



Madison West Neighborhood Association

February 3, 2017

To: Dan McAuliffe, Planning Division

CC: Deputy Mayor Anne Monks, Alder Barbara Harrington-McKinney

From: Members of the Madison West Neighborhood Association Neighborhood Ad Hoc Plan Review Committee

David Handowski – Chair and Organizer

George Conway – Stone Crest Estates

Sharon Hayes – Newbery Heights

Lee Olsen – Mill Creek Estates

David Olson – Ice Age Falls

Shane Prichard – Hawks Landing

Joseph Ryan – Madison West Neighborhood Association

Kathy Saldana – Stone Crest Estates

Jesse Schreiner - Valley Ridge

Matthew Stanford – Hawks Creek

Matthew Starzewski – Midtown Commons

Craig Thompson – High Point Estates

Re: Neighborhood Recommendations: The High Point – Raymond Neighborhood Development Plan Update

Who is the Madison West Neighborhood Association?

Officially recognized and registered in 2016 by the City of Madison Planning Division as a City of Madison Neighborhood Association, the Madison West Neighborhood Association (MWNA) is Madison’s geographically largest recognized neighborhood association, comprising the entirety of the District 1 aldermanic district on the southwest side of Madison. The MWNA is a formalization of the District 1 Leadership Council first developed by Alder Barbara McKinney.

The residents of the MWNA make up the vast majority of the area that is included in the High Point – Raymond Neighborhood Development Plan and who will be most affected by the Plan. As a steward of District 1, the MWNA established an Ad Hoc Committee to represent affected neighborhoods (including non-District subdivisions Ice Age Falls and Newbery Heights) to shepherd the update process to our neighborhoods’ neighborhood development plan.

As Madison continues to grow, traditional suburban areas are now faced with the challenges of increasing residential and commercial development, traffic congestion, and a higher demand for an ‘amenities infrastructure’. The long range success of District 1 will be highly dependent on how these work in tandem with each other and with the existing neighborhoods.

Recommended Inclusions in the Update to the High Point – Raymond Neighborhood Development Plan

We agree with the Planning Department that a review and update to the Neighborhood Development Plan is overdue given changes in our neighborhood, changes in demographic-related preferences, and changes in City priorities to emphasize neighborhood quality of life assets, walkability, and bikeability.

To help inform the Planning Department's efforts to update the Neighborhood Plan, this memo outlines 8 recommendations detailed below that the MWNA would like to see included in the proposed update to the High Point – Raymond Neighborhood Development Plan being developed by the Planning Division.

Recommendation #1: "People Powered Planning" Should Shape the Neighborhood Development Plan

Recommendation #2: Include Comparative Density Data to Ensure Density Decisions Now and in the Future Fit the Attributes and Assets of the Neighborhood

Recommendation #3: Prioritize Preserving Natural Resources Assets and Neighborhood Character; Prioritize Park Space and Bike Facilities

Recommendation #4: Specifically Articulate and Prioritize a Strategic Order of Development in the Plan to Avoid Piecemeal Infrastructure and Development

Recommendation #5: Prioritize the Completion of the High Point Road Arterial and Limit Further Development Until That Critical Arterial is Completed

Recommendation #6: Preserve the 3 year old Jeffy Bike Path and City-Owned Conservancy Woods by Not Including the Previously Proposed Jeffy Trail Local Street Extension in the Updated Plan.

Recommendation #7: Prioritize Completion of the 4th Lane of High Point Road North of Starr Grass Road

Recommendation #8: Include a Coordinated Topology Within the Plan For Access, Transit, and Open Space Usage

Recommendation #1: "People Powered Planning" Should Shape the Neighborhood Development Plan



As the City of Madison embarks upon its update to the city-wide comprehensive plan, it has promoted its Imagine Madison: People Powered Planning initiative to emphasize the importance of resident and neighborhood input in shaping Madison's planning goals, strategies, actions, and priorities. Neighborhoods have unique characteristics, assets, and residential quality of life preferences that are readily identified by its residents. Recognizing and building upon those unique characteristics, assets, and preferences of a neighborhood helps Madison create a diversity of unique Madison neighborhoods attractive to a diverse set of prospective residents. **We agree with the City of Madison's "People Powered Planning" approach to planning and that is why it is critical that the update to the High Point-Raymond Neighborhood Development Plan explicitly provide significant weight to the input of its existing residents as the City evaluates changes to the Neighborhood Development Plan.** Changes to the plan should be driven by the neighborhood, and not by the City in the "best interests" of the neighborhood.

