

Sustainable Madison Committee
Meeting of August 5, 2024
Agenda #3, Legistar 83420

“The CGS [Complete Green Streets] decision-making process also includes increasing tree cover, which reduces the urban heat island effect and helps capture and store carbon.” (page 34)

- A lot of residents disagreed that CGS increased canopy cover when CGS was adopted.

“The City’s Traffic Engineering Division and Engineering Division are working to improve our community’s climate resilience. They do so by prioritizing green infrastructure like trees, rain gardens, green roofs, and native prairie plantings across the community. These natural climate solutions reduce the impacts of heavy rain and increased temperatures.” (page 34)

- See above as to support for trees.
- As to rain gardens, assistance is available only if you are impacted by road construction.
- As to prairie plantings, Legistar 83601 (also on this agenda) essentially eliminates that option on private property due to a maximum 8 inch height of grasses.
- There is a study area around Westmoreland Park where a lot of green infrastructure is supported (reimbursements available for about \$1K) – the study period is 5 years. So will the rest of the City be waiting until the end of the study period before expanding these options?

“Prioritize and implement recommendations from the Urban Forestry Task Force Report in collaboration with neighborhood groups, with particular attention paid to improving canopy coverage on private property in neighborhoods currently lacking canopy cover.” (page 77)

- This could use more detail, including adding some priority actions. Not all of the Task Force recommendations will be supported by the City (e.g., developing zoning policies that encourage street trees, like larger building setbacks).
- One of the aims of the sustainability plan is to bring together the City’s sustainability goals all in one place. That is not accomplished if the Urban Forestry recommendations are merely referenced.

“Reduce and eliminate the spread of PFAS contamination into surface and groundwaters in collaboration with county, state, and federal partners, eventually removing surface waters from the WDNR’s Impaired Waters List for PFAS and achieving levels of PFAS below state and federal drinking, ground, and surface water standards.” (page 62)

- In other words, status quo. The City has known of the PFAS problem since at least 2017 when they were discovered at Well #15. In 7 years the City has not done much to reduce and eliminate PFAS spread. The only action listed on the City website is: “Ongoing coordination with Dane County and the Air National Guard on a plan to prevent PFAS contamination from entering Starkweather Creek via the storm sewers.” Yet there are fish advisories, due to PFAS, for Lake Monona and Starkweather Creek, advisories first issued in 2021 and continuing to date.

“Percentage of residential areas with the service area of parks” is one of the metrics to measure equitable access to parkland. (page 36)

- Currently, 95% of residents are within a 10 minute walk of a park. What also once mattered, but perhaps no longer does, is how many residents that park served.

Parkland has not expanded as the downtown and isthmus have added a lot of new residents.

- The plan claims Madison ranks 13th nationally in the Trust For Public Land's ParkScore rating system – in 2024 the rank is 18th.

"Finalize, adopt, and implement recommendations from Madison's Integrated Pest Management Task Force for all City activities." (page 76)

- The Task Force has not met since February 2020. The Task Force had planned to do a draft and then seek resident comments on that draft.

The goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles includes an action that would have a 20 mph speed limit on local streets. (page 48)

- An actual study from Wales showed that air quality did not improve with a drop from 30 to 20 mph.

The first goal is "Quality, Affordable Housing." There are two goals: increasing housing that is affordable to households with incomes at or below 60% of area median income; and, (2) support energy efficiency, healthy indoor air quality, sustainable building materials, and removal of environmental toxins in new and existing housing. As to the first goal, the plan says: "Adding new housing options in existing Madison neighborhoods helps prevent the loss of natural areas and farmland to development in neighboring communities through urban sprawl."

- Madison does not have much opportunity for urban sprawl – the biggest area to be annexed is part of the Town of Burke in 2036, but the City has already created a Neighborhood Development Plan for that.
- I am not against affordable housing, but question the relationship to sustainability. The goals and actions of the draft plan were compared to 5 other communities. Of those 5, only one, Los Angeles, included a housing component.
- Lacking from this goal is the preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing. The Comprehensive Plan states: "Further, in addition to adding new affordable housing, it is often more cost-efficient to preserve the existing affordable public and private housing stock." It is not only more cost-efficient, but it also reduces waste and the carbon increases caused by new construction. As the Comp Plan also says: "Finally, housing conservation and rehabilitation will help achieve the City's sustainability goals, as the most sustainable housing stock is that which already exists." Action 1.1, "Use City programs and policies to create or preserve affordable rental housing ..." does not advance preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing. Rather it gives equal weight, and the City does not have policies/programs to preserve existing housing.

"Implement Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Zoning along Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and other high-frequency transit service corridors." (page 38)

- This was implemented in 2023, so it should not be an action item (unless further expansion is planned).

"Equitably expand urban tree canopy coverage from 23% in 2024 to 40% by 2080."

- The metric is merely the percentage of urban tree canopy coverage. There are no goals as to annual number of new trees that should be planted, nor are there any interim goals for an increase in canopy coverage.

- Having more defined goals is needed. Madison had 23% canopy coverage in 2019 and the draft plan says the 2024 canopy coverage is 23%. In other words, 5 years have produced no gain in canopy coverage.
- The DNR says: "But planting more trees is not the only means to expand your community's canopy. Even more important is preservation of existing trees." Some level of protection should be provided to existing mature trees – in addition to cooling, a mature tree can sequester 48 pounds of carbon per year.

"The 2020 U.S. Census showed Madison gained 75,000 new community members over the last decade." The Census redistricting numbers reflect an increase of 36,631 residents from 2010-2020. (page 18)

Respectfully Submitted,
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