parkland acquisition funds.

The wetland is historic.

Staff Response: The Hartmeyer property was farmed and no indication of a wetland is present on [publicly available historic aerial imagery](#). It is possible a wetland existed prior to cultivation, but was destroyed. Water begins to be present in aerial photography in the 1970s, generally coinciding with the establishment of the East Madison Little League Fields. The shape of the water coincides with the perimeter of the outfield, possibly indicating it was a constructed depression.

The wetland is larger than what is shown.

Staff Response: The wetland data is from the [Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources](#), which shows the general location and scale of a wetland while noting that a wetland delineation is required to definitively establish boundaries. If a wetland delineation indicates it is larger than what is shown in the DNR data, the protected area will increase accordingly.

The water table is rising since Oscar Mayer shut down their high-capacity wells.

Staff Response: Ground water level changes could be associated with several factors, including Oscar Mayer shuttering their wells and a reduction of pumping from nearby Water Utility well. These actions alone could be expected to result in a reduction of the cone of depression in the area (or increasing groundwater levels). However, they were timed reasonably closely to the high rain/snow years of 2007/08. The precipitation from August 2007 through spring of 2009 caused groundwater levels citywide to rise dramatically.

While the ground water may be rising, it should not impact the ability to develop in appropriate areas. High water tables may restrict the ability to have subterranean spaces such as basements or underground parking, however there are many local examples of buildings that addressed this issue (ie. East Washington/Capital East/isthmus).

The Hartmeyer property is needed for infiltration and the wetland should not be used for stormwater from new development.

Staff Response: Per WDNR Administrative Code NR-151 Stormwater can't be routed towards wetlands in general, without treatment in advance of that discharge. This wetland in particular however is not suitable for discharge of stormwater as its current water level is lower than the stormwater system that surrounds it. Meaning that once water goes in there it can't get out without pumping, evaporation, or infiltration. Engineering has already drafted comments regarding any development of the land surrounding the wetlands to the effect that no runoff from developed or redeveloped lands shall be allowed to be discharged to the wetland area. The shallow water table and hydric soils on site aren't very effective in infiltrating water, limiting any potential stormwater benefit tied to non-development. The City of Madison is proposing a significant revision to its stormwater ordinance, requiring significantly more stormwater controls and pushing development proposals to use more innovative solutions including green roofs. If adopted, any future development will be subject to the more rigorous standards. .

Development of the Hartmeyer property is a social justice issue, as lower-income residents won't have access to nature.

Staff response: Several higher quality and larger natural areas exist on the northside and are easily accessible via all day transit service or bike. These include the 1,300-acre Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park and a large natural area at the 214-acre Warner Park. Housing and affordability are also significant social justice issues which development, or lack there of, on the Hartmeyer could have broader community impact.

Mature and high quality trees should be preserved

Staff response: The revised development concept preserves the larger oak trees on Roth Street, as well as most trees on the Hartmeyer property.

Burial mounds may be present in the area, and should be preserved

Staff Response: Planning staff consulted with the Wisconsin Historical Society regarding protected burial sites. Their mapping did not indicate any protected sites on the Hartmeyer property and no evidence of burial sites has been found on the property.

A park on the Hartmeyer property should be wild and natural, not just mowed lawn.

Staff Response: Special area plans provide recommendations as to the general scale and location of parks and open spaces. They do not design or program park spaces, as this is done in a future park planning process carried out by Parks Division staff. This plan can include public comments heard regarding preferences for future park spaces to be considered during future park planning, such as a preference for a more natural, less manicured park space.

Metro Satellite Facility

Note: The Metro satellite facility is a separate Common Council decision outside this planning process, but is consistent with the current zoning and with the future land use recommendation:

The City will eventually relocate all buses from its East Washington Facility to Oscar Mayer.

Staff Response: The City did analyze that possibility, but the financial analysis showed that would have a far greater cost per bus than maintaining and improving the East Washington facility and adding a second satellite facility. Metro staff believes the two buildings being considered for purchase would have sufficient capacity for fleet expansion for the next 15 to 20 years.

This will detract from the good elements of the Oscar Mayer redevelopment.

