

Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan Response to the 85% draft plan.

“One of the biggest challenges we face in planning is understanding, responding to and incorporating multiple, often divergent perspectives on issues that could have significant citywide impact. ***If we (staff) agree with a comment, we incorporated it into our recommendations to the extent possible and explain why.*** When there are conflicting comments or ***we don’t agree***, we will communicate perspectives heard, as well as our own concerns to the public and to public bodies that will ultimately make a decision (ie Plan Commission or Council).”

~ Dan McAuliffe Nov 6, 2019

Hartmeyer Property

“Society exists within environment that must be respected and preserved for future generations...the preservation of important natural features and systems is critical to maintaining a healthy environment and ecological balances.” - Madison Comprehensive Plan (2018)

“A wetland exists on the Hartmeyer property that not only serves an important retention function, but as a natural feature for residents as well.” “Partner with the current owners of the wetlands near Roth Street to preserve and maintain them as open space.” – Oscar Mayer Area Strategic Assessment Report (2018)

“Preserving and enhancing the existing wetland area and the natural open space features that surround it may promote community building and identity in this area, serve employers/employees and serve as a greenspace gateway to the Northside.” Northport-Warner Park-Sherman Neighborhood Plan (2009)

The Parks and Open Space Plan identified the Sherman neighborhood area as deficient in access to a park.

Acquiring ALL 30 acres of the Hartmeyer land for conservancy fulfills 6 out of the 9 strategies in the Madison Comprehensive Plan:

1. Protect Madison’s water supply and infrastructure to provide safe, clean drinking water – the wetland can be a place for natural water infiltration and particulate removal
2. Improve lake and stream water quality – the wetland captures a large volume of water with each rain event and keeps it from storm sewers and slowly releases the water through infiltration
3. Acquire parkland and upgrade park facilities to accommodate more diverse activities and gatherings – the Hartmeyer property offers a great space for people of all ethnicities and ages and socioeconomic backgrounds to find a peaceful spot in the urban landscape for a quiet connection to nature and wildlife and nature education programming provided by city volunteers
4. Improve and preserve urban biodiversity through an interconnected greenway and habitat system – the back end of the Hartmeyer property runs along a rail corridor that offers a natural greenway that connects area open spaces for all urban wildlife
5. Develop a healthy and diverse tree canopy – there are several old oaks on the uplands that add to the variety of trees in the area with land enough to plant additional oaks
6. Support sustainable farming and gardening practices that protect the ecosystem and public health- if preserved, the Hartmeyer natural area would be cleaned up and restored to include native plantings to provide habitat and enhance the ecosystem.

While the preservation of ALL 30 acres is a departure from the Future Land use Map in the Comprehensive Plan, which identifies this as light industrial with a wetland overlay, the current desire of the Sherman Neighborhood Association as well as the Eken Park Neighborhood Association, Alder Abbas, and area residents and businesses is to conserve ALL 30 acres for a sanctuary natural area.

The area neighborhood associations including Sherman Neighborhood Association and the Eken Park Neighborhood Association clearly support the creation of a natural area sanctuary for the Hartmeyer property. While the Comprehensive Plan may recommend development that includes infill and redevelopment, the Northport-Warner Park-Sherman (NWS) Neighborhood Plan, the adopted sub-area plan (2009), shows that there is a desire for open space shown for the Hartmeyer property, it is based on the wetland delineation of that time. Overwhelmingly, the area residents who live in the adopted plan area are support of preserving the natural area of the Hartmeyer property. Overwhelmingly at all of the OMSAP related meetings with area residents, young, old and millennials, no one at those meetings announced that they are against the creation of a natural area at the Hartmeyer property.

It is the request that we consider the wetland as an existing context for the neighborhood area. True context-sensitive design is required, as the Hartmeyer land is a key component of the neighbor character and it offers a place in which community members feel ownership. The comprehensive plan also offers that we “preserve historic and special places that tell the story of Madison and reflect racially and ethnically diverse cultures and histories.” The Hartmeyer property tells the natural history of Madison, as one of the few urban areas that are still wetland surrounded by housing and businesses. Area businesses rely upon the wetland as a critical part of their business branding. The dental office facility on Sherman Avenue faces out onto the wetland and uses its visual calming effects to help their patients.

