



## DANE COUNTY REGIONAL AIRPORT (MSN)

### ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS: REQUEST TO ELIMINATE LANDSCAPE POINTS

Consider: Who benefits? **Traveling Public**

Who is burdened? **Airport Safety Staff**

Who does not have a voice at the table? **Traveling Public**

How can policymakers mitigate unintended consequences? **Understanding the unique condition at the airport by protecting the safety of passengers.**

#### OVERVIEW OF THE VARIANCE REQUEST

- The variance pertains specifically to Section 28.142 (4) of the landscaping ordinance, focusing on landscape calculations and distribution, rather than Section 28.142 in its entirety. The variance exclusively concerns the newly added parking area and the existing lot will remain as is.
- This variance request is solely focused on the planting calculations. Each category of plantings—including trees, shrubs, and grasses — is assigned a point value. These plantings create wildlife habitats that are dangerous to aircraft and passenger safety.
- The principal purpose of this variance request is to eliminate wildlife habitats that are hazardous to aircraft operations. The intent is not to relax landscaping standards for aesthetic reasons.

#### VEGETATION AND LANDSCAPING DETAILS

- The project is committed to fulfilling the purpose of Section 28.142(1) (a) - (f). The emphasis is on subsection 28.142(4), pertaining to landscape point allocation. Natural turfgrass will be utilized for all landscape islands to mitigate heat island effects. The proposal requests omission of other landscaping elements that may attract wildlife, thereby making it impossible to meet the calculation points in that subsection (4)
- Additional landscaping requirements, including lighting, hardscape, decorative boulders and retaining walls, entrance/exit canopies, amenities, trash collection, and stormwater — will be included per requirements.



## FAA GUIDANCE AND WILDLIFE HABITS

- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) guidance specifically states to use local wildlife biologists, and they recommend excluding trees and specific plantings to reduce wildlife hazards in proximity to the airport.
- Refer to the attached letter. The State of Wisconsin Bureau of Aeronautics endorses this approach, as evidenced in relevant correspondence.
- The airport maintains an objective to eradicate all potential wildlife habitats — including trees, shrubs, plantings, and water features—that may constitute safety threats.
- Given the property's location within a high-impact zone for aircraft approach and departure, it is strongly recommended that no additional wildlife habitats be created.

## CHARACTER AND IMPACT ON THE SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD

- The dominant feature of the area, neighborhood, and district is the airport, with all associated characteristics present. Businesses — including leased offices, car rental, and truck rental — are situated here due to their proximity to the airport.
- The variance serves to enhance airport safety for the benefit of the airport, the surrounding neighborhood, and the city as a whole. By prioritizing safety, this request upholds reliability and serves public interests.
- Avoiding bird strikes is a critical concern; this variance is designed to elevate safety above other considerations in the landscaping ordinance.
- The railroad forms a significant divide at the property boundaries. Adjacent uses — including car and truck rentals as well as leased office spaces — are similarly positioned to capitalize on proximity to the airport, and all depend on safe airport operations.
- Mobile homes in the vicinity are physically separated from the airport by a substantial vegetation buffer, which minimizes potential negative impacts such as noise, dust, debris, vehicle headlight glare, artificial light intrusion, and other undesirable views or activities.