Staff Response: The use itself won't have nearly the impact on the character of the place and redevelopment as the design of the building will. The site is very deep and active spaces can and should be kept near the street, while less active uses should occur closer to the rail corridor. The most critical façade is the street facing wall on Oscar Avenue, and that can be designed in a way that does not detract from adjacent active spaces. If the Council elects to proceed with this location, it would require design review and approval from the Urban Design Commission.

The buses will create a traffic issue.

Staff Response: The two buildings are estimated to house 60-70 busses. The traffic impact associated with those buses would be the drivers reporting to work, and buses departing at the beginning of service. Drivers would return upon completion of their shift and leave. The total trip generation of the facility would be less than a comparable employment use and almost all trips starting and leaving the facility would be off-peak travel hours, further reducing any traffic delay.

The site has contamination and the City will become responsible for clean-up of known and unknown chemicals.

Staff Response: As with many formerly industrial properties contamination does exist on the property. Some information is known, though additional testing is required to understand the extent of contamination and remediation required. The City will be able to perform additional testing and have an understanding of contamination prior to purchasing.

The purchase should not occur prior to the adoption of the plan.

Staff Response: Given the due diligence and site investigation required, it would be very unlikely for a final decision on the purchase to occur prior to adoption of the plan, which is expected in spring of 2020.

Coolidge and Packers Intersection:

Why connect at Coolidge? Why not Mayer Ave?

Staff Response: Coolidge Street was initially selected based on its spacing from the traffic signals at Commercial Avenue and the ramps at Aberg Ave. Connecting at Coolidge also makes for more regular intersections and a continuous path across the rail corridor on the Oscar Mayer property, which a Mayer extension would not do. An intersection of Mayer and Packers would be too close to Commercial Ave and its angle to Packers would create a problematic intersection configuration.

How much traffic would use Coolidge Street in Eken Park?

Staff Response: The traffic model the Madison Area Transportation Planning Board uses isn't designed for fine-grain traffic distribution. The model estimates the Eken Park neighborhood north of Commercial Avenue to generate a total of 5,000 trips per day, distributed over all access points depending on direction of travel. After review of the model output data, staff believes a reasonable 2050 estimate would be 1,000 cars per day with a full access intersection. For comparison, this is approximately the same volume as Spaight Street at Orton Park, Delaware Boulevard at Sherman Village Park in the and South Hill Drive at Garner Park, all in very similar neighborhood contexts. The estimate assumes a full access intersection and volumes would be reduced if certain movements are eliminated.

Coolidge will be used as a cut through for people to get from Packers to East Washington Avenue

Staff Response: This is not likely as better, more direct paths for through travel already exist on Commercial Avenue, and the relatively limited destinations between other routes (Aberg and Sixth). It's conceivable that if left turns on to Commercial Avenue from southbound Packers becomes highly congested, some motorists may opt to turn left on to Coolidge, then travel south on North Street to reach East Washington. However, this would be an

atypical situation.

Why not use a three way intersection, with a bike and pedestrian signal?

Staff Response: There would likely not be sufficient bike and pedestrian volumes to meet minimum traffic signal warrants as defined in the MUTCD (Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices). A three-way intersection could result in an intersection design that allows continuous northbound movement on Packers, similar to the intersection at University Avenue and University Row (near Whitney Way). This will not help control speeds on the corridor and not contribute to making Packers Avenue more conducive to bikes and pedestrians.

Why not use a pedestrian bridge over Packers?

Staff Response: Pedestrians will frequently not use a bridge of other grade separated crossing when a more direct path is available, such as would be the case at Coolidge Street. For example, the pedestrian bridge at East Washington at Starkweather Creek adds approximately 500 ft of out of direction travel to crossing the street. The required ramps to make a bridge ADA accessible are space-intensive and would likely not be possible at Coolidge Street in Eken Park. Re-establishing the pedestrian and bike crossings at grade on Packers Avenue will require intersection improvements that will begin to maintain traffic at speeds closer to the posted limit.

Eken Park is on Coolidge and often used by children:

Staff Response: As discussed, the potential traffic volume on Coolidge is typical of neighborhood streets with parks. It is believed that the narrow width of the street will reduce vehicular speeds, the potential addition of traffic calming through the neighborhood traffic calming program could also be an additional option for speed reduction.

Will Coolidge need to be widened if connected?

Staff Response: Coolidge would not be widened if connected to Packers Avenue. The relatively narrow street with on street parking on both sides acts effectively as traffic calming. Widening the street may result in faster traffic, lost mature street trees and a reduced buffer between homes and the roadway.

