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To: [Board of Public Works](#); [Benford, Brian](#)
Cc: [Pam Barrett](#); [Peggy Barrett](#); [Anne Walker](#); [joanne schilling](#)
Subject: Today's Agenda Item 6. 64803, Helena, Jenifer, Russell streets
Date: Wednesday, April 21, 2021 12:01:28 PM

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Dear Commissioners,

These are our comments re:

6. 64803 Approving Plans, Specifications, And Schedule Of Assessments
For Helena
Street, Jenifer Street, and Russell Street Assessment District - 2021.
(6th AD)

-No flared drives. They do not do justice to the traditional look & feel of our old neighborhood. Furthermore, they pave more. This is an area prone to flooding and by paving more, you are eliminating yet more land from absorbing stormwater. And yes, every little bit helps. Moreover, the flaring of the driveways means *faster* turns from the street onto the driveway and across the sidewalk, putting pedestrians at yet another disadvantage and heightened risk. Not that I personally care that parking will be lost, but, yes, with flaring, on-street parking will be lost. There was much hue & cry about lost parking with street narrowing. If on-street parking is so valuable, then suburban-style curb-flaring needs to be taken seriously as a parking space robber. It's as if you want your interstate on-ramps all the way into our neighborhoods--always prioritizing car speeds over safe walking. And aesthetics do matter; people are frequently commenting with envy about our Sommers Ave traditional driveway apron style. Why do you feel the need to impose suburban standards on us? Mr. Wolfe's assertion about cost is specious. Just put it in the bid. It is nothing compared to the rest of the project. I've gone through this on another project, it simply isn't true that it is more expensive if it is properly put out for bid.

-For ADA purposes, every intersection in *every* direction needs to have a level curb access to the street. Contra Mr. Wolfe's assertion during the conference, it doesn't matter if it means using a driveway apron opposite. The apron, though providing access to private property, is public property. It can be used by anyone. It appears that Helena at Russell (NW leg), pointing SW that there is a missing curb cut. Same at Helena at Russell (NE leg), for the Russell walk (NE corner). I believe there are others. You need to review the city's pedestrian plan to better understand the necessity of these ADA accessible connections *in all directions*. One of the signers below is 88 years old. This is important to keep her and other seniors in the neighborhood.

-Crosswalks should be raised like speed humps to give pedestrians a fighting chance. There are a lot of out-of-neighborhood types speeding down Jenifer to get to the market and Schoep's workers speeding to/from work. This needs to be brought under control--physically in the streetscape. Furthermore, right now, the city is using curb cuts as snow

& ice storage, militating against year-round ADA access. This needs to be structurally changed by raising crosswalks, prioritizing pedestrians--including the disabled-- at every intersection.

-Helena at Russell should not be rounded off. No intersections should be. It is about increasing speed and you know it. This is a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood.

-The Russell at Eastwood intersection should also not be rounded off. The last thing we need is Eastwood speeds ripping around the corner and entering the neighborhood at speed. Tighten the curb radius to neighborhood standards, not Interstate standards.

-Trees are being decimated in your plan. There is no call for destroying our urban forest canopy. Nope not even the wires are an excuse. Good arborists can creatively work around that perfectly safely. And no, MGE is not our overlord. We the people determine the look, feel & function of our public spaces. You are destroying a major factor in climate resiliency, accessibility, CO2-free transportation. My 87 yo mother needs the shaded streets to be able to make it to the market, and other daily activities. Heat and direct sun is a real problem for the elderly in maintaining mobility. But not only the elderly. My postal worker has complained about the loss of shade trees on his route. You have so decimated our urban canopy that even I--a relatively fit 58 yo-- am noticing the extra heat load because of the increasing lack of shade for vast stretches of our neighborhood. Mr. Wolfe was fond of quoting plans during the presentation and refutation of these points. I would direct him to the City's adopted pedestrian plan which emphasizes the importance of a healthy, extensive urban canopy to promote walking. Review, it Mr. Wolfe. Quit denying this. Speaking of denialism, on climate resiliency: Large trees take up HUNDREDS of gallons of stormwater within hours of a deluge and continue this natural flood mitigation service for days. Why on earth would you exterminate this cheap & effective mitigator of weather extremes to come? Case in point: There is a perfectly healthy honey locust in front of my mother's house on Helena St. that is slated for destruction. Aside from the general interest in providing shade for people walking by and helping attenuate floods, why would you take this one simple joy from an 87 year old? Now she won't be able to enjoy her porch & deck for much of the year given the heat load you will be heaping upon her house. This is the sort of thoughtless policy that creates shut-ins. Whenever you take away a shade tree during these reconstructs, inevitably, adjacent neighbors end up buying central air systems. How exactly does adding all of those refrigerants (1000X more damaging than CO2) and CO2 spew from new electricity demand, fit in to the mayor's plans for making Madison a greener city? (Oh, and, yes, she will hear about this.)

