

UNIVERSITY HILL FARMS ASSOCIATION, INC.

November 28, 2015

Chair and Members, City of Madison Plan Commission
c/o City of Madison Department of Planning and Development
211 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

Re: University Hill Farms Association, Inc. Opposition to Community Gardens in Rennebohm Park

Dear Chair and Members of the Plan Commission:

I am writing to you as the President of the University Hill Farms Association, Inc. Our Association represents the residents of the single-family and duplex portions of the Hill Farms neighborhood on the west side of Madison. The entire Hill Farms neighborhood contains approximately 4,000 housing units, with approximately 25% of the units being single-family and duplex units, and 75% multi-family housing units.

Our neighborhood is served by Rennebohm Park, which is located at the intersection of Regent Street and North Eau Claire Avenue. Our Association Board of Directors recently voted in opposition to placing the Sheboygan Community Gardens, either temporarily or permanently, in Rennebohm Park, and I want to communicate to you the reasons for this position on behalf of our Board:

First, the major portion of the Hill Farms neighborhood, which is located between Whitney Way on the west and Midvale Boulevard on the east, is short of necessary park land now, and will have a more serious shortfall in usable park land in the future. In recent years, we have had development of substantial new multi-family housing in our neighborhood, including the high-rise Weston Place condominium building, the Overlook apartments and the new high-rise Stoppel apartment building, all along North Segoe Road. In addition, the redevelopment of the Hill Farms office building site will likely have some substantial multi-family buildings, with the number unknown at this time. Finally, the proposed Hill Farms neighborhood plan now before you anticipates over 900 additional multi-family units, in addition to the foregoing, in our neighborhood during the life of the plan. While the recently constructed residential buildings paid park fees, these fees have not been used to purchase additional park land in our neighborhood, and it can be anticipated that this will be likely to continue in the future. Hence, we are deficient in park land now and will be more deficient in the future. Using Rennebohm Park for a community garden, which will tie up land for one use, will make this situation worse.

Second, all of the areas in Rennebohm Park which have sufficient sunlight for a community garden are currently utilized for existing outdoor activities, and these existing activities should not be displaced in favor of an exclusive private use arrangement. The park is currently home to a park shelter, which is used regularly throughout the summer, and hosts the Capitol City Band every Thursday night during the summer. The areas around the shelter are used for tennis courts, a playground, basketball court, volleyball and picnic area, ball diamond, athletic fields for soccer and other outdoor sports, and a skating rink which is used for parking for the Capitol City Band concerts. These facilities are in regular and intensive use, and we are opposed to displacing any of these activities in favor of a community gardens.

Third, the Hill Farms Plan was developed after substantial work by the City of Madison Ad Hoc Plan Committee and City staff, with the help of a City-paid consultant, and this Plan does not recommend that existing land in Rennebohm Park be used for a community garden. The proposed Hill Farms Plan has already been reviewed by the City Parks Commission, and the Parks Commission has voted in favor of the Hill Farms Plan as recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee and City staff, without recommending placement of a community garden in the existing Rennebohm Park boundaries.

Fourth, there has been no showing that the search for community garden sites elsewhere, on public or private lands, including lands that could be leased or purchased, has been exhausted by the City or the community gardens, including, but not limited to, discussions with the developer of the private portion of the Hill Farms Office Building site.

In conclusion, our Association requests that the Plan Commission approve the Hill Farms Plan as presented by the City Ad Hoc Committee, and that the Commission decline to make any amendment to the Hill Farms Plan with respect to locating community gardens in the existing boundaries of Rennebohm Park. We look forward to discussing this with the Plan Commission. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Peter Hughes, President, University Hill Farms Association, Inc.

Email: pehughes@wisc.edu; Phone: 238-7568

cc: Ald. Chris Schmidt
Ald. Mark Clear
Ms. Ann Monks, Mayor's Office
Director, City of Madison Parks Department
Hill Farms Association Board Members