



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Planning Division

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To: City of Madison Plan Commission
From: Greater East Towne Area Planning Team
Rebecca Cnare, Linda Horvath, Kirstie Laatsch, Ryan Jonely, Chris Wells, Bill Fruhling
Date: February 7, 2022
Subject: Greater East Towne Area Plan Adoption ([Legistar ID #68802](#))

Background

The City of Madison has been concurrently planning for the futures of both the Greater East Towne Area and the Odana Area. The Odana Area Plan was adopted by Common Council on September 9, 2021. The Greater East Towne [Planning Area](#) (GETAP) is roughly bounded by the Wisconsin and Southern Railroad corridor on the south, East Washington Avenue on the north, Interstate 39/90 on the east and Mendota Street on the west.

The Comprehensive Plan had identified the area as one of the City's growth priority areas that should transform from the current auto-oriented character to higher density mixed-use centers along the future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route. Undertaking this planning effort will also help the area adapt to the changes and challenges the retail sector has been experiencing since the 1990s, which have further been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been many public outreach activities throughout the planning process. These public engagement activities were adapted to seek input and feedback during the pandemic, and to intentionally include communities that traditionally underrepresented in planning processes. A summary of the various public outreach activities are available on the [project website](#).

[Link to Draft Plan](#)

Plan Summary

The Plan Commission received an informational presentation on the Plan's Draft Land Use and Transportation concepts on 10/4/21. Feedback received at that meeting, as well as that received from other boards, commissions and committees and the public was used as staff finalized the document, including the addition of more detailed policy recommendations throughout the Plan Chapters. Below is a summary of the document.

Land Use and Transportation

The development concept proposed in this Plan will guide the Greater East Towne Area towards becoming a walkable, transit-oriented activity centered that is better connected to, and integrated with, surrounding areas. A fundamental element of the concept is the need for a plan that accommodates redevelopment over time to achieve a long-term vision; it does not require demolition, but frames how redevelopment should occur when property owners are ready to do so.

The Plan recommends mixed-use development for a significant amount of land, with the highest future development intensity adjacent to existing and planned transit. The general land use recommendations are flexible

to be adaptable and resilient to changing conditions going forward, as long as development adheres to certain principles and accommodates recommended public improvements. Staff believe that this plan offers great opportunity for growth along the planned Bus Rapid Transit line, and could add thousands of new residents in a new and complete urban neighborhood. Growth planning projections show that 2,500+ units could easily be built in the next 15-25 years, while still leaving capacity as continued redevelopment occurs for more than 9,500+ dwelling units in the long term. Staff believes that a large amount of growth is possible with or without the redevelopment of the East Towne Mall, although redevelopment of some or all of the mall area would facilitate much more additional economic and residential growth.

Proactive Rezoning: In addition to the [General Future Land Use \(GFLU\) map changes](#) to become an official part of the Comprehensive Plan, this plan also recommends the [pro-active rezoning of several areas](#) that could see early development pressure as the Metro Bus Rapid Transit line is implemented in the next few years. The recently created RMX district, the densest mixed-use district outside of the Downtown, is the best match for encourage redevelopment on existing parking lots, and in underutilized commercial areas.

Transportation recommendations call for the implementation of important street connections as redevelopment occurs. Concepts a future [interconnected grid of streets](#) that will organize and orient new development while increasing walkability and bikability by providing more direct routes on public streets. There are additional, related transportation recommendations on [page 21](#). A highlight is a recommendation authorizing an East Washington Avenue Corridor Study that focuses on pedestrian, bicyclist, and transit rider safety, and considers a pedestrian bridge or other separated structure. There is also a recommendation to consider adding tabletop crossings, rapid flashing beacons, bump outs, and other pedestrian infrastructure where deemed necessary to improve pedestrian safety and comfort.

Officially Mapping Streets: The Plan recommends the [pro-active official mapping](#) of several key transportation linkages including the beginning phase of a cross-connecting High Crossing Boulevard. In addition, the Plan recommends mapping a Parkside Drive connection and the westward extension of East Springs to Lien Road. This recommendation will unlock some key re-development parcels.

Neighborhoods and Housing

The key neighborhood and housing recommendations encourage a wide variety of housing scales, types and costs in order to encourage a complete new neighborhood within the Plan area. In an area with little to no housing over the last 50 years, the development of the BRT line unlocks a the potential for higher densities near East Washington Avenue, as well as the opportunity for a smaller scale neighborhood adjacent to Starkweather Creek and future park space.

Economy and Opportunity

A cross agency team completed a Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative (RESJI) Analysis on the draft Plan in October 2021. The purpose was to guide the Plan in creating equitable business and housing opportunities within the planning area for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities and people living with lower incomes. The Planning Division worked closely with Economic Development Division staff to draft the Economy and Opportunity recommendations. Input from public participation activities and the RESJI analysis significantly informed the recommendations. A general theme is to work in partnership with BIPOC communities to create a more equitable economy that they have more capacity to participate in and benefit from.

Culture and Character

This Plan looks to expand and review the existing Urban Design District #5 as well as improve partnerships and communication with BIPOC residents, business owners and other historically underrepresented communities during the development of parks, open spaces, community facilities and public art.

Green and Resilient

Park space is a critical part of creating vibrant neighborhoods, and the Plan offers a variety of ways that new park space could be built over time in an area that lacks parks due to its history as a predominantly commercial area. In addition, the Plan focuses on increasing sustainability, improving the tree canopy and coordinating with the future watershed study on park redevelopment and stormwater management projects in the area.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend that the Plan Commission return to Common Council with the recommendation for approval of adoption of the Greater East Towne Area Plan as a supplement to the Comprehensive Plan with the following recommended changes of the Transportation Policy and Planning Board.

1/10/22 Transportation Policy and Planning Board:

Recommended approval of the Plan with the following changes (on a unanimous vote):

- Delineate environmentally sensitive areas along the creek more clearly in the Natural Features Map, such as headwaters area of Starkweather Creek – important information when development is being considered
- Add the railroad line to the Street Connections, Pedestrian and Bicycle Maps
- Add two new bike path crossings of the railroad on the Bicycle Map: one connection somewhere between the roundabout and Interstate, and another up to City View Dr.

1/12/22 Board of Parks Commissioners:

Recommended adoption of the Plan without any changes (on a unanimous vote).

1/12/22 Urban Design Commission:

Recommended adoption of the Plan without any changes (on a unanimous vote).

Additional Feedback: The UDC made the following recommendation for the future implementation of the Plan.

- UDD No. 5 should be extended to the Interstate for those properties fronting E. Washington Avenue, and wrap south for the identified buildings that are 8-stories or more. The UDC also signaled an intent to the Plan Commission that the district would be expanded and come more in compliance with new East Towne Area Plan.

1/19/22 Economic Development Committee:

Recommended adoption of the Plan without any changes (on a unanimous vote).

Additional Feedback:

- The language of some strategies sounds weak, such as the words “strive” and “explore.” They want firmer language particularly around strategies related to racial equity and helping businesses owned by BIPOC communities.
- The following recommendation was general and we should be more clear/specific: "Consider creating a cultural inclusion plan for developers that would provide guidance on promoting a diverse mix of tenants."
- One other suggestion about making sure BIPOC-owned businesses could locate in the area was to include something like: “Ensure 20% of the Commercial Core area is set aside for minority-owned businesses.”
 - EDD Staff noted that there could be legal reasons why the Plan cannot include something like that but that we could follow-up on it.