Recommendation #2: Include Comparative Density Data to Ensure Density Decisions Now and in the Future Fit the Attributes and Assets of the Neighborhood

As the City embarks upon its Comprehensive Plan, it is important that Madison have a diverse portfolio of neighborhoods that can be attractive to a diverse portfolio of current and future residents. Much has been written and said about trends in millennial residential preferences and the impact of Epic on Madison planning decisions. However, there are nuances in trends and risks that millennial preferences suddenly change, and that is why we urge caution in building all neighborhoods to maximize opportunity if the trend continues.

The current Neighborhood Plan last amended in 2006 provides an initial baseline for land use and density (see Table 1 – Proposed Land Uses). However, completed developments and those currently under construction have changed those mixes. **We recommend that the updated Neighborhood Plan narrative provide data comparing the proposed land use and density mixes (including data on total residential units for each density type) in the neighborhood between what was proposed in 2006, what those mixes are currently (completed plus in process construction), and what the mixes would be in the proposed updated Plan. We also recommend that comparisons be provided with other similarly situated suburban neighborhoods, such as the new Grandview Commons.**

We recognize that ‘future’ development will be determined by individual developers. However, it is reasonable to request a projection given that completed projects have established a trend. This future modeling is imperative as it will drive discussion and prioritization of required infrastructure (roads, transit, drainage/public works, parks, and amenities) and establish the baseline for land use that will guide both residents and developers.

We believe that to create a diverse portfolio of attractive neighborhoods, the City should be careful to recognize existing differences in neighborhoods and to not simply maximize high-density, mixed use development in every neighborhood. We will be asking questions and closely watching the update to the Neighborhood Plan to make sure that density concepts that work in other neighborhoods actually make sense given our neighborhood’s attributes and assets and are not just general reflections of an overall trend.

Recommendation #3: Prioritize Preserving Natural Resources Assets and Neighborhood Character
Prioritize Park Space and Bike Facilities

At the December 15, 2016, public open house, residents were asked to provide their preferences on a number of neighborhood development preferences on a score of A (most important) to E (least important) (see <https://www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/planning/documents/HPR%20Clicker.pdf>). “Preserving Natural Resources” (67%) and “Neighborhood Character” (62%) received the two highest preference scores when combining the “A” and “B” scores.

These neighborhood preferences are not surprising given the unique natural resource assets in the neighborhood which are a key reason that residents are attracted to the neighborhood. The Ice Age Trail and its adjoining Ice Age Trail Junction Natural Resource Area and Ice Age Junction Bike Path are key assets to the southern half of the Plan area, and the unique rolling topography as well as the adjacent Elver Park greenspace define the northern half of the Plan area. Those assets help define the neighborhood’s character, traits, and attractiveness and should be preserved and leveraged to enhance the neighborhood’s overall appeal to existing and new residents.

Given those unique neighborhood assets, it is not surprising then that the two highest ranked “amenities” picked by residents at the December open house were “More Park Space” (62%) and “Bike Facilities” (53%) when the “A” and “B” scores were combined. The glacial area of Southwest Madison attracts individuals that appreciate a different type of recreational and park aesthetic than traditional urban neighborhoods. While traditional parkland with fields and courts are important, larger natural areas such as the Ice Age Trail Junction Natural Resource Area, Prairie Ridge Park, Midtown

Commons Park and Elver Park are highly valued by the neighborhood and access by residents to those areas is often achieved by bicycle.