The Hartmeyer natural area may resides near a known native American human burial ground on the Oscar Mayer property (Lots 1 and 2) and Hartmeyer natural area could be a teaching tool in telling the story of Madison’s native peoples’ history and experience. Area tribes lived, trapped, hunted and traded along and in the Yahara River watershed. Let us move beyond the verbal tribute to the HoChunk nation and pay actual tribute to our native brothers and sisters by including the installation of a tribute garden on the burial site rather than allowing for the potential excavation of human remains or development over the remains. In the exploration of the Hartmeyer natural area, we can include signage for self-guided tours around the Hartmeyer property to explore early life and the habitat that provided such a rich diversity of opportunities as well as teaching opportunities for how our watershed works – rain, rivers, streams, and groundwater. All interconnected.

While the adopted NWS neighborhood plan shows development near the wetland, the uplands are required for the wetland to survive, and indeed, the wetland area has reclaimed some of its original boundaries as the subsurface water levels and surface runoff from increased rain. This increase in water inputs and the ever-rising groundwater levels, has expanded the wetland defined area to include the now permanent impoundment, commonly found in areas of hydric soils. This naturally occurring low-lying wet area has always been there but shows only as a dark impression on aerial photos (see attached topographic maps and aerial photos). It is an historic depression in the landscape, not a manmade depression. It was in this low-lying area that the water first rose up and continues to expand to accept elevated groundwater levels and increased rainfall, just as wetlands are designed to do. Neighbors are talking about the wetland online through NextDoor and are also expressing their desire to keep the wetland intact, ALL 30 acres. These include our neighbors in Maple Bluff.

At the time of the 2009 NWS neighborhood plan, the Hartmeyer land was not displaying its true nature, wetland and upland, due to less rainfall and greater use of groundwater by Oscar Mayer, still in production and using several high capacity wells in its production of meat products. Indeed, the Oscar Mayer drawdown of groundwater was included in the city’s wellhead plan for Well 7 as being in Well 7’s zone of capture as well as the industrial property being a potential source of contamination contribution.

As a result of drier times and a lower groundwater level, the wetland was much drier, and even in use for area baseball fields and was mowed. Historic topographic maps and historic aerial photos show that the

Hartmeyer land was marsh and wetland. In truth, most of the lakeshore areas that are now all developed and being redeveloped in the Madison area were once open marsh and wetland supporting the Yahara River watershed. It was through the infilling of the wetlands and marsh areas with soil, public trash, rubble, construction debris, coal ash, and industrial toxic and hazardous waste, that we filled the wetlands and marshes in, and now redevelop and live on top of it. But the wetland and groundwater systems remain, despite our infilling. Wetland subsurface systems remain in place, and are not destroyed. As the saying goes, *a river runs through it*.

Aerial photos show the wetland is thriving as it returns to its historic capacity within the urban setting. Area birds, amphibians and other species have found this small 30 acres and call it home. Sandhill cranes raise colts in the wetland and there is the potential for native species that have long been cut back or under fill that could emerge, given time. What is required is a current wetland delineation to determine the new boundaries of the wetland before we look at dense housing installations. Let us find out where the wetland boundary lies and then plan accordingly.

Alder Abbas and the Common Council have designated funds towards evaluating the Hartmeyer property, with a \$20,000 commitment in the budget. Because soil sampling occurred in 2018 to determine contaminants in the soil, related to petroleum spills and other uses of the property in the past, let us use a portion of the funds to have a wetland delineation performed this year and determine the wetland boundaries and determine best use of the surrounding area. Let us also conduct subsurface soil and groundwater testing, as home basements often contain groundwater both in Maple Bluff and in Eken Park neighborhoods. It is in the best interest of the health, safety and welfare of area neighbors to determine the extent and types of contaminants present in the ground, and its relevant risks as groundwater fills area home basements.

At this point in time, there are residential developments being considered for the Hartmeyer area and along Packers Highway. When creating high density housing areas, let us consider creating an open space where the residents of the high-density, low-green space developments can go for nature recreation. Putting housing at Hartmeyer does not serve the residents of the Sherman Neighborhood, and having an open space as the redevelopment of the Oscar Mayer property is underway, can only enhance the lifestyle of all area residents, both current and those yet to come.

Metro Satellite Facility

While city staff claims that the Metro facility is “outside of this planning process”, the boundaries of the Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan includes all of the acreage of the previous Oscar Mayer property, and it is a concern for area neighborhood associations as it impacts future redevelopment of the north end of OM Station. It was presented in the city staff’s November 7 comments to the Plan Commission as one of the “two most frequently heard concerns were related to the potential Metro facility at Oscar Mayer and a desire by some to see the Hartmeyer property acquired by the City for a conservation park.” These issues have come up at public meetings, with the staff deeming the Metro facility as “outside the planning process’, perhaps not “agreeing with comments.”

