

From: [Gary Tipler](#)
To: [Board of Public Works](#); [Wolfe, James](#); [Traffic](#); [Verveer, Michael](#); [Rummel, Marsha](#); [Foster, Grant](#)
Cc: [Gary Tipler](#); [Jeffery Kuesel](#); [Eileen Somers](#); [Mary Knapp](#); [Kevin Earley](#); [Callaway, Renee](#); [Aviles Pineiro, Gretchen](#)
Subject: Bd of Public Wks, Item 6: Impact on Wilson Green of E. Wilson St. reconstruction
Date: Wednesday, August 19, 2020 3:42:04 PM

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Board of Public Works

August 19, 2020 Meeting

Item 6. 61576 Approving roadway geometry for the reconstruction of S. Blair St. from John Nolen Dr. to E. Washington Ave., including the intersection of S. Blair St., John Nolen Dr., Williamson St. and E. Wilson St. (2nd, 4th and 6th AD)

Forwarded, Ellen Henningsen letter to Jim Wolfe and alders.

Photos of original drawing for Wilson Green, 1986, Photo of Crabapple tree in Wilson Green, May 2020.:

from: Ellen Henningsen <info@blairstreetgardens.org>
to: "Wolfe, James" <jwolfe@cityofmadison.com>, traffic@cityofmadison.com, Mike Verveer <district4@cityofmadison.com>, Marsha Rummel <district6@cityofmadison.com>, "Foster, Grant" <district15@cityofmadison.com>
cc: Gary Tipler <garytip8778@gmail.com>, Jeffery Kuesel <jkuesel@tds.net>, Eileen Somers <lee.somers1@gmail.com>, Mary Knapp <mknapp@uwalumni.com>, Kevin Earley <earleykevne@gmail.com>
date: Aug 14, 2020, 4:34 PM
subject: Impact on Wilson Green of E. Wilson St. reconstruction

Hello. I am the head of Blair Street Gardens Committee, Inc. which is the all-volunteer, non-profit organization that maintains "Wilson Green" and "The Gateway Garden." Wilson Green is on the 400 and 500 blocks of E. Wilson Street (officially 499 E. Wilson St). The Gateway Garden is on the 600 block of Williamson Street (officially 603 E. Wilson St.)

I am writing to express our concerns, as well as to request a meeting with appropriate staff and alders anytime after August 24, about the impact of the E. Wilson Street reconstruction on Wilson Green. We appreciate the care the City took with The Gateway Garden during the Willy Street construction, and ask that the same consideration be given to Wilson Green.

Wilson Green is essentially a little park, consisting of the raised perennial bed, and also the lawn, the walkway, the bench, the lamppost, the perimeter plantings, a crabapple tree, and a locust tree. At the recent Transportation Commission hearing, we learned that staff and others believe that the garden is only the raised bed, when in fact it is the entire area from approximately the railroad tracks to the sidewalk next to Crowley Station.

The loss of the lawn between the current sidewalk and the raised bed would expose the bed to winter kill from plows and salt/sand, as well as promote erosion of the bed. Currently, every winter a strip of grass at least a foot wide along the sidewalk dies from plowing and salt, but at least there are several more feet of grass to protect the bed. To avoid winterkill if the sidewalk were moved, most likely we would need to move or reconstruct the raised bed. (That bed was developed by hand with tons of high-quality dirt, soil enrichments, native plants funded by

neighborhood residents, steel edging, and a raised irrigation system. All that would have to be moved or removed.) The loss of the 60 year old crabapple tree, which is likely to be damaged by root cutting and winter plowing and salting, would certainly compromise the beauty and comfort of that space. The entire area has been planned as a whole to provide a beautiful, restful spot in the middle of the City - to change the proportions, as well as potentially killing the crabapple, would damage the pleasing aesthetic of the garden.

All this damage is not necessary. The current paved area is large enough to handle east-bound and north-bound lanes, as well as a bike path, without expanding into Wilson Green.

Here is a brief history of our organization. BSG was founded in 1985 by citizens to plan, maintain and fundraise for several public gardens at or near the John Nolen/Blair Street/Williamson intersection. What are now lovely gardens were originally derelict eyesores - an abandoned gas station (The Gateway Garden) and an abandoned railroad right-of-way (Wilson Green). (Our 3rd garden is next to the MGE building on S. Blair Street, but is now maintained solely by MGE). We operated under an oral agreement with the City for years, and in 2017 formalized our agreement in a written "Landscape Maintenance Agreement." With the exception of providing mulch, mowing the grass, and a one-time \$5,000 grant, BSG receives no City funding or staff time. Volunteers have spent thousands of hours planning, planting, weeding, pruning and fundraising to provide these gardens for the City and its residents; many residents have donated thousands of dollars for plants, equipment and other expenses. Wilson Green and The Gateway Garden provide beauty and calm in a congested urban environment, and are assets to the neighborhood and City.

Thank you for your consideration. Please advise regarding a date and time for a meeting. If you prefer to phone me, my mobile is 608-575-3212.

Ellen Henningsen

President

Blair Street Gardens Committee, Inc.

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