These preferences align with Deputy Mayor Monk's and City of Madison Housing Initiatives Specialty Matt Wachter's vision for suburban neighborhoods that they presented during a session on "21st Century Suburban Neighborhoods" at the Mayor's 2016 Neighborhood Conference. We agree with them that suburban neighborhoods need to reconsider having "neighborhoods built for cars and not for bicycles and pedestrians," and that Madison has not historically looked at the "package of quality of life of a neighborhood," which includes "walkability issues, parkland – which is huge – and bikeability." We also agree with Deputy Mayor Monks that in neighborhood planning, neighborhoods need to "use the assets you have," and that "more suburban neighborhoods could be building on their assets."

We agree with the Deputy Mayor that the updated Neighborhood Plan needs to explicitly place a high priority on "overall quality of life" which includes preserving and enhancing the neighborhood's unique natural resources assets and character, and that includes prioritizing traditional and non-traditional park space and bicycle and pedestrian connections to those assets. Specific elements of the Neighborhood Plan need to be measured by these new priorities and emphases on building on unique assets. An approach for the utilization of Park and Open Space should be developed that incorporates high demand amenities (dog park, community garden, etc.) into the available space. In order to prioritize options there must be understanding of how basic space requirements for a desired amenity impacts the total space available for use. This should be incorporated into Recommendation 8 which requests a "coordinated topology".

Recommendation #4: Specifically Articulate and Prioritize a Strategic Order of Development in the Plan to Avoid Piecemeal Infrastructure and Development

A significant deficiency in the current Neighborhood Development Plan is that the Plan does not address the order or prioritization of supporting infrastructure or development. The Neighborhood Plan has progressed in a piecemeal fashion which affects the cohesiveness and functionality of all aspects of the overall plan, particularly the transportation network.

Regional developments, outside of the direct Plan area (Reserve at High Point, University Research Park and other developments north to Middleton), also impact and influence the success and design of our plan due to continuity of regional access and transportation infrastructure, mass transit, and coordination of amenity infrastructure (bike paths, parks, etc.

Most obviously, the lack of development of the planned realignment and connection of High Point Road and Raymond Road arterials impacts developments in all directions – including development along the High Point Road north of the Plan area such as the Reserve at High Point - from that planned development. The plan and schedule for Midtown Road improvement should also be presented as that remains the critical East/West arterial needed to support access and transit for multiple neighborhoods.

In order to proceed with "smart" development, we believe that the updated plan should articulate and prioritize a strategic order of development, so that the full intent and design of the Neighborhood Plan is realized as development in the neighborhood progresses not just when it is completed.

Recommendation #5: Prioritize the Completion of the High Point Road Arterial and Limit Further Development Until That Critical Arterial is Completed

The heart of the High Point- Raymond Neighborhood Development plan – the connection and realignment of High Point, Midtown, and Raymond Roads - remains an uncompleted hole whose impact radiates throughout the entirety of the Neighborhood Plan area. The lack of the High Point Road arterial connection in particular impacts traffic routing throughout the entirety of the neighborhood and moves automobiles onto facilities not designed or intended to be throughways.

Further development in the Plan area until the planned High Point Road arterial connection is completed will only exacerbate these problems and will negatively impact bikeability and walkability on facilities that are used as alternatives to the arterial connection. **Thus, consistent with the Recommendation #4, we recommend that the update to the Plan explicitly prioritize completion of the High Point Road arterial. We further recommend that the Plan narrative should recommend that until the High Point Road arterial is completed, new development with the neighborhood be specially scrutinized by the City prior to construction approval to ensure that the development will not further exacerbate the automobile connectivity issues caused by the uncompleted section of the High Point Road arterial.**

We do recognize that the City of Madison prefers to have a developer fund a connection such as the High Point Road arterial at the time that the adjacent land is developed by the land owner. However, we also are aware, as is city staff, of circumstances that indicate that the current land owner of the planned High Point Road arterial is not currently inclined to develop that land (the owner previously fought a \$191,000 assessment in 2011 issued by the City of Madison to reconstruct an existing Midtown Road alignment slated to be removed in the current Neighborhood Plan <http://talk.newagtalk.com/forums/thread-view.asp?tid=252584&mid=1929545#M1929545>). **With that backdrop, we also believe that it is critically important that the updated plan identify multiple, specific, workable options for completing this important “heart” of the High Point-Raymond Neighborhood Development Plan**, so that the rest of the Plan can function appropriately and consistently with the principles of the Plan.