The large increase in land for redevelopment should create a clear shift in the planning for north Madison as well as the inclusion of planning for the North BRT route as well as the Metro facility.

The Metro facility to be located at the north end of the OM property is the start of the move for all of the Metro facilities to the north side of Madison, to allow for Metro to move from the E. Washington site for the redevelopment of the Capitol East district. The current plan to move the Metro facility to the Oscar Mayer site, to allow for an improved work conditions for Metro employees seems a far reach as the conditions within Building 43 and under Building 43 are toxic. Infiltration of Trichoroethene (TCE) into the building is occurring and we have not tested much of the subsurface area in Lot 1, the northernmost portion of the site, part of the Metro facility property. According to Mr. Lynch, the city is to conduct an

environmental site assessment that may even include testing for PFAs. The toxic soup that resides under the paved parking area, to the East of the site where gas stations once resided, to the south there is ethylene dichloride contamination, near the Bodgery there is subsurface petroleum contamination, to the west is more petroleum and heavy metals contamination, and for most of this industrial-use weary property, there are issues. As an area within an economic opportunity zone, the city can apply for a grant from the USEPA to fund a remediation investigation (up to \$300,000), similar to the one being performed as part of the South Madison Plan process. This will allow us to determine the extent of all the contamination. This will help to determine how best to clean up the subsurface soil and groundwater that eventually makes its way to the Starkweather Creek and places south. It is the best we can offer to all of our neighbors here in Madison and to our south as the river flows to Stoughton and beyond.

PFAs and other contaminants will travel and sadly, we offer the perfect conduit - the Yahara watershed in which we live. Before any County removal of sediments to the south occurs, extensive testing should occur to determine the proper disposal of the dredged sediments and the proper personal protective gear, as yet not seen as on site testing has been conducted. Within the current (2019) data from sampling at OM Station, notes on soil boring drill logs indicating "strong odors" shows the lack of care for the health and safety of city contracted personnel. If they were wearing protective gear, including respirators, they would have not been able to smell the contamination related organic vapors. Given prior knowledge of the exact contaminants in the subsurface, from prior testing and logs, all onsite personnel need to wear protective gear whether drilling or sampling. Hundreds of gallons of water have been drawn out of the ground with contamination, what is happening with that waste and where will it go for proper disposal?

If city oversight of the OM Station site work is happening, and if contractors are working in known contaminated sites (data from 2017-2019 are available), and are without personal protective equipment, then we are allowing exposure of workers to known toxics as well as possibly area residents and passersby on foot. Is this the precedent we want to set as Metro personnel are slated to work on contaminated land in a building with known high levels of infiltration? Meanwhile piles of site-excavated soil sit near the north transfer point without being covered or otherwise contained from ambient air and wind. How are we keeping area residents safe from potential exposure and health risks? This is not best practice for containing contaminated soils, which are noted to contain contamination, on current soil boring logs.

As we transition from our current auto-oriented development to more transit/walk/bike friendly styles of development, let us remember to include all of the residents of Madison's north side. Existing long-term homeowners, new millennial homeowners, current local investors and land owners at OM Station and the yet to be new residents of north Madison.

BRT

It is in the best of current and future residents of north Madison to begin planning for the bus rapid transit system hand in hand with the OMSAP.

I recently read the report that was completed in 2013 related to infill and redevelopment. It based the decision to not plan for the north route mostly due to the speculation that there just was not enough land available for redevelopment along Sherman Avenue. In that assessment report, three locations were shown for redevelopment potential, one has since been redeveloped into apartments with a still vacant commercial space, likely due to limited street parking for customers. The BRT route-decision matrix was based on availability of land for redevelopment and placed the number of potential housing units for the north BRT route along Sherman at 600, in 2013.

Fast forward to 2020, with a projected 4,000 new units of housing and +4,000 residents both on Sherman and along Commercial and Packers. And I wonder, where is the transit oriented planning for the north side now that things have changed so drastically? I understand that the current focus for the city is South Madison and the Capitol East area but we do not live in a vacuum. Due to changes on East Washington, we are facing the absorption of a massive amount of transportation related vehicles to the north side, the planned Metro facility move to Madison's north side to free up the land on E. Washington for the Capitol East redevelopment project impacts our north side. The move of the MG&E fleet and equipment to our north side. The South Madison plan also impacts our north side as I hear stories of gentrification, rising rents and evictions happening more and more on Madison's south side. A sign of issues to come as the push of gentrification will cause undue hardship to our north side neighbors.

The BRT transit corridor study uses the related demand estimates, in part, as one of the factors generating ridership numbers upon BRT-startup. Given the massive influx of residents, 4,000 by 2040, planning to include transit is imperative as we look at how best to create transit options for north side residents. Our ridership potential will only show to have increased in a significant way.

