



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Planning Division

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Date: July 17, 2020

To: All Alders

From: Heather Stouder, Director, Planning Division

Eric Knepp, Parks Superintendent

Matt Wachter, Director, Department of Planning, Community, and Economic Development

Re: Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan

On July 21, the Draft Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan (the Plan) will be before you for consideration. Many of you have been involved in the shaping and review of the Plan thus far, and recognize its importance as a guide for public and private investment as this pivotal area on the near north side of Madison begins to transform. Historically an employment center, this currently underutilized industrial area in the central city is well-served by transit, close to many varied parks, open spaces, and conservation areas, and holds the potential to support a significant amount of residential growth. With many similarities to the Capital East District, its location sets the stage for transition to a vibrant, mixed-use transit-oriented development that can accommodate some of our central-city growth pressures and lessen pressure to grow into surrounding agricultural and undeveloped land. The Plan lays out an aspirational, achievable, and balanced framework rooted firmly in many Comprehensive Plan strategies, including the following:

- **Land Use & Transportation Strategy 5** – Concentrate the highest intensity development along transit corridors, downtown and at Activity Centers
- **Land Use & Transportation Strategy 6** – Facilitate compact growth to reduce the development of farmland
- **Neighborhoods & Housing Strategy 1** – Create complete neighborhoods across the city where residents have access to transportation options and resources needed for daily living
- **Neighborhoods & Housing Strategy 2** – Support development of a wider mix of housing types, sizes, and costs throughout the city
- **Neighborhoods & Housing Strategy 3** – Increase the amount of available housing
- **Economy & Opportunity Strategy 2** – Ensure an adequate supply of sites for a wide variety of employers to operate and grow
- **Green & Resilient Strategy 4** – Acquire parkland and upgrade park facilities to accommodate more diverse activities and gatherings

It also directly furthers several strategies in the City's Parks and Open Space Plan, most notably:

- Design park facilities to accommodate diverse activities and populations
- Protect and enhance natural and cultural resources
- Acquire parkland to reduce parkland deficiencies and address increasing residential density
- Ensure that existing levels of service are maintained and supported through the park system and are increased as new parks and facilities are developed
- Create equitable access and funding for parks
- Increase connectivity between parks to enhance access
- Develop a healthy and diverse urban tree canopy within parks

As with many plans, policies and development proposals, the review process has included strong, values-based perspectives that you will likely hear more about during the public hearing. The strong desire for more open space within a key portion of the Plan Area continues to be shared and heard. Staff from many agencies have listened intently to input from nearby residents throughout the process, and have nearly doubled the open space recommendation since the first draft was released, all while striving to adhere to the strategies listed above. Importantly, the planning process also included a deliberate effort to engage residents who do not typically attend public meetings, including people of color and lower income residents whose voices are often missed in traditional public meeting and public hearing processes, but are important in shaping a plan that meets the needs for everybody in our community. Participants in this process may not live adjacent to the plan area today, but could call it home in the future. The Plan also balances these voices, which predominantly call for more housing and employment opportunities.

In conclusion, staff have coordinated carefully to incorporate into the Plan a generous, yet achievable amount of open space reflecting that which is called for in the Parks and Open Space Plan and seeks to meet the needs of all residents. We believe that the balance of land uses and infrastructure shown in the Plan is achievable, but also fragile and interconnected. A doubling of an already sizable open space area cannot be easily accommodated, and would jeopardize several core elements of the Plan. In order to hold true to the core of this rare opportunity - transit-oriented development and transformational infill to help meet the housing and employment needs of our growing city – we encourage you to support the Plan as recommended by staff and the Plan Commission.



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July 17, 2020

From: Dan McAuliffe, Planning Division

RE: Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan

The Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan will be considered for adoption at the July 21 Common Council meeting. Throughout the planning process, many emails have been sent to allalders@cityofmadison.com, some of which contain inaccurate or speculative information. The purpose of the memo is to clarify a few points in advance of the Council meeting.

Hartmeyer Property:

The most contentious aspect of the plan likely to be discussed by the Council is the proposed future land use for the Hartmeyer property. The plan recommends 14.1 acres of open space on the 30 acre parcel (47%). This increased from initial drafts showing 8 acres, and increased a second time after Planning Division staff received the wetland delineation from the Hartmeyer Estate. The 14.1 acre open space includes a wetland and surrounding natural area combined with a neighborhood park.