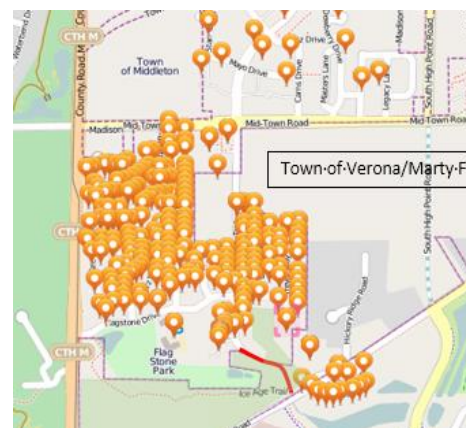
Recommendation #6: Preserve the 3 year old Jeffy Bike Path and City-Owned Conservancy Woods by Not Including the Previously Proposed Jeffy Trail Local Street Extension in the Updated Plan.

Consistent with Recommendation #1 and #3, and the prioritizations in Recommendation #4 and #5 , **the MWNA recommends that the updated Neighborhood Plan preserve the existing Jeffy Bike Path and preserve as a park the unique conservancy land adjoining the Ice Age Junction Natural Resource area. To preserve these assets, the MWNA recommends that the updated Plan not include the previously proposed southern extension of Jeffy Trail which will serve no new development.**

It has been documented that the extension of the street is overwhelmingly opposed by the neighborhood it is intended to serve. That opposition is based on neighborhood residents’ determination that the impacts on the neighborhood’s auto-free *bike and pedestrian connections* via the Jeffy Bike Path and Ice Age Junction Bike Paths to other neighborhoods and the neighborhood’s use of the unique conservancy land adjoining the Ice Age Junction Natural Resource area as a park do not to justify the small benefit created by an *automobile connection* to Raymond Road.

Given that pre-existing organized and widespread opposition, the neighborhood has already gathered significant information about the previously proposed Jeffy Trail local street extension, and wants to ensure that City Planning also has that information, which is provided below in summary.

In the summer of 2014, the City of Madison completed a dedicated bike path through former Audubon Society land purchased by the City of Madison and dedicated as conservancy land to connect the end of Jeffy Trail to the newly completed Ice Age Junction Bike Path. Completion of the Jeffy Bike Path created a natural bicycle corridor from Midtown Commons down Jeffy Trail street to the Jeffy Bike Path and the Ice Age Junction Natural Resource Area and Ice Age Junction Bike Path. The completion also created a dedicated bike and walkway path through the adjoining Ice Age Trail natural area for residents of Hawk’s Creek to bike and walk to the Flagstone Park. Since the completion of the Jeffy Bike Path, it has seen significant use by residents of Hawk’s Creek, Stone Crest Estates, and Mill Creek Estates, and significant use by Epic employees commuting to work by bicycle from the Midtown Commons area.



Signatures By Address Opposing the Jeffy Trail Street Extension

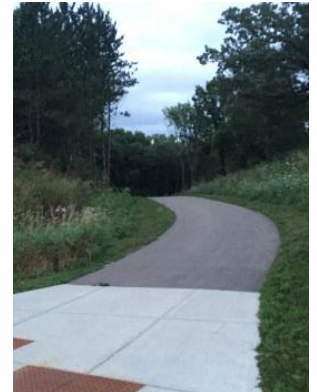
In Fall 2014 and again in Fall 2015, City Engineering proposed spending over \$500,000 to replace the newly built Jeffy Bike Path with a street connection to Raymond Road. Because of the significant value the neighborhood placed on preserving the Jeffy Bike Path and the conservancy land adjacent to the Ice Age Trail that the street extension would replace and traverse, the neighborhood organized to oppose funding for the project. In 2015, over 420 individuals that live in the neighborhood, including 80% of the single family homes of Jeffy Trail, Bedner Road, Trevor Way, Flagstone Drive, Ethan Circle, Mica Road, Quartz Lane, Dolomite Lane, Shale Drive, and Talc Trail, joined a letter opposing the street connection. That joint letter presented to the City of Madison Common Council in November 2015 stated **“THE NEIGHBORHOOD – Hawk’s Creek, Stone Crest Estates, and Mill Creek Estates Subdivisions – that is the intended beneficiary of the Jeffy Trail street extension overwhelmingly opposes the street extension.”** As a result of neighborhood opposition, the Common Council in 2014 and again in 2015 did not approve funding for the street project for the subsequent budget year. In 2016, City Engineering recommended that the street project was not a priority and did not recommend funding for the 2017 budget year.