-Russell between Helena & Jenifer must maintain parking on both sides. Otherwise, it will become an attractive cut-through with a lot of speeding traffic. Right now it functions almost like a woonerf. Please keep it that way.

-Curb bump outs should be a feature at most intersections in this project. This would provide pedestrians with a head start in crossing (this is so important for old people, and those with mobility differences.) Furthermore, it will provide greenspace in summer, space for raingardens, and snow storage in winter.

-Bike path: By creating two intersections at Eastwood--Eastwood itself and the new bike path configuration, hidden behind shrubbery and at an unexpected location--you are setting cyclists up for calamity. I guarantee that the deathmobilers will queue up blocking this heavily transited bike path. From Mr. Wolfe's presentation, it is clear you don't even understand why it curves closer to the street. Frankly, if leaving it as is means slowing traffic on that expressway, so be it. That 55 mph road is inappropriate for a traditional neighborhood anyway. Whatever its ultimate configuration, the bike path--having vastly more traffic on it than Russell St.--should be made the priority thru-way vis-a-vis lightly traveled Russell St (and we want to keep that street lightly traveled). That means raising the bike path on a traffic table/speed hump. Drainage issues are always an excuse to deny. Always so convenient. How about for once using that excuse to de-prioritize cars?

-Inequities in funding street reconstructs. Core neighborhoods like this pay for sidewalks, outlying neighborhoods do not. Mr. Wolfe went on & on about how important it was to excuse neighborhoods like Lake Edge from paying for their share of pedestrian access (sidewalks) because they have trees. Indeed they do. So do we. Yet you want to decimate our trees. There seems to be no concern on the part of City Engineering about our trees. In the end, no neighborhood should have their urban forest ravaged by a street reconstruct (Lake Edge could have been designed with sidewalks *and* trees, easily; just not by your ridiculously rigid standards). Ever. Lake Edge has no right to enjoy an extra tree privilege over our traditional, classic old neighborhoods like this one. Mr. Wolfe also gave us a long whine about how costly sidewalks would be in Lake Edge. They are costly here, too. In addition to this reconstruct, the original cost of sidewalks was built in to the original price some 100 years ago, subsequent reconstructs as well, and handed down with each purchase price. This was a cost never borne by properties in Lake Edge. And see, there is a constitutional mandate that taxes be apportioned fairly:

"1. Wis. CONST. art. VIII, § 1(amended 1974) reads: Rule of taxation uniform; income, privilege and occupation taxes.

The rule of taxation shall be uniform...."

And no, there is no special, private privilege attained with sidewalks as you allege in the special assessment. Indeed, it is a purely *public* benefit.

You are using street reconstructs as an end-around from this equitable constitutional provision.

DO NOT, Mr. Wolfe, twist my words, as you did during the presentation back in February, and imply that I am suggesting no sidewalks. Nothing could be further from the truth; witness my three decades of work on behalf of pedestrians, bicyclists and those with different (from the automotive) mobility needs. Indeed, one of the the (many) reasons I was thrown off the Urban Design Commission back in 2007 was my promotion of pedestrian-friendly site design. Everything here is in line with the work that I have done to bring equitable treatment for pedestrians, bicyclists, those with mobility differences to neighborhoods across the

city (state, even). It is so disappointing that your department continues to militate against better, more humane & just neighborhood environments.

Sincerely,
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