Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Planning Division

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To: Economic Development Committee
From: Ben Zellers, Linda Horvath
Date: December 17, 2025
Subject: Southwest Area Plan Update

Background

The Southwest Area Plan is the fourth of 12 area plans that lend more detail to the City's Comprehensive Plan by providing area-specific actions. Area plans create a long-term vision to guide changes in the physical aspects of our community, such as development initiated by the private sector and infrastructure improvements typically carried out by the public sector. Plan recommendations are guided by adopted City policies and feedback from the community. Plans are used to guide the types and locations of new development, identify locations for investment in public infrastructure, ranging from parks to sewers and bike paths. Plans help prioritize what investments the community wants to pursue with limited resources.

Staff is updating the Committee on draft Southwest Area Plan Economy and Opportunity chapter actions and seeking Committee feedback prior to compiling a final draft of the Southwest Area Plan for introduction at Common Council. Please see the project website for maps, background material, public feedback summaries, and material from past meetings.

Public Engagement

Staff has undertaken many public outreach and engagement events and activities throughout the planning process. The most prominent outreach relating to economic development was the June 3, 2025 business walk led by Economic Development Division staff.

Initial feedback and summer feedback was used to draft actions and maps in late summer/early fall. Draft actions and maps were released for public review on October 17th, with a "storymap" walkthrough of highlights. An in-person open house to discuss draft actions and maps with the public was held on October 23rd, followed by virtual meetings on October 29 (evening) and October 30 (noon). Staff also worked with nINA Collective to hold four focus groups (one general discussion, one Spanish-language discussion, one Chinese-language discussion, and a discussion held in association with Access to Independence). Commenting on draft actions and maps via the online Konveio commenting site closed on December 4th. An interim summary of feedback is available on the project website. It summarizes comments received from June 1-November 16, 2025 and will be updated with comments received through December 4th.

Economy and Opportunity Actions

1. Create new tax increment districts (TIDs) as needed to support development of businesses/ employment and mixed-use redevelopment consistent with the GFLU Map in the Land Use chapter.
    a. If significant redevelopment is proposed in the southwest and/or southeast corner of Verona Rd./W. Beltline Hwy., create a new tax increment district that extends north and south of the W. Beltline Hwy. to support development of businesses/employment.
    b. As properties within the Town of Middleton island bounded by Gammon, Watts, Struck, and the Beltline transfer to the City and redevelop, create a new TID to fund non-assessable infrastructure improvements to this commercial/ employment area (contingent on proposal of a revenue-generating project).
2. Preserve the Southwest Area's ability to grow employment and businesses by maintaining General Commercial and Employment land uses on the GFLU map for businesses and employers, specifically the two large business areas along the Beltline.
3. Evaluate the prospects for the City to land bank underutilized and/or vacant commercial properties if business vacancies continue or increase, possibly in conjunction with creation of a new TID that generates revenue to support land banking.
4. Explore options for adding public wi-fi in City of Madison Parks located in our Community Action Strategy Areas where 50 % or more people live with low to moderate incomes as defined by Census and HUD income data.

The actions shown above are City-led. The Economy and Opportunity chapter also includes several partnerships. A full draft of the plan, including partnerships, maps, and actions from other chapters, is linked through the project website.

Economic Development Committee Discussion

Staff is seeking feedback from the Committee on draft actions and maps prior to completing a full final draft:

1. Is there anything you think we missed?
2. Do you have additional comments or questions?