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To: Board of Park Commissioners

From: Dan McAuliffe, Project Co-Lead

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Subject: Odana Area Plan initial development concepts

Note: During past plan approval processes, staff heard some board, committee, and commission (BCC) members express a desire to be more engaged during plan development, rather than just review and comment on a largely final product. This memo is an in-process update of the Odana Area Plan to ensure BCC members who would like to participate can do so while plan recommendations are taking shape.

The Odana Area Plan process began in early 2020 to provide guidance on future land uses and transportation issues within the 1,044 acre plan area, roughly bound by Mineral Point Road, Whitney Way and the Beltline. The Comprehensive Plan identified several corridors and activity centers within the plan boundary as growth priority areas that should transform from the current auto-oriented character to higher density mixed-use centers along the future Bus Rapid Transit route. The Odana Area contains several corridors and activity centers. Undertaking this planning effort will also help the area adapt to the changes and challenges the retail sector has seen since the 1990s, which have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic.

There have been many public outreach activities throughout the planning process. Initial public outreach, Madison Mall Madness, asked participants to prioritize elements that could be included in a large redevelopment. The most common priorities included affordable places to live, frequent and convenient transit, comfortable and safe bike routes and natural space and stormwater management. This was followed up webinar series discussions on issues facing malls, mall redevelopment examples, and issues specific to the Odana plan area. Staff met with and discussed project issues with Neighborhood Resource Teams, property and business owners, as well as the Hmong, Latino and Black chambers of commerce. The most recent public outreach reviewed draft concepts for the area.

The draft development concept moves the Odana Area towards becoming a walkable, transit-oriented activity centered that is better connected to, and integrated with, surrounding areas. A fundamental element of the concept is the need for a plan that accommodates redevelopment over time to achieve a long-term vision; it does not require demolition, but frames how redevelopment should occur when property owners are ready to do so.

The concept is centered on three major connections that provide better access to and through the plan area: an extension of Odana Road to High Point Road, a new Beltline crossing at Westfield Road, and a connection between the Research Park and the Yellowstone and Grand Canyon Drive area. Those connections are supplemented with a network of new local streets that organize and orient new development towards them. Most of the West Towne Mall area is shown as mixed use, transitioning to residential to the west and employment and commercial uses along the beltline. Additional mixed-use areas are shown at Westgate/West Transfer Point, and along Mineral Point Road by the Research Park.

New park space is recommended near Grand Canyon and Yellowstone Drives. This could provide better access and expanded park space adjacent to the stormwater facility and soccer fields on Mineral Point, and additional park space for new residents in the area. Since these areas are already developed and several properties could achieve the goals of expanding park space and improving access to existing open spaces, the potential park location is generalized (see “General Future Park Area” #2 and #3 on attached map). The precise location will depend on property availability and eventual acquisition.

A new public park is also envisioned as a focal point of a redeveloped mall area, serving future residents, employees, visitors and businesses like restaurants and cafes. The five acre park is located on the planned extensions of Odana and Westfield Roads, giving it high visibility in a prominent location. Because of the general uncertainty around the mall redevelopment, Planning staff is considering a more general approach by expanding the relatively small “General Future Park Area” (area #1) that is currently shown by West Towne Mall and overlaps a portion of the under-construction Von Maur department store.

If new park spaces are built as shown in the plan, they would address the park deficiency based on service area extending from West Towne Mall east to Odana Road identified in the 2018 Parks and Open Space Plan.

After meeting with the Plan Commission, Transportation Policy and Planning Board, Economic Development Committee and Board of Park Commissioners, staff will make any required changes to the concept, recommend implementation strategies, and draft the plan document before a final round of public engagement. The plan is expected to begin the City review and approval process this summer.

More information, including background maps and details related to past public engagement, can be found on the [project website](#).