



Project Addresses: 801 S Whitney Way

Application Type: Demolition Permit, Zoning Map Amendment, and Conditional Use

Legistar File ID # [90161](#), [90536](#), and [90126](#)

Prepared By: Timothy M. Parks, Planning Division
Report includes comments from other City agencies, as noted

Summary

Applicant & Property Owner: Pete Holmgren, Chief Engineer, Madison Water Utility; 119 E Olin Avenue; Madison.

Contact Person: Isaac Steinmeyer, SEH; 10 N Bridge Street; Chippewa Falls.

Requested Actions:

- ID [90161](#) – Consideration of a demolition permit to demolish Madison Water Utility Well 12 at 801 S Whitney Way;
- ID [90536](#) – Consideration of a request to rezone 801 S Whitney Way from CN (Conservancy District) to PR (Parks and Recreation District); and
- ID [90126](#) – Consideration of a conditional use in the [Proposed] Parks and Recreation (PR) District for a water pumping station and water reservoir to allow reconstruction of Unit Well 12 and its reservoir.

Proposal Summary: The Madison Water Utility is requesting approval to construct a 1,505 square-foot well house to replace its Unit Well 12 and new, larger reservoir to replace the existing reservoir located north of the well. The existing well house and reservoir have existed on the site since 1957. The project is scheduled to commence in May 2026, with completion anticipated in October 2027.

Applicable Regulations & Standards: Section 28.182 of the Zoning Code provides the process for zoning map amendments. Table G-1 in Section 28.091(1) identifies water pumping stations water reservoirs and other similar civic and institutional uses as conditional uses in the [proposed] PR district. Section 28.183 provides the process and standards for the approval of conditional use permits. Section 28.185 provides the process and standards for the approval of demolitions. Also, the proposed facility is a public building per Section 33.24 of the Urban Design Commission ordinance, which requires approval by the Urban Design Commission.

Review Required By: Urban Design Commission, Plan Commission, and Common Council.

Summary Recommendations:

That the Plan Commission may find that that the standards for demolition permits are met to **approve** demolition of the existing well house located at 801 S Whitney Way subject to input at the public hearing and the conditions from reviewing agencies.

That the Plan Commission find the standards are met and forward Zoning Map Amendment ID 28.022–00730, rezoning 801 S Whitney Way from CN to PR, to the Common Council with a recommendation of **approval**.

That the Plan Commission find that the standards for conditional uses met to **approve** allow reconstruction of Unit Well 12 and its reservoir subject to the conditions from reviewing agencies.

The proposed conditions of approval begin on **page 8**.

Background Information

Parcel Location: An approximately 1.06-acre parcel located in the northeastern quadrant of the S Whitney Way-Beltline Highway interchange; Alder District 11 (Tishler); Madison Metropolitan School District.

Existing Conditions and Land Use: The one-story well and a rear parking area are located in the southwestern corner of the irregularly shaped parcel, while the one-story reservoir is located in the northeasterly corner. The site is zoned CN (Conservancy District).

Surrounding Land Use and Zoning:

North: Single-family residences on Milward Drive and Coney Weston Place, zoned SR-C1 (Suburban Residential–Consistent 1 District); four-unit residences on S Whitney Way, zoned SR-V1 (Suburban Residential–Varied 1 District); YMCA on west side of Whitney, zoned CC-T (Commercial Corridor–Transitional District);

South: Beltline Highway (US Highways 12 and 14);

West: Beltline Highway;

East: Odana Hills Park and Golf Course, zoned CN (Conservancy District).

Adopted Land Use Plans: The [West Area Plan](#) and [Comprehensive Plan](#) as amended through 20204 both identify the subject site and nearby Odana Hills Park and Golf Course for Park and Open Space (P) uses.

Zoning Summary: The subject site will be zoned PR (Parks and Recreation District):

Requirements	Required	Proposed
Lot Area	5 acres	1.06 acres (existing)
Lot Width	300'	165' (existing)
Front Yard Setback	30'	45'
Side Yard Setback	30'	Variance required (See conditions)
Rear Yard	30'	177'
Lot Coverage	N/A	---
Maximum Building Height	2 stories/35'	1 story/14'
Auto Parking	None	3
Electric Vehicle (EV) Stalls	None	0
Accessible Stalls	1	1
Bike Parking	None	0
Loading	None	0
Building Forms	Public Building	Will comply
Other Critical Zoning Items		
Yes:	Urban Design (Public Building), Wellhead Protection (WP-12), Utility Easements	
No:	Barrier Free, Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Overlay, Waterfront Development, Wetlands, Floodplain, Adjacent to Park, Landmarks	
Prepared by: Jacob Moskowitz, Assistant Zoning Administrator		

Environmental Corridor Status: This property is not located within a mapped environmental corridor.

