TO: Plan Commission Members and Planning Staff

FROM: Madison Food Policy Council

RE: Recommendations and Action on Draft Comp Plan

DATE: July 12, 2018

The Madison Food Policy Council and its Comprehensive Plan Work Group appreciate the support our suggestions have received from staff, boards and committees, and the Plan Commission over the past 18 months. At this point in the process, we'd appreciate your consideration on four outstanding issues before you vote on the Comprehensive Plan at your meeting on July 16th:

**1. Restoring an action to provide guidelines for Green & Resilient Strategy 9 that reads, "Support safe and sustainable farming and gardening practices to protect the ecosystems and public health." (page 97)**

As you know, Planning Staff included an action regarding "Guidelines for Agricultural Best Practices" for this strategy in the initial draft of the Comp Plan. Parks staff requested its removal because of concerns about budget and operations impact on its use of pesticides. In the weeks since, five boards and commissions have voted for its restoration in their recommendations for approval of the Comp Plan – the Board of Public Health, CDBG Committee, Economic Development Committee, Sustainable Madison Committee, and Madison Food Policy Council.

While the Plan Commission declined to restore the action at a Work Session in June, its discussion shed some light on concerns raised by staff that the Work Group would like to address and possibly clarify some misunderstandings:

- This Strategy and Action are focused on growing food. Community gardens on city-owned lands are already required to observe organic best practices; developing guidelines would help to inform residents and growers throughout our community about best practices for sustainable agriculture.
- The Action supports and informs the implementation of this strategy in much the same way as the RESJ process supports Transportation Strategy 3 (see Action A on page 34)
- Restoring this Action does not undermine staff's objective of presenting "6 Elements, 12 Goals, 50 Strategies and 150+ Actions" in the Comp Plan
- Regarding the pesticide issue, it's important to note that a task force is currently being formed to review the City's Integrated Pest Management policy (adopted in 2004) that will involve all relevant division staff in a transparent process to consider pesticide use in our community.
- Without restoring this Action, in spite of numerous goal statements about protecting water quality and public health, there will be no references to the use of pesticides or fertilizers anywhere in this Comprehensive Plan.

The Madison Food Policy Council respectfully requests that the following text be restored to the Comp Plan as an action for implementing Green & Resilient Strategy 9 on page 97 to **"Support safe and sustainable farming and gardening practices to protect the ecosystems and public health."**

> Guidelines for Sustainable Agriculture Best Practices
> We must work to reduce the amount of harmful fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides that have negative environmental and health impacts. Guidelines should be established for urban agriculture to promote best practices that support the natural environment and public health in our community.

**2. Adding language about "preserving farmland".** In its July 2nd spreadsheet (entry #109) staff's analysis suggested including this in the introduction to Land Use Strategy 6 on page 39. The actual text, however, was apparently not expected to be written until after the adoption of the Comp Plan. The Work Group respectfully requests that the following text be considered before voting on the plan:

> Dane County contains some of Wisconsin's most productive farmland, some of which lies inside and near Madison's boundaries. Once farmland is converted, it is likely to never again be available for cultivation. Because the City has acknowledged farmland preservation and growth of the local food economy as significant goals, any development proposed on Madison's periphery should be consciously and carefully weighed against the long-term public value of those areas identified as prime farmland.

**3. Explaining agricultural land use in the Land Demand Analysis process.**
The Work Group noticed the absence of any reference to agricultural lands in this section of the Comp Plan, which left us (and presumably could leave other readers) wondering how it will be accounted for in this analysis. Based on staff's responses to our questions about this, the Work Group respectfully requests the following text be added as a second introductory paragraph on page 126 before the paragraph explaining Table 2.

> There is no mention of agricultural land in this section. Most forms of urban agriculture are conducted on less than ten acres; so noting this potential land use would be out of scale with the other areas covered by the analysis. Given the stated goal of preserving farmland, however, the city should acknowledge the presence of prime farmland in and near the city, inventory those areas appropriate for continued agricultural use, and include this information in discussions of future development.

4. **Add Troy Gardens as an example of an "agrihood" in the City of Madison.**
At its Work Session on July 2, 2018, the Plan Commission agreed to include the term "agrihood" in the Glossary, to add language in Green & Resilient Strategy 9 Action (c) on page 97 below, and to include Troy Gardens as an example because we already have an agrihood in our city. The Work Group respectfully recommends the following revision:

> The City should also identify locations that would be suitable for agrihoods where development is integrated with a working farm; **Troy Gardens on the north side is a good example**. Agrihoods could be developed at a variety of scales, but may be most appropriate on the edge of the city where they could serve as a transition of existing rural uses.

Members of the Madison Food Policy Council, its Comprehensive Plan Work Group and other supporters of our efforts will be attending the Public Hearing and available to answer any questions you may have at the meeting on July 16.

Thank you for your consideration.