

February 13, 2019

Members of the Board of Park Commissioners,

My name is Dawn O’Kroley. I am an architect, resident of one of the homes in the park, and I was asked by Parks staff to be a stakeholder in this process. I have also served 11 years on city design committees.

I have several questions but am requesting only two changes to the plan. Changes that do not omit any community use or program goal. Omit the Blount Street parking lot expansion and locate the new shelter at the west end of the park. Then, all parking associated with the shelter moves to the west.

My questions are the gaps in information provided to the public. I have previously mentioned several of these items:

- Provide the public with the RFP required cost estimates prepared by a third-party contractor. At the last meeting cost was a criteria of staff level decision making.
- Provide the amount of green space converted to pavement. Provide a preliminary lighting plan.
- Provide the public the work product of the \$18,000 design change order staff stated was due to my comments. Per staff response at the 10.03.18 UDC meeting: “Based on Dawn’s comments and her concerns we extended this contract and pushed it back by a month, added about \$18,000 to the design contract to really...try and I think there are some great points about not having parking. Parks doesn’t like parking.”
- I have told staff that I estimate the design team is only 60% complete with the scope of the RFP.
- Provide the written DNR preliminary approval. Parks staff indicates the emergent wetland will be difficult to permit, how will it possible? Submit a 2020 budget request for this project identified as top priority.

My first concern is the needless sacrifice of green space. Strive to meet the City’s Shoreline Park Preservation ordinance which sets the bar for buildings and paved areas to be no more than 5% of a shoreline park. Excluding paths and ground leases that translates to about 25,000 SF.

This plan continues to double the amount of paved parking area. In the Blount lot alone converts over 5,000 SF of green space to pavement for 4 stalls. Traffic Engineering agreed to the opportunity for increased street parking on Butler Street. These 4 spots can be provided at no cost and without loss of any green space - why is this option not in the plan?

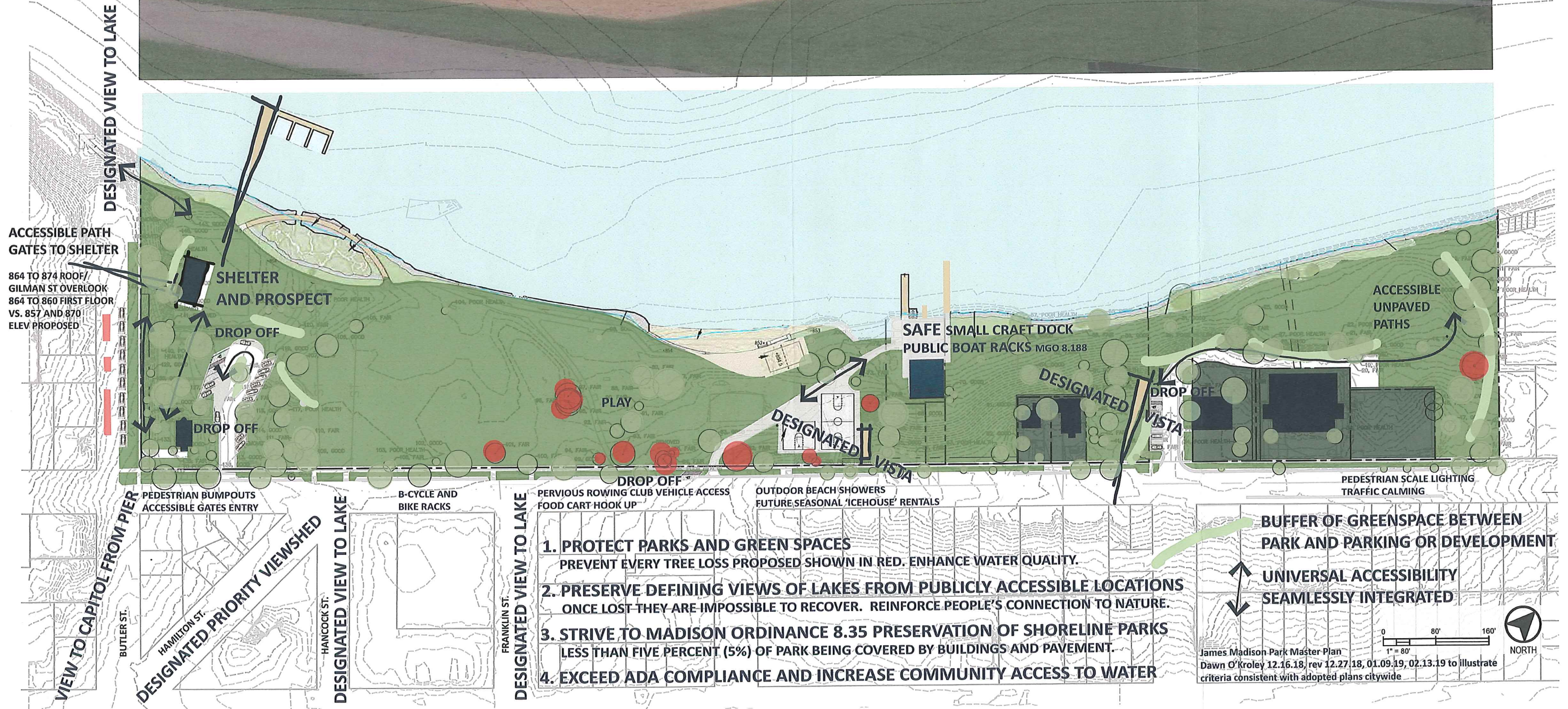
My second concern is the senseless viewshed obstruction. This is not on the table for compromise, this is a requirement. The proposed shelter blocks views. The proposed parking lots block views. A west shelter nestled in the wooded hillside of Mansion Hill preserves green space, all designated views, is safe and better connects the community with the water. The west shelter supports Gates of Heaven by wrapping it with a natural context and provides Gates accessible restrooms, both requested by the public. A west shelter is feasible and meets the CPTED criteria for all building entrances to face the street. The designated views from the sidewalk would be of green space and shoreline, not parking and an elevator tower. The basketball and volleyball courts would be screened from designated views by simply using the existing topography with the sidewalk perched above the existing volleyball court and paved area.

