

To: City of Madison Plan Commission
Re: Elderberry Neighborhood Development Plan, 2018 draft
Date: March 14, 2018

Dear Members of the Plan Commission:

Ours is a neighborhood built on farmland that recently belonged to the Town of Middleton. Those of us who moved here, many in just the last two years, came for quiet and the chance to see fields, hills, and woods. (For these vanishing amenities, as well as good schools, we pay taxes of \$9,000-10,000 per year.) I doubt there's a single person here who knew anything about a City of Madison development plan featuring large apartment buildings, commercial and employment uses, and busy roads. Our builders certainly didn't tell us!

We realize growth is inevitable. And we understand the City has broad objectives to meet. However, as residents we ask you to hear some of our primary concerns about how that growth is handled within the Elderberry Neighborhood:

1) **Density.** In the 2018 draft, acreage for apartments has increased, while acreage for single family housing has decreased by 33%. Planners attribute the decrease in single family acreage to a need for more storm water retention areas. It's not clear, however, why single family housing is taking the hit. Our experience, and reports from realtors, tell us there's a shortage of single family housing in Madison, especially recent construction. This of course drives up prices. While we know the City wants many thousands of new units, what happens when people now living in apartments want a home? If they have to leave the city to find one they can afford, does that serve the city longterm?

Also, we note that the new *Imagine Madison* document shows that residents favor keeping growth inside the Beltline on the far west side. We'd like to know if their preference for infill rather than edge growth will be applied to the ENDP.

2) **QRS parcel.** Relative to 2002, the new plan increases density on the QRS parcel (along Old Sauk Rd., immediately east of the City water tower parcel). **The ENA Board opposes Housing Mix 3 on this parcel.** Our reasons are several: 1) We view HM 3 as inappropriate because it's inconsistent with the area surrounding it in all directions. It has been added per the developer's request and does not serve the neighborhood. 2) Directly north, across the road, is Pope Farm Conservancy, which is a treasure for all who live here. High concentrations of residents nearby will increase problems for the conservancy in numerous ways such as more escape of light, more hazards to wildlife, and more people illegally walking dogs or entering the park after hours. Another issue for Pope Farm is that HM3 creates the possibility of five-story apartment buildings. These would destroy the conservancy's 360 degree view of the driftless area, a view the City has in the past worked to help preserve. (We encourage you to talk to Mel Pope, chair of the Conservancy board, for details on why this is a bad move for Pope Farm.)

3) High density housing here would clog traffic on Old Sauk Rd. Eventually one or more schools will be built directly across the street, and Pope Farm already produces traffic jams here. Aside from those issues, dense housing will add higher volume to the west end of the neighborhood where the city has agreed to keep density and traffic low.

3) Street use changes. The 2002 plan channeled traffic north-south along Bear Claw Way and east-west along several collector roads including Elderberry, Brader, and White Fox. The draft plan presents a seriously altered traffic pattern that would harm portions of our neighborhood. In the name of “connectivity” it is turning Burnt Sienna (as well as Fargo and northern Big Stone Trail) into narrow collector streets. It’s doing so by creating a straight line route from Mineral Pt in the south to Old Sauk in the north, along a path that will also collect traffic from the employment district, a regional dirt-bike park, and multi-family housing. Residents of Burnt Sienna view this as highly unfair because *the new plan changes the rules of the game after play has begun*.

To wit, homeowners were sold property along a street sized to be a local street — a curving street bordering the bike/walking path that’s supposed to be a peaceful amenity for us— with no indication it would ever be anything other than a quiet street. The 2002 plan affirmed Burnt Sienna as a local street. If the City sees a need for more connectivity, we believe it should’ve planned for this in advance of allowing developers to market property on these streets. For the City to propose changing the rules now is hurtful to residents’ lives and pocketbooks.

We see alternate ways, better ways, to address connectivity. (1) Street layout could remain as shown on the 2002 map, where traffic is largely routed east to west except along Bear Claw Way. (2) Alternatively, traffic from high-concentration areas (employment districts, apartment housing, and the Mineral Pt. artery) could be directly linked to yet undeveloped collector roads such as Schewe, Brader, and Elderberry, but linked only indirectly to existing residential streets. There are multiple ways to do this. We will gladly help work out a new design with traffic planners.

4) Employment district. We don’t yet have much information on the employment district. We note that on the 2018 draft the area is presented as a strip and the pedestrian-friendly village center area reduced. We also want to learn more about about the scope of acceptable uses and height limits on buildings.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns. We hope that the Plan Commission cares about the residents it serves — not just developers and the abstract city — and will help us create a livable neighborhood. We would like to preserve some of our uniqueness and avoid getting swallowed up in “the geography of nowhere.”

Respectfully,
Sharon M Goss, Elderberry Neighborhood Association President