Other transportation comments

Aberg is very busy and overused. New development will increase traffic.

Staff Response: If the concepts are built as shown, Aberg would be projected to have 14,000 cars per day in 2050, an increase from 10,800 in 2018. Creating a new intersection on Packers will balance vehicular traffic over multiple routes, minimizing any increase. The area also has excellent transit access, which will reduce future vehicular trips.

Roundabouts allow for continuous traffic, which is bad for pedestrians and bikes.

Staff Response: Roundabout do allow for continuous vehicular movement, but are much safer and can do better job of controlling speed than signalized intersections. The roundabouts shown in the concept drawing show one possible outcome, but the intersection design will be determined by future traffic and engineering studies. If roundabouts are used, particular attention will be paid to pedestrian and bike facilities to ensure they are safe and accessible.

Will the transit facility include intercity buses?

Staff Response: The City has worked to create an intercity bus terminal to better serve the needs of passengers. However, transit providers cannot be required to use a facility and often prefer curbside stops. If there is interest from transit providers at the time of development, the idea would likely be explored.

When is bus rapid transit coming to the northside?

Staff Response: The City is proceeding with the east/west corridor as the initial phase. The north corridor will be a later phase with no specific start date set, but there is a desire to proceed as quickly as possible.

Additional signals should be installed at Sixth Street and Schlimgen Ave.

Staff Response: The addition of signals at this location would bring the signal spacing on Packers Ave closer to that seen on East Washington Ave, make pedestrian and bike crossings easier and could help maintain speeds closer to the posted speed limit. Past analyses have determined these intersections did not meet the required warrants for a signal. However, these should be evaluated in the light of anticipated redevelopment at Oscar Mayer and other surrounding sites.

Land use and Housing

Development in this area will be impacted by F-35s.

Staff Response: The sound analysis prepared for the F35 draft EIS indicated that for virtually the entire planning area, any land use would be considered compatible with noise generation from the airport. A very small area off Shopko drive does exceed the 65 db DNL level, considered the threshold for residential compatibility without soundproofing or other mitigation. In this area, the plan recommends employment as a future land use category, which is considered a compatible land use.

Housing is too dense, not compatible with Sherman neighborhood.

We don't need any more "affordable" housing and we don't need any more apartments.

OM should be just employment and recreational – residential should be located elsewhere

This is a great location for new housing

How does plan related to maintaining housing affordability; prevent displacement of renters/homeowners?

There should be a greater focus on affordable housing

Where are the taller buildings?

Staff response: The plan does present a relatively compact, dense residential neighborhood south of the existing Sherman neighborhood. The nearly 15,000 participants in the citywide public engagement leading to the creation of 2018 Comprehensive Plan preferred a growth pattern that encouraged infill and redevelopment, particularly along major transit corridors. The adoption of the plan established this as the City's current growth policy. New housing will likely have a higher density than what is currently found in the Sherman neighborhood, but that does not mean it is not compatible. Neighborhoods frequently have density gradients, with areas of high density transitioning to and coexisting with single family homes. While the addition of higher density housing may change the appearance of certain areas being developed, it does not change the visual character of already established single family areas.

The Comprehensive Plan also discuss the need to have a wider mix of housing types and sizes throughout the City, including lower priced and subsidized units. Given transit and grocery store access, this area will likely received the "Preferred Area" designation for the City's Affordable Housing Fund, which provides grants to encourage affordable housing development. However, subsidized and affordable units would not and should not be the exclusive housing type, and should exist as part of larger housing mix which includes market rate units.

One of the findings from the Equitable Development report was affordability of existing housing was largely maintained when new housing was added at a rate that met demand. As Madison anticipates a growth of approximately 70,000 residents in the next 25 years, a significant and consistently high number of units will need to be added to prevent housing from becoming scarce and artificially raising housing costs. This exact case occurred around the great recession, where Madison continued to see population growth due to its relatively strong growth, but new construction effectively stopped. Rental vacancy rates fell to 1% and rents rose quickly. Much of our population growth is also coming from a younger generation, who are renting at far greater rates than those of the same ages in past generations. This may be for financial reasons (student loans debt, lack of down payment, shift to "gig" economy) as well as preference.