Access for Independence, which I learned this week was a paid consultant on this team who spoke during public testimony, recommended to ‘**designate a few ADA street spots** with curb cuts... Street spots are a much more efficient use of space than ADA parking lots stalls.’ And that ‘**Stable surfaces do not have to be concrete** (e.g., can be crushed limestone like at Governor’s Island).’ The attached concept does not show any paths that could be natural materials.

This is a missed opportunity. You are required to protect green space and views. That in no way means sacrificing accessibility or improved community access. Please consider incorporating these two changes into the plan tonight. I am happy to answer any questions.

Thank you,

Dawn O’Kroley
646 E Gorham Street



My name is John Jacobs. While I've lived on the near west side for 43 years, I know and love James Madison park. I used to row with Mendota Rowing at the park. When our kids were little we'd come to the park to hang out and be by the water. Like thousands of Madisonians, I get some extra joy every time I simply drive, bike, or walk past the park.

I hope the Board will reject all three plans before you and send them back to the drawing board.

I may have been vaguely aware of the planning process for the park but until the Isthmus article, I had no idea that there was a plan to diminish the best aspects of James Madison. If anything, I may have thought the folks in the neighborhood would take care of our park.

I recently learned that there were, in fact, neighbors working hard for months to save our iconic view across the park. I also learned that the awful parking plan along Gorham had been "non-negotiable" by city staff and their consultants since the beginning of the planning process. Probably before the beginning. Why?

The draft master plan says;

"This design is contrary to recognized Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles and may contribute to the high number of calls for service at this park."

"From January 1st to November 18, 2017 there were over 700 police calls for service to James Madison Park."

In a December 7, 2018 letter to the parks commission recommending approval of the plan, Alder Zellers says:

"Additionally, the relocated parking eliminates the current parking which is relatively hidden and has provided an attractive place for drug dealing and other bad behavior. There were ~ about 700 calls for service for this park in 2017."

To the average reader, 700 police calls in 11 months may sound like the park is a high crime area. The police were called 700 times. Wow. Sounds bad right?

In fact, the total number of calls to both 911 and the non-emergency number were far less. 911 records show only 42 "calls" to the park during those 11 months. The 42 calls includes police, fire and EMS.

42 calls are not *"over 700 police calls."*

I hate to say it, but our Parks Division's non-negotiable agenda about the parking lot is being sold with the same kind of scare tactics and fearmongering that Mr. Trump uses to describe folks who arrive at our southern border. Paint an exaggerated image of rampant criminality to build a wall or – in this case - move a parking lot.

I don't know who or which city agency is most responsible for the dishonesty of *"over 700 police calls"* in the planning process. Citizens, alders and park commissioners should get truthful information not slanted propaganda from city staff. That Parks would stoop to such dishonesty calls into question the integrity of the whole planning effort for James Madison Park.

Besides the awful parking, the draft plan strikes me as a confused, cluttered mess.

The best part of James Madison park is its simplicity. A wide expanse of grass and green from sidewalk to shore. For James Madison "less is more"

The draft plan reduces the greenspace that people can actually use by a significant amount. Just look carefully at the graphic that Parks gave to Isthmus. The shoreline is moved towards Gorham which narrows the park. The new parking lot and road further narrows the usable greenspace from the Gorham side as well.

The overgrown science fair project called an "emergent wetland" and the adjacent plantings along the shore keeps people away from 600 feet of shoreline and replaces lots of active greenspace on the west end. I'm all for science and education. I'm a lab manager at the UW. But this thing probably won't work and will instead be a maintenance nightmare for Parks staff.

The planned shelter is way too large for its location at the narrowest part of the park. At three times the size of the existing shelter, and with its roof extending farther toward the lake, the new building will block views far more than the existing shelter. Like the big tubes that currently block part of the view, the mass of new structures on the roof – including an unnecessary extra roof, a fake green roof with interpretive walkway, an elevator, and then trees to hide the elevator - will block the view far more.