One bicyclist using the Jeffy Bike Path that lives north of the neighborhood shared this thought that sums up the neighborhood’s concerns:

“Building the street makes no sense. This is a beautiful area with a great bike path. I live in a complex that is about 75% Epic employees and amenities like the bike path and conservancy are why we live in Madison. This plan makes no sense.”

In its November 2015 communication to the Common Council, the neighborhood expressed several concerns with the underlying premises for the street extension that remain relevant:

- *The Street Does Not Solve a Problem.* City staff have provided no specific data or information as to what specific problem the street extension is necessary to solve. Importantly, the City states on the Jeffy Trail project website that “Most of the neighborhood has developed,” yet no information other than generalities regarding connections has been shared by the City explaining that any current traffic problem actually exists in the neighborhood. If no current traffic problem exists, why is the road necessary?
- *Deters Bicycles and Pedestrians and Impacts Their Safety.* The 2 year old Jeffy Bike Path is a highly used bike and pedestrian path that connects to the also recently completed Ice Age Trail Bike Path. Any street option will be comparatively less safe for bicyclists and pedestrians compared to maintaining the existing bike path, and will likely deter the neighborhood’s usage of the Ice Age Junction Bike Path and Trail.
- *Quality of Life and Impact to Wooded Conservancy Land.* **The street extension will cut through former Audubon Society land purchased by the City of Madison and now maintained as conservancy land connecting to the Ice Age Trail Junction Natural Resource Area.** Cutting a street through that hilly, forested land significantly detracts from the quality of life of the neighborhood. *“The fact is at this time it looks very nice down there,” said Chief Engineer Robert Philips at the Sept. 28, 2015 Board of Estimates meeting. “It is a green space and somewhat wooded. People are using this space as a park and that isn’t going to change as long as a road isn’t there.”*
- *Though the City states that Jeffy Trail is not an arterial thoroughway like McKenna Blvd, neighbors are concerned that it will be used as a “cut-through.”* City staff in September 2015 for the first time explained that the street extension is not intended to create a through-way through the neighborhood, and went to lengths to explain that the extension is “for the neighborhood.” In fact, Chief Engineer Philips said during the Sept. 28, 2015, Board of Estimates meeting



- that *“This particular decision doesn’t rise to McKenna Blvd. because Jeffy Trail is not an arterial street.”* Despite those explanations, residents believe that until the High Point Road arterial is constructed through the present “Marty Farm,” traffic from other neighborhoods will use utilize the extension and negatively impact bicycle and pedestrian safety in the neighborhood.
- *Public Safety is not an issue.* In 2014, the Fire Chief Davis told the Common Council that the Jeffy Trail extension was “not a priority” for his department and that the extension “would not necessarily change his department’s response times.” Similarly, a Madison Police Officer serving in our neighborhood told City staff at the September 2015 neighborhood meeting that the extension would similarly not change police response times. When asked during the Sept. 28, 2015 Board of Estimates meeting whether delaying the extension would jeopardize access to first responders, Chief Engineer Philips responded, “No. I think life will go on.”
- *The neighborhood plan needs to be revisited now that residents actually live in the neighborhood.* As stated on the City’s website “Most of the neighborhood has developed.” Yet, as Chief Engineer Philips said at the Sept. 28, 2015 Board of Estimates meeting, the 20-year old neighborhood plan was created before this neighborhood was developed, and that a connection was not an absolute necessity: *“Before it was developed there was a plan that laid out the network. That network of streets could have been laid out without that connection, but at that time, there was a feeling that there should be more access points.”* Further, as recently as May 2013, when the City purchased the Audubon Society land Jeffy Trail would cut through, it characterized a future extension of Jeffy Trail as a “potential future extension of Jeffy Trail.”

