

July 11, 2017

To: City of Madison Engineering & The Board of Public Works

Cc: Alder Maurice Cheeks

The city is proposing a sidewalk installation along Chippewa Drive in order to improve safe access to Thoreau grade school, a goal which is entirely reasonable and upon which we can all agree. We the undersigned however, strongly urge the city to consider a sidewalk installation on the north side of the boulevard *only*, for the following reasons:

- Chippewa Drive is a three block street with limited foot and vehicle traffic.
- In a mature neighborhood such as Nakoma, the installation of sidewalks where they previously haven't existed can present challenges, both to the city and sidewalk installation contractor, as well as existing homeowners (trees, telephone poles, existing landscaping and topography). We believe that the best outcome for both the city, homeowners, and the neighborhood would be to achieve the stated goal (access to the school) in the least disruptive way to the neighborhood and homeowners. That can easily be accomplished with a sidewalk installation on the north side of the boulevard. The crosswalk at Hiawatha Drive would facilitate movement of children and pedestrians from the south to the north side of Chippewa Drive, and allow for full access to the school via a sidewalk route.
- The reason the north side of the boulevard makes the most sense is twofold. First, the cross-walk to the school is on the northern corner of the road, meaning that all children and pedestrians must eventually cross to that side of the street in order to safely access the school. Second, there is already a sidewalk installed down the northern side of Chippewa Drive all the way to Ottawa Trail, meaning that a shorter length of installation is necessary in order to achieve the stated goal. One block will be impacted, instead of three; three homeowners would be affected rather than seven. The total cost of the project would be reduced by 59%, or \$11,800.
- We are additionally concerned that a sidewalk down the south side of the street might encourage children and pedestrians to continue crossing Cherokee Drive in that direction, where there is no crosswalk and moreover, where the median presents a safety hazard. Due to the median running down Cherokee Drive at that crossing, the large trees and brush significantly impair drivers' visibility, as well as pedestrians' capacity to see oncoming traffic headed north along Cherokee Drive. This poses a safety risk for children and other pedestrians attempting to cross at that point. On the north side of Chippewa Drive, there is no median, and an existing crosswalk leads safely to the school grounds on the other side. Those of us who live near this intersection routinely see school staff who park on the south side of the street cross diagonally to the school from the south side of Chippewa Drive in an effort to save a few seconds from properly using the crosswalks. We believe that a south sidewalk would only further encourage this type of unsafe behavior (see picture below of this intersection, where the red line depicts a frequent route of pedestrians to the school from the south side of Chippewa Drive).



- The justification provided by city engineering for installation of the sidewalks on both sides was “completion” of the street. That might make sense in a new development, but we question its pertinence in a situation that involves a mature street that has been developed and landscaped for 65+ years prior to this point. We believe that every effort should be made to achieve the stated goal in the least impactful way possible, in order to preserve the trees and greenery of this neighborhood. Several large, mature trees would be lost in an installation down the south side of the street. A sidewalk down one side of the street and not the other would not be an anomaly in our neighborhood. In fact, six of the eight streets that cross or intersect Chippewa Drive are not “completed” streets in this fashion, lacking sidewalks all the way down both sides.
- We believe it prudent to try to maintain the character, unique charm and natural beauty of the neighborhood as much as is possible. Nakoma is a neighborhood over 100 years old and is known for its landscape, mature trees and greenery. The installation of a small stretch of sidewalk on the north side of the boulevard would serve the purpose of easing access to the school, while at the same time limiting the destruction of existing trees, grass and other natural features. Many neighbors who are not directly impacted by this project have expressed a preference for less pavement and more natural beauty, still while achieving the mutual goal of safety. We strongly believe that this can be adequately achieved with completion of the sidewalk on just one side of Chippewa.
- We also believe that an additional 2,000 sq. ft. of impervious surface pavement that is not fully necessary in order to achieve the stated goal will only serve to increase water runoff into the Lake Wingra watershed. Using water runoff calculators we can estimate that the installation of a south sidewalk would lead to an additional 8,000 gallons of runoff each year. Efforts to minimize the environmental impact of such a project should also be given strong consideration.

We appreciate your careful consideration of our thoughts and concerns.

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Handwritten signatures of Stephanie Jaeckle and Torrey Jaeckle.

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