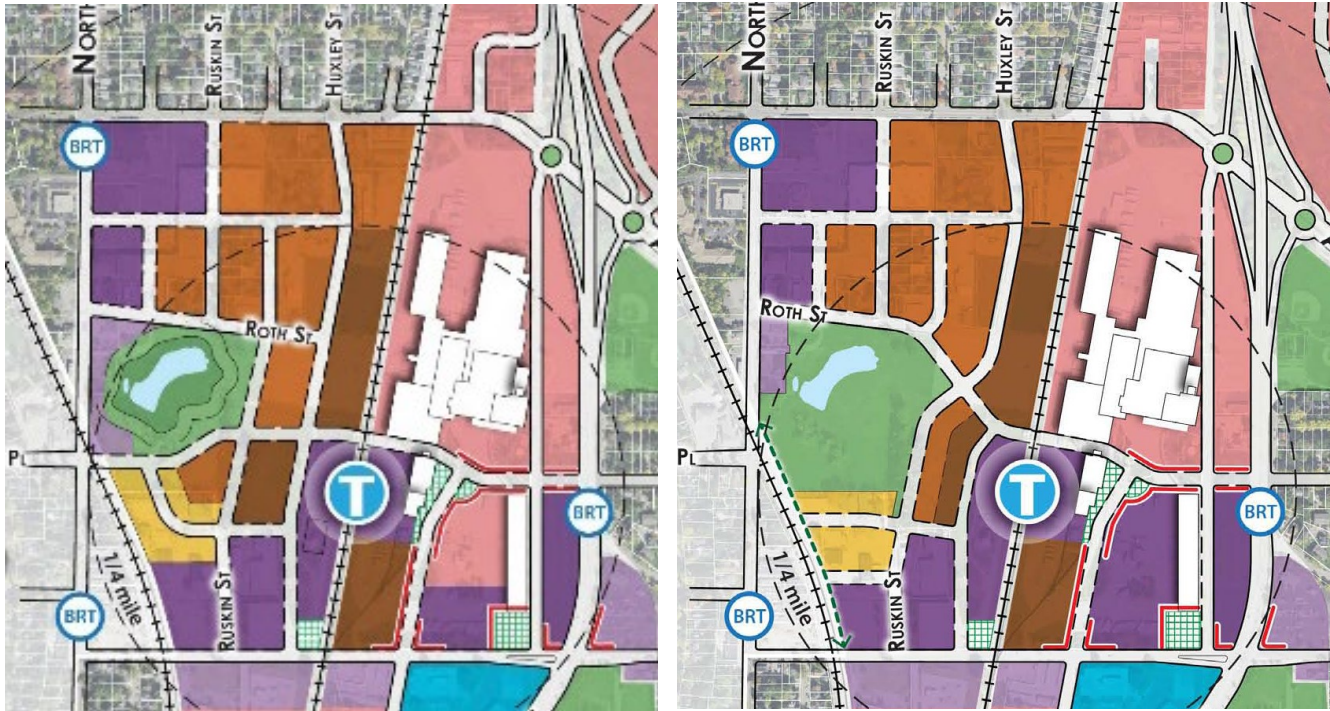
Wetland and natural features

The plan does not show development in the wetland, nor have any drafts based on information available at the time they were prepared. Two planned streets cross a narrow “constructed stormwater conveyance swale.” Planning Division and Engineering staff discussed this with staff from Dane County and Wisconsin DNR and they did not express any concern. Initial drafts used the DNR wetland inventory for the approximate location and scale. Publicly available historical aerial photography indicates the land was



actively farmed, with no indication of a wetland or wet soil in the 1930s. More recently, a wet area appears outside the outfield fence of the former East Madison Little League field. The wetland appears to have expanded and contracted overtime, and currently is approximately 7 acres.

The old growth oaks on the Hartmeyer property are contained in the 14.1 acre open space and will not need to be removed as some comments have suggested. The plan's street network was designed to avoid any impact on these large trees and to maintain them as prominent features in a future park space. Additionally, the vast majority of trees at the southern end of the property are included in the park space.



Initial draft concept – November 2019

Plan introduced to Council – February 2020

Contamination:

Several comments have correctly stated there are environmental contaminants on the Oscar Mayer and Hartmeyer properties. These properties have a long history of industrial use (and are currently zoned for industrial use), and having some level of contaminants on former industrial properties is not surprising. Redevelopment of these properties is the most certain path to clean up, and key to ensuring they are remediated safely, thoroughly, and expediently. Clean up of sites without redevelopment can be very challenging, and the likelihood of this occurring is questionable at best. Madison has many examples of formerly contaminated properties remediated through redevelopment, including most of the Capital East District and Royster Corners (which was built on the site of a former fertilizer plant and is home to the newly opened Pinney branch library).