The previously proposed Jeffy Trail local street extension represents an intersection of competing neighborhood planning priorities: Automobile connections, bikeability and walkability and dedicated bicycle/pedestrian connections, preserving natural resources, prioritizing park space, building upon unique neighborhood assets to enhance the quality of life in a neighborhood, and utilizing neighborhood input to drive neighborhood planning. With all of those priorities directly impacted by the previously proposed Jeffy Trail extension, the Planning Division’s recommendation for Jeffy Trail in the updated Plan will impact not just the local neighborhood, but will set a precedent for future projects in Madison as to whether auto connections remain the overwhelming priority over other stated neighborhood planning priorities for Madison in the 21st Century.

For additional information, the MWNA can provide a previous letter and Q&A providing additional information that was provided to the City of Madison Common Council in November 2015.

Recommendation #7: Prioritize Completion of the 4th Lane of High Point Road North of Starr Grass Road

High Point Road currently narrows from four lanes to three lanes between Starr Grass Road and Welton Drive. This narrowing creates issues considered dangerous by the neighborhood for motorists and bicyclists particularly at the Welton Drive intersection. Because of the heavy use of High Point Road as an arterial for the neighborhood and its impacts on safety in a growing neighborhood, **we recommend that the updated Neighborhood Development Plan identify steps to complete and prioritize the addition of the fourth lane of the High Point Road arterial between Star Grass Road and Welton Drive, consistent with the earlier principle that the Plan articulate and prioritize an order of development.**

Recommendation #8: Include a Coordinated Topology Within the Plan For Access, Transit, and Open Space Usage

As the Planning Division develops the updated Plan, we would encourage the Division to include additional detail in the Plan identifying the multiple ways that individual developments in the plan area are connected. As noted in Recommendation #6 regarding the previously proposed Jeffy Trail local street extension, connections are not just about automobile connections. **We recommend that the updated Plan individually consider and prioritize according to need what type of inter-development connections best serve the neighborhood, and that those individual neighborhood connection considerations and prioritizations be articulated in the Plan narrative.**

For example, is an automobile connection between Newberry Heights and new development to the south necessary and beneficial, or as residents of Newberry Heights recommend, would those neighborhoods be better served overall by dedicated bicycle or pedestrian paths? As another example, is the primary driver for connections between developments access to park assets? How should that impact what type of connection should be between developments? A further example involves mass transit. How should mass transit options and access points drive what type of inter neighborhood connections are best?

To help further prioritize types of inter-development connections, we also recommend that the Plan include additional information about visions for usage of open space. Different usages of open space create differing volumes of usage by residents. For example, a dog park would likely draw from a larger area compared to a more traditional local park infrastructure. **Thus, we further recommend that the Plan provide some additional detail regarding potential planned development of open spaces identified in the Plan as a means to help identify the best connection types within the neighborhood.**

The MWNA appreciates the City's interest in involving the MWNA in the development process of the update to the High Point-Raymond Neighborhood Development Plan. As residents of the Plan area's neighborhoods, we have "on the ground" knowledge of the assets, characteristics, and quality of life preferences should help drive improvements and changes to the Neighborhood Plan that will make the neighborhood attractive to current and prospective residents. Madison is a diverse community with a diverse set of neighborhoods that can attract a diverse set of prospective residents. We will continue to ask questions and communicate with the City regarding its approach to updating the Neighborhood Plan, and we hope that the recommendations that we provide in this letter will help advance a draft plan that best serves current and future residents.

On behalf of the Ad Hoc Plan Review Committee representing the neighborhoods affected by the High Point - Raymond Road Neighborhood Development Plan, we thank you very much for your time and consideration.

