

CITY OF MADISON
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL
CORRESPONDENCE

Date: June 10, 2015
To: Mayor Soglin
Members of the Common Council
From: University Hill Farms Ad Hoc Steering Committee
Subject: Redevelopment of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Site

In 2013, the Common Council authorized a neighborhood planning process for the University Hill Farms area. The planning study area is bounded roughly by University Avenue on the north, Midvale Boulevard on the east, Mineral Point Road on the south, and Rosa Road and Whitney Way on the west. The resolution authorizing the planning process excluded the 21 acre Wisconsin Department of Transportation site location at 4802 Sheboygan Avenue.

Public input was solicited during the planning process. Although the WDOT was not in the official study area, residents were concerned that the redevelopment of the site could have major impacts on the neighborhood. The University Hill Farms Ad Hoc Steering Committee has summarized the public input received to ensure that the City, Department of Administration, and the selected development team is aware of the comments received during the two year planning process.

The University Hill Farms Ad Hoc Steering Committee recognizes the redevelopment of the State Office Building site will provide opportunities for employment, and it is hoped, a renewed investment in the northern portion of the planning study area. The focus of this letter is to identify issues identified by residents, and as appropriate, suggest strategies for further discussion when a proposal is submitted to the City for review.

General Development Plan (2007)

The State of Wisconsin Department of Administration authorized preparation of a Hill Farms Development General Development Plan (GDP) which provided detailed land use, multi-phased redevelopment, and infrastructure improvements for the entire site in 2007. The GDP proposed extensive office, commercial and residential development over several years. The Common Council conditionally approved to rezone the property from C2 to PUD-GDP at its August 7, 2007 meeting. This PUD-GDP expired before any redevelopment occurred.

The University Hill Farms Neighborhood Plan has proposed redevelopment concepts on the adjacent American Red Cross site, nearby underutilized sites, as well as recommended public infrastructure improvements. It is expected a GDP will be prepared and approved before any redevelopment occurs on the WDOT site to ensure coordinated development and major impacts on the neighborhood are mitigated prior to redevelopment.

Land Use

The City of Madison Comprehensive Master Plan denotes this site for Employment (E). Employment Districts are recommended as predominantly office, research and specialized employment areas, and generally do not include retail or consumer service uses serving the wider community. Limited retail and service establishments primarily serving employees and users of the district are encouraged (Source: City of Madison Comprehensive Plan, Volume II, pgs 2-95-96).

The State of Wisconsin site is roughly a 21-acre parcel which has a potential to serve as a larger employment center. The existing multi-modal network supports employment uses, and the potential BRT stations on Sheboygan at N Segoe Road and N Eau Claire Avenue will provide additional transportation alternatives to workers.

The State of Wisconsin DOA released an RFP in October 2014. It is assumed that a newly constructed 600,000 gross square foot State office building will be built on the westerly edge of the site. A mixture of office, residential, or mixed-use is anticipated to be constructed on the remainder of the site. Neighborhood issues of concern include:

New land uses, and the intensity and ingress/egress from the site onto residential streets, taking into account vehicle trips and peak times.

Building Design, Height and Setbacks

The WDOT site is zoned as Suburban Employment District (SE). The zoning code allows building heights of five stories as a permitted use or heights greater than five stories with a conditional use. In the case of the WDOT site, the zoning ordinance allows lots of record created prior to the adoption of the new zoning code the maximum building height of the existing building. The WDOT building is ten stories. (Sources: City of Madison Zoning Code, Chapter 28, pg 95).

Consideration by Common Council:

- New buildings are constructed with greatest height along University Avenue and lower height along Sheboygan. The northern portion of the site is highly visible from University Avenue. Building height is should not exceed 12-stories which is consistent with Weston Place Condominiums or the newly constructed 11-story apartment building at 617 N Segoe Road.
- Design buildings and streets to prevent the development of a “canyon effect,” which will reduce the potential of wind tunnels.
- Provide a greater setback of buildings on Sheboygan Avenue and N Segoe Road to accommodate greenspace, landscaping, and streetscape amenities.
- Widen sidewalks from 6-feet to 8-feet on Sheboygan to accommodate pedestrian movement.
- Construct new buildings with outstanding design that not only compliments the existing surrounding structures, but also creates a sophisticated and modern development.
- Mixed-use development that is predominantly commercial/employment uses and fewer residential uses. The site should also include amenities and services that provide civic, recreational and/or commercial appeal.

- New construction adheres to green building standards, though do not necessarily qualify for LEED or other green building certification programs.
- There is an unobstructed view of the State Capitol from the crest of Old Sauk Road. Any new building should be setback from University Avenue and/or have building stepbacks at upper stories to help preserve the sight line to the State Capitol. Maintaining this view shed is a priority as the WDOT site is redeveloped.

Transportation

The intensity of land uses of the site will generate a greater volume of vehicular trips. The greater intensity of office uses will generate a larger volume of vehicular traffic with peak times during morning and late afternoon. Neighborhood issues of concern include:

- Increased use of and vehicular speed on Sheboygan Avenue, N Segoe Road, N Whitney Way and Regent Street is a concern for the livability of University Hill Farms Neighborhood. This is a neighborhood with a high population of seniors and college-age students that rely on bus, biking and walking. Increased vehicular use and speed could negatively impact the quality of life within the neighborhood, in addition to creating potential unsafe conditions. A development that emphasizes workforce housing, use of alternative transportation modes, is attractive, pedestrian-friendly, and provides amenities that are desirable for employees and residents living in close proximity is preferred.
- N Segoe Road and N Whitney Way intersections are at or near capacity. Increase in use of the intersections radiating from employment uses will put greater demand on the functioning of the intersections and the use of Sheboygan Avenue.
- It is important for the neighborhood to minimize traffic volume, congestion and speed on Regent Street, Sheboygan Avenue, N Segoe Road and N Whitney Way and cut thru traffic on residential streets.
- New land use developments should provide adequate parking and transportation facilities to accommodate their needs.
- On-street parking by commuter vehicles will limit availability for other users, such as those using Rennebohm Park, patrons of the Post Office, or visitors to the area and adversely affect the neighborhood quality of life.