Public Utilities and Services: The site is served by a full range of urban services, including daily Metro Transit service along S Whitney Way.

Previous Approvals

On March 23, 2015, the Plan Commission approved conditional uses in the Conservancy (CN) district to allow construction of an addition to Water Utility Unit Well 12 at 801 S Whitney Way. However, the project never received final plan approval and permits for the addition were not issued within the timeframe required by the Zoning Code, so this approval is null and void.

On April 12, 2021, the Plan Commission approved a conditional use for a water pumping station and reservoir in the CN district, and approved a conditional use for an emergency electric generator to allow a generator to be installed at Madison Water Utility Unit Well 12.

Project Description

The Madison Water Utility is requesting approval of a request to rezone their 1.06-acre parcel from CN to PR and conditional use approval to replace the existing Unit Well 12 and reservoir. Unlike past proposals for the Water Utility's property, which called for the existing well house to remain and be expanded, the current requests call for the building to be razed. On October 6, 2025, the Landmarks Commission found that the existing well had historic value. Therefore, the Plan Commission must also approve the demolition of the building before the new well may be constructed.

The subject site is a City-owned parcel located on the east side of S Whitney Way within its interchange with the Beltline Highway between the overpass of the Beltline over Whitney and the westbound off-ramp. The nearest structure to the existing well house is approximately 250 to the northeast (a single-family residence on Milward Drive). The site is also developed with a reservoir located in the northeastern corner of the 1.06-acre property. The 1,122 square-foot well house and 150,000-gallon reservoir have been located on the site since 1957.

The proposed well house will be a one-story, 1,505 square-foot building, which will be constructed on the southern portion of the subject site in the same location as the existing well house to allow the existing wellhead to be reused with the project. The new building will primarily be clad in two-toned stone veneer with terra cotta rain screen below the cornice. A new one-million-gallon reservoir is proposed to replace the existing smaller reservoir, which will be located due east of the new well house. The existing driveway from S Whitney Way will be reused to provide access to three surface parking stalls to be located behind the well house, which will predominantly be used by Water Utility employees servicing the facility. The Water Utility indicates that reconstruction of the well and new reservoir is needed to improve capacity and reliability in two pressure zones, and to bring the well into compliance with State Administrative Code NR-811.

Analysis

Water pumping stations and water reservoirs are a conditional use in the CN (Conservancy) district. The subject site was zoned CN as part of the mapping of the new Zoning Code and shares the same zoning as nearby Odana Hills Park and a regional detention facility located to the southeast across the Beltline. However, lot coverage in the CN district is limited to five percent (5%) of the site, and the Zoning Administrator has determined that the

replacement of the well house, the larger reservoir, and associate site improvements will exceed that maximum. Lot coverage also generally includes paving on the site unless it is pervious. By comparison, there is no lot coverage maximum in the proposed PR zoning district, which also allows water pumping stations and water reservoirs with conditional use approval.

Consideration of Zoning Map Amendment Standards and Consistency with Adopted Plans

The standards for zoning map amendments found in Section 28.182(6) of the Zoning Code state that such amendments are legislative decisions of the Common Council that shall be based on public health, safety, and welfare, shall be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and shall comply with Wisconsin and federal law. Wis. Stats. Section 66.1001(3) requires that zoning map amendments approved after January 1, 2010 be consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan. 2010 Wisconsin Act 372 clarified "consistent with" as "furthers or does not contradict the objectives, goals, and policies contained in the comprehensive plan."

The West Area Plan identifies the subject site and nearby Odana Hills Park and Golf Course for Park and Open Space (P) uses. North of the Beltline interchange, the plans recommend the established residential neighborhood between S Whitney Way and Odana Hills Park and Golf Course for Low Residential (LR), while the area northwest of the subject site along Medical Circle is recommended for Employment (E). As defined in the 2023 Comprehensive Plan, the Park and Open Space (P) category includes public parks, conservation areas, recreation areas, private recreation uses (such as golf courses), cemeteries, stormwater management facilities, greenways, urban agriculture, community gardens, major public trails, and other natural features and lands with a park-like character that are recommended for preservation.