In no way does the Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan recommend that development occur on contaminated soil without remediation, as has been suggested by several comments. There are laws that ensure properties are evaluated for potential contaminants and that remediation occur if necessary prior to new construction and occupation of spaces. Despite the historic contamination concerns in the planning area, City staff from multiple agencies do not have concerns about the appropriateness of future development, including residential uses, since many comparable properties with similar contamination issues have been successfully remediated and redeveloped. Several properties currently have 'open' cases with WDNR and must follow the NR 700 remediation process. As part of the City's plat approval process, staff requires that environmental investigation reports be submitted for any lands dedicated to the City (e.g. streets and right of way, parkland, stormwater parcels). This is standard practice for all dedications to ensure that the City does not unknowingly take possession of contaminated

property. There are additional checks to ensure affordable housing is not developed on contaminated soil. Any expenditure with federal funds (CDBG, HOME, etc.) must follow environmental review process specified in [24 CFR 58 - Environmental review procedures for entities assuming HUD environmental responsibilities](#). Further, the City's Affordable Housing Fund requires a Phase 1 assessment of all applicants to further identify and require remediation of any potential contamination.

Housing

Some have claimed the removal of development from the Hartmeyer property would have a negligible impact on the amount of needed housing developed in the plan area. Development estimates for the Hartmeyer property suggest approximately 395 units could be built on the 16 acres of the property shown for future development.

The development estimate for the entire plan area suggests a maximum of 2,780 units *could be* built (14% on Hartmeyer). However, this number doesn't reflect likelihood of development, market constraints, or property owner motivations to redevelop. Planning staff then classified development sites as "likely to develop", "possible/longer-term development", and "allowable but not likely to develop", to better understand the number of units that could reasonably be expected, rather than simply a maximum possible capacity.

When only considering sites that are "likely to develop", the Hartmeyer property accounts for 42% of units in the plan area.

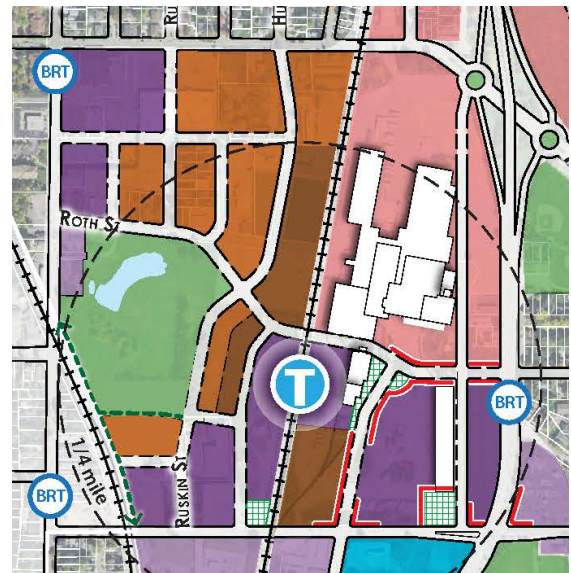
It has also been suggested that if the open space were made larger, the proposed housing units could simply be replaced by increasing the density or height on nearby parcels. The plan seeks to provide a balance of housing types to accommodate a wide range of residents and envisions a mix of building heights—a goal supported by the public throughout the process. Simply shifting the units to taller buildings elsewhere will skew that balance. Also, several factors (construction type, market demand, parking requirements, groundwater level, airport height restrictions), mean that taller buildings are less likely to develop in the near future in this location. "Missing middle" housing and multifamily housing generally in the 3-5 story range, is more likely to be built in this area, as exemplified by a few examples currently proposed in the planning area.

Hartmeyer Recommendation:

Planning and Parks staff, the Board of Park Commissioners, Transportation Policy and Planning Board, and Plan Commission (lead referral) recommend adoption of the plan with the 14.1 acre open space as shown in the document. [Planning staff's rationale is documented in the staff memo to Plan Commission.](#)

Planning staff does not recommend acquisition of all 30 acres as recommended by Sustainable Madison Committee. Housing Strategy Committee recommended Plan Commission consider additional open space, but did not make a recommendation about the amount.

If Common Council determines additional open space is necessary, Planning staff strongly recommend expansion to the south as shown in the graphic presented at the June 29 Plan Commission meeting. This maintains the number of housing units in the plan area, keeps critical neighborhood street connections, and ensures better circulation at the transit center site. The concept adds 1.9 acres of open space, bringing the total to just over 16 acres. It should be noted, however, that this alternative would eliminate the sole lower density housing recommended in the plan, which was viewed as the most likely opportunity for home ownership (attached single family units).



Recommended location and extent for potential expanded open space if Council believes expansion is necessary.