Consideration by the Common Council:

- Incorporate transportation improvements included in the 2007 GDP plan, notably the development of the B-Street/University Avenue intersection/outlet.
- Full movement intersection with University Avenue and a roundabout at Sheboygan Avenue at N Segoe Road is fully supported to alleviate traffic congestion on arterial and residential streets.
- Provide a safe and comfortable connection across University Avenue to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists traveling from Madison's west side and Middleton traveling to WDOT and Hilldale.
- Develop a traffic management plan to improve traffic mobility, increase traffic safety and decrease travel times.

- Employee incentives to use mass transit, car sharing or pooling, or other transportation demand management strategies for the State Office building and other non-public entities should be part of the strategy to maximize workers use of vehicles.
- Obscure on-site parking structures by wrapping them in office, retail and/or residential buildings.
- Construct a joint parking structure for WDOT use, other on-site commercial users, and a Park and Ride Facility to support bus and proposed BRT station.
- Provide for extensive pedestrian and bicycle facilities and accommodations, including a B-Cycle or other bike sharing stations.
- On-street parking strategies which restrict commuter parking should be implemented. Two-hour parking limits will assist in frequent turnover but is most likely to create a musical-chair like situation with employees moving their automobiles during the day. Affordable parking rates and incentives to use alternative modes of transportation should be part of the strategy to address over parking of the residential streets.

Civic and Open Space

The intensity of use on the site, and the existing and projected new residential units north of Regent Street are putting greater demands on the limited open space within the neighborhood. Any commercial and residential development must incorporate open space in the site design.

Consideration by the Common Council:

- Commercial buildings should incorporate landscaping and outdoor spaces, such as eating areas, to provide outdoor areas for the workforce and for patrons of the area.
- Incorporate open space for civic uses within the redevelopment. The Westside Community Market is held in the east parking lot of the DOT site at the corner of Segoe Road and Sheboygan Avenue. Although the Committee acknowledges the Hilldale Farmer’s Market is nearby, maintaining the Westside Community Market is a high priority, as it is considered one of the neighborhood’s greatest assets.

Stormwater Management

The neighborhood’s existing stormwater management system is insufficient and causes flooding for University Hill Farms and surrounding communities. Ensuring that a stormwater management system developed for the WDOT site is effective and sustainable will decrease the level of existing issues that result from the lack of adequate stormwater drainage.

Consideration by the Common Council:

- Develop a comprehensive on-site stormwater management system that maintains storm water on-site.
- Use of green space, rain gardens, or other infiltration or detention strategies to capture stormwater from roofs and building sites.

Sheboygan Avenue

As part of the neighborhood plan process, Sheboygan Avenue was identified as an important corridor for pedestrians living in the area and as a connector to the employment center to the west and regional shopping mall to the east. Improving the function of the street was a high

priority, especially for the ease of pedestrians, bicyclists, and bus riders. This complements the major arterial University Avenue along the north edge of the neighborhood.

Considerations by the Common Council:

- Add pedestrian-style and LED street lighting along Sheboygan Avenue, between North Segoe Road to North Whitney Way. Retain and enhance street trees along streets.
- At the time new development occurs, widen the sidewalk from 6-feet to 8-feet to accommodate pedestrian movement.
- Add bus amenities, Bus Rapid Transit Stations, bicycle lane and facilities, on-street parking, and reduce speed limit from 30 mph to 25 mph to make the street pedestrian-friendly.
- Plant flowering trees along Sheboygan Avenue to contribute to the unique character of the neighborhood and development.

Community Gardens

The Sheboygan Community Gardens were established in 1981. The gardens cover 1.9 acres, with 60 plots of which 8 are raised gardens. Out of 108 gardeners, 49 (45%) live within 0.5 miles and 76 gardeners (70%) within 1.0 mile of the gardens.

The Sheboygan Community Gardens are located in the northwest corner of the WDOT site. In 2007, the consulting firm preparing a redevelopment plan for the site conducted an analysis of twelve alternative garden locations within a 1.0 to 1.5 mile radius of the existing garden location. The Hill Farms Redevelopment General Development Plan (May 9, 2007) final recommendation was to relocate the community gardens to the eastern edge of Rennebohm Park, but this was not approved by the Neighborhood Association or the City in 2007. The concept plan proposed 111 plots lying south of a proposed bike and pedestrian path. After further analysis, this drainage-way serves as a storm water retention area which is deemed unsuitable for a community garden site. Neighborhood issues of concern include:

- Relocation of Sheboygan community gardens from the current location in the northwest corner of 4802 Sheboygan Avenue. The community gardens are used by neighborhood residents which provide a highly valued service to the gardening community.
- Relocation of the community gardens to other locations within the neighborhood has proven difficult due to location, suitability and accessibility.

Consideration by the Common Council:

- As part of the overall site design, retain the existing community gardens at the northwestern corner of the WDOT site, or relocate the community gardens to an acceptable alternative location on the State-owned property or other acceptable site(s).

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