Moving the huge shelter west into the greenspace further reduces area for active recreation.

- If it were my plan, the non-negotiable items would be:
- Maintain or improve the view from the top of the hill on Gorham to the bottom.
 - Add toilets on the west end.

With more and more folks living downtown, its makes no sense to reduce the amount of green area that people can actually use in James Madison Park.

We should try to improve the iconic view, not diminish it.

Thank you.

JOHN JACOBS

February 13, 2019

Dear members of the Board of Park Commissioners,

I'd prefer spending my time talking about the merits of Parks' James Madison Park plan and possible alternatives. But in the interest of honesty, fairness, and good government, I can't let Superintendent Knepp's non-answer to the questions of how and why Parks' planning team repeatedly used "over 700 police calls" in their selling of the awful parking plan go unquestioned.

At your January 9 meeting, one of the commissioners asked about the police calls. Superintendent Knepp responded:

"This commission's not going to be Trumped by misleading data with (garbled) ..."

"I don't want to get too far into the weeds about the details of the police calls, but this park is not designed around police calls. We don't ever design around police calls. Certainly the data and how things are recorded or not, we can get down that road. But this commission is not going to be bullied by a misled number. It wasn't early in the process it's never been a core component of the design."

The extent which police *incident reports* drove the plan's formulation may be debated, but there's little doubt that proponents of the plan misled the public and Alder Zellers with unfair fearmongering by citing "over 700 police calls" as an element of their sales pitch to gain approval.

Mr. Knepp's assertion that the number of police calls were not involved in the planning process is at odds with evidence in the James Madison draft plan and supporting documents. That the period of calls is from 1/1/2017 to 11/18/2017 suggests that Parks had gathered the police call information before the formal planning process began in January 2018. I suspect they got the information from the MPD either on or soon after 11/19/2017. There's no good reason to omit the end of November and all of December 2017 unless the data was requested before then.

A participant in the stakeholder meetings, [Alexander Einsman wrote to the BPC on 12/11/2018](#):

"During the process of developing the master plan, many of the stakeholders continued to voice concern about the expansion of parking all along the park. This was continuously represented as a non-negotiable aspect. ... I recognize that part of the rationale for changing the parking lot location is due to police calls."

[The 9-12-2018 stakeholder meeting notes](#) (Engagement Summary page 181, pdf 184) show a member of the design team, Zia Brucaya of Urban Assets saying: "MPD is happy with the parking configuration. More eyes on the street and easier to police."

At the Urban Design Commission's October 3, 2018 meeting, [JMP planners told the commission](#):

"During the initial data gathering phase of the project they heard about safety concerns, they talked to Police and learned there had been over 700 calls to the park in 2017, with 81 calls directly addressed to the Gates of Heaven area. As they worked with Police and Traffic Engineering, the reconfiguration of parking will make it much easier to monitor and access."

The planners not only used "over 700 calls" as justification for the reconfigured parking, they even specifically mentioned that Gates of Heaven area (near existing lot) as being responsible for 81 calls. How does Eric Knepp reconcile the statements above with "We don't ever design around police calls" he told you on January 9?

There are other instances where planners mention the *police calls* or *incidents*. I can list them too if you wish.

I doubt the the neighbors who were fighting the awful parking plan in good faith for months resorted to such dishonesty to make their case.

Green dots or Red?

I believe the planning team may have misled the January 9 Parks Commission about the levels of public support for the awful parking plan. It appears the planning team picked data to show you that favored their plan but omitted data that did the opposite.

Mr. Saiki spoke about the police calls in [Brenda Konkel's video](#) starting at 1:24:00

Parks staff and Ken Saiki picked a slide labelled "Plan Development" (image below) which Mr. Saiki said showed "very positive feedback" for the parking design from the third public meeting on May 14, 2018 when the non-negotiable parking plan was first shown. Mr. Saiki said "... green dots are good. You can see all the green dots on the parking areas."

But, Parks and Mr. Saiki chose to **not** mention or include data from the fourth and final public meeting on September 24, 2018. At that meeting, red dots (dislike) outnumbered green dots (like) by 3:1 generally or 6:3 including various features.

The information shown below was copied from pdf page 44,45 of [JMMP Engagement Summary](#).

"Following the draft master plan presentation, participants worked in nine table groups to review and comment on the draft plan. Groups were directed to place red dots on features that members unanimously disliked, yellow dots on features that members had mixed feelings about, and green dots on features they unanimously liked."

"The following are combined dot votes and notes made by nine table groups on the draft master plan."

Design Feature	Green Dots	Yellow Dots	Red Dots
Parking lot - general	1	1	3
Parking lot - linearity	1	1	2
Parking lot - congestion of activities		1	
Parking lot - sharp angles and access <small>Inline image</small>		1	1
Parking lot - ADA accessibility	1		

Good government depends on honest communications from city hall. Citizens, alders and Parks Commissioners should not have to file public records requests and analyze a bunch of data to get the truth. How can we trust a plan developed with such slant?

John Jacobs