As I discussed with Tom Otto at the Jan 30 OMSAP meeting, I am asking for transit freedom for all of Madison's citizens. We all should be able to walk out of our front doors and be able to consider all manner of transit options: Walk, Bike, Bus or Car? How will I safely move through the city today? Right now, because of an outdated report, we are being held captive to a premise that is no longer valid, and is causing us undo harm in terms of not being able to truly create the transit oriented new community that could be wonderful for all of Madison's residents. How can we meet the goal of creating a walkable neighborhood, a walkable transit-oriented city, when north side residents are denied the opportunity to be involved in the planning of BRT North route?. BRT stations that are over a mile apart, is not the same as the plans for every ¼ mile on the East West route. We want a place at the planning table for the BRT system now.

North Madison residents insist that planning for the North BRT route is included now for planning routes, transfer station needs and locations, and the begins to offer north side residents equal transit freedom that we all welcome. As redevelopment plans for the Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan are being made, so too should all of the transit options be considered with the public involved. One is integral to the other. We can do better.

Coolidge Street

As the comprehensive plan and other adopted area plans are considered when it comes to neighborhood connectivity, the opening up of Coolidge Street to pedestrian and bike path access is a great concept and in keeping with the creation of a transit connected walkable neighborhood. If a well defined walkway is installed, and access to a local BRT station is at the corner of Commercial Avenue, this would be the best possible TOD for the neighborhood. While the east end of Coolidge was described as "not in the plan area" by city staff, the impact on the Eken Park neighborhood is huge. In a January 16 meeting, the concept of opening up Coolidge to more car traffic (5,000ADT) was considered "insane." Over 100 people attended that meeting as well as the December 4th meeting. Not one person at these meetings expressed a positive response to the road being extended and opened.

The Canadian Pacific Railroad currently maintains an at-grade rail crossing at Roth Street and is currently in the process of decreasing at-grade rail crossings, not increasing the number due to an FRA program underway to reduce crossings for public safety. Why not build a road that starts on Oscar Avenue across from Coolidge Street, travels past the powerhouse (future home to the Powerhouse Brewery/restaurant) and then turns north on the west edge of Lot 3 and the proposed city-owned Lot 2 to the Roth Street crossing, extending Roth just over the railroad. In this way, the road could be brought across the OM Station property at the strategic location near the powerhouse, and then will travel on city property

north to the existing rail crossing to connect to Roth Street to Sherman. East West connectivity, no need for Hartmeyer land. This could also provide a road-side /ped bike path for the ped/bike path starting at the west edge of Coolidge, across the Packers Highway and into the Sherman neighborhood from Eken Park. A true Win-Win.

Land Use and Housing

While nearly 15,000 participants in the comprehensive plan process spoke to and encouraged transit oriented development, the residents who live on Madison's north side, are actively participating in the city's planning process (over 600 participants). Housing that meets the missing middle housing requirement that includes a gradual increase in building heights and density needs to be regarded, as do the requests for a wide selection of housing types. All in keeping with a neighborhood sense of place. The Sherman Neighborhood is already in the process of adding affordable housing in its redevelopment.

The special area plan we are currently producing will play a key role in future redevelopment. We ask that the input of over 600 area residents be heard and valued. So while the comprehensive plan may show a particular path to development, the special area plan process is uncovering that area residents may provide more detailed recommendations that are considered inconsistent with the comprehensive plan. In this light, the comprehensive plan will need to be modified to reflect the desires of the residents of North Madison.

While the Tenney Park model is always quoted in terms of equitable development, the truth is that areas that are currently in process for redevelopment and gentrification, like the Rim Rock Road area, are undergoing "evictions are happening due to rent increases." (Ananda Mirilli, School Board member, South Side Neighbor during a presentation on Gentrification, Jan 2020)

North Madison is unlike the Tenney Park area in that it is largely comprised of single-family homes, and low income apartment complexes. Not many UW students live in this area and many that do, attend MATC. Much of our population growth is due to young people purchasing their first house in an area that still contains housing options that are under 250,000 dollar price point or less. Many new young workers and families now are moving into area neighborhoods bringing a renewed spirit to caring about and improving their neighborhoods. Not all young people want to rent!

While the north side welcomes new housing and new neighbors, the types of housing, the focus on low - med residential zoning with some single family homes, height limits on apartment complexes to 2-3 stories makes sense along Sherman Avenue. Housing on OM Station can be taller as it fits into the overall growth plan along Packers Highway.