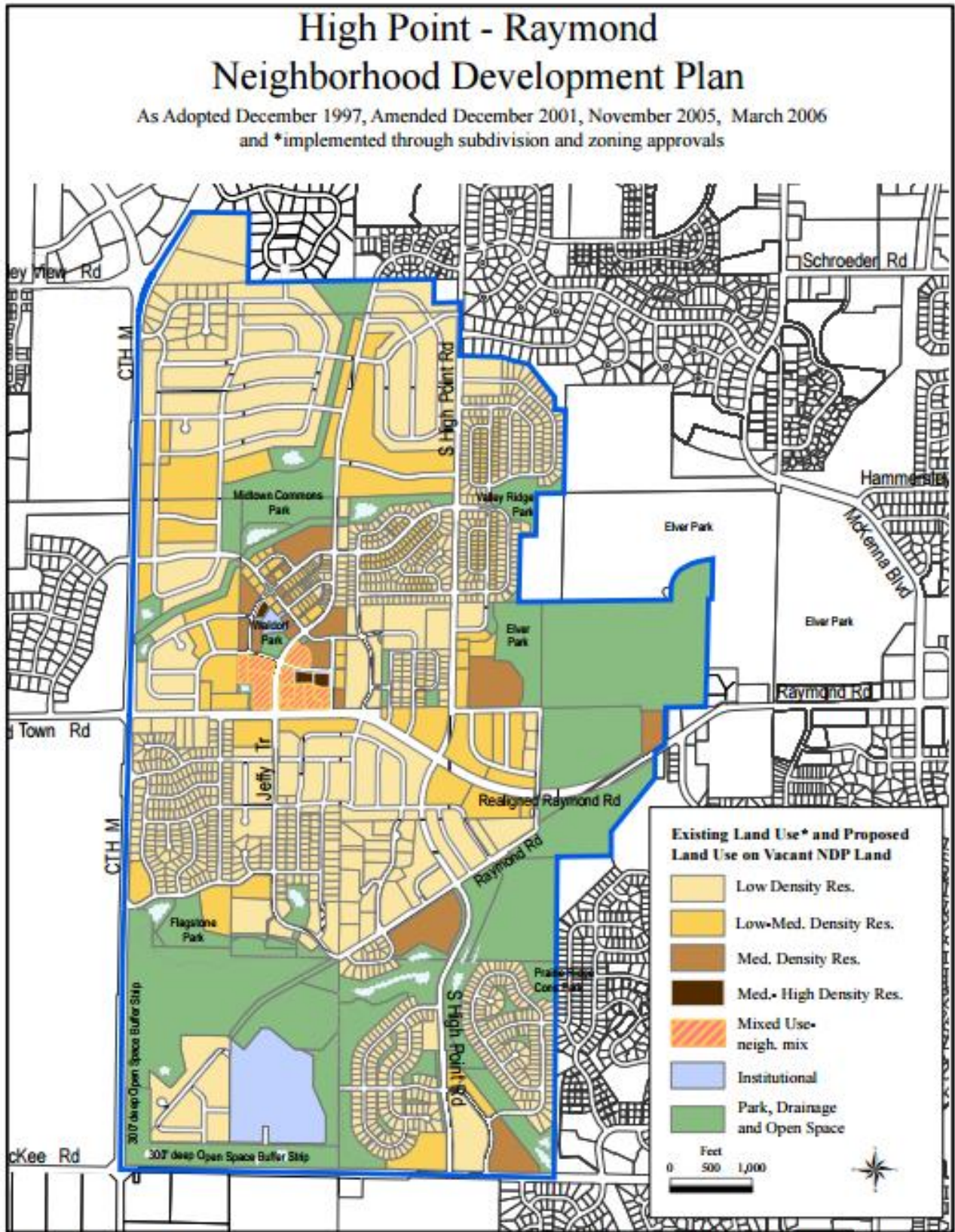
If you have any questions, please contact:

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Table 1



Last Update of NDP file: March 2016