Per its statement of purpose, the Conservancy (CN) zoning district is "...established to recognize and protect the natural functions of certain natural and non-intensive recreational areas, including large City and County parks, the University of Wisconsin Arboretum, and stormwater management areas. Development within the district is limited in order to protect natural drainageways and water retention areas, natural habitat for plant and animal life, steep slopes, woodlands, and other resources beneficial to the community." The bulk requirements in the CN district reinforce the intent of the district to have limited or no development, such as the five percent lot coverage limit noted above. By comparison, the Parks and Recreation (PR) zoning district is "...established to accommodate active outdoor and indoor recreation uses and facilities such as golf course, stadiums, swimming pools, community centers, large recreation structures, recreational complexes, and similar uses where lands are developed to accommodate said recreational uses, and may also include areas for natural preservation and passive enjoyment of natural features."

In general, many of the City's larger community parks and other large open space parcels developed with active recreation uses and facilities, such as Vitsense Golf and Hawks Landing Golf Club, are zoned PR. On the other hand, many of the City's passive conservation parks are zoned CN. Under the 1966 Zoning Code and map, Odana Hills Park and Golf Course and the subject Water Utility parcel were zoned in the Conservancy (C) zoning district, which was a more encompassing and generally less restrictive zoning district that applied primarily to City-owned parks and open spaces of varying size and use. However, in preparation for the current Zoning Code and map taking effect in January 2013, the portion of Odana Hills Park generally west of the golf course and Wedgewood Way and the subject site were zoned to the more restrictive CN zoning district, while most of the rest of Odana Hills was zoned PR. It is staff's opinion that the zoning of the subject site was not intended to prevent or preclude the Water Utility's ability to improve the longstanding use of the site as a municipal well and reservoir. Staff further believes that rezoning 801 S Whitney Way to PR can be found to be consistent with the Park and Open Space land use recommendation.

Consideration of Demolition Standards

In February 2025, the Common Council adopted Ordinance 25-00010 (ID [86649](#)) to change the demolition review process and approval standards. When a demolition application is submitted, it is first reviewed by the Landmarks Commission. The Landmarks Commission assigns Category A, B, or C to each principal building. Category A buildings have historic value based on architectural significance, cultural significance, or historic significance. Category B buildings have historic value, but the building itself is not historically, architecturally or culturally significant. Category C buildings have no known historic value. The demolition of a Category C building may be approved by the Director of Building Inspection. The demolition of a Category A or B building requires approval by the Plan Commission following a public hearing.

On October 6, 2025, the Landmarks Commission reviewed the demolition application for Unit Well 12 and determined that it is a Category B demolition, noting “this property speaks to the vernacular context of Madison and the evolution of the Prairie-style design for municipal water service structures.” The Landmarks Commission recommends that the Plan Commission request documentation of existing conditions to meet historic survey standards if it approves the demolition. The motion to refer the demolition to the Plan Commission with a Category B finding passed by voice vote/other. Full information on the Landmarks Commission review of the demolition may be found in legislative file ID [90161](#).

In its report to the Landmarks Commission ([link](#)), preservation staff noted that the well house was part of a series of well houses constructed by the City from 1918-1960s. They utilized yellow brick or stone with Prairie School style architecture to mimic the appearance of the Nichols Station pumphouse, which was the central pumping station at 311 N Hancock Street constructed in 1917. Staff found that the Unit Well 12 building retains good architectural integrity and speaks to the early history of the City’s municipal water service. The staff report noted that a similar well house at 845 Vilas Avenue was determined eligible for the National Register in 2001. The Unit Well 12 building is slightly different from the earlier iterations, which used the blond brick, and it showed the evolution of the design program to incorporate a more mid-century modern style with the shift to the irregularly sized, coursed stone. Landmarks Commission staff recommended that the Commission assign Category B to the demolition request for 801 S Whitney Way.

The Plan Commission shall not approve the demolition unless it finds that two approval standards are met.

Standard 1 states: *“Demolition of the existing building(s) is consistent with or will aid in the implementation of adopted plans or with the purpose statement of this section. The Plan Commission may consider how demolition and redevelopment of the property relates to the implementation of the City’s adopted plans.”*

Per the discussion in the preceding subsection of this report, staff believe the proposed project is consistent with the City’s adopted plans.

Standard 2 states: *“There are factors that are found to outweigh the public interest in preserving historic resources. Such a finding may include, but is not limited to:*

- i. *The building is found to be in such a deteriorated condition that it is not structurally or economically feasible to preserve or restore it.*
- ii. *If the building has historic value, the building has been so altered that it cannot convey its historical association or architectural significance.*

- iii. *There is a structural or fire hazard, unlawful use of the property, public nuisance, or other public health and safety concern that supports demolition as provided in reports from the Madison Fire Department, Police Department, and/or Building Inspection Division.”*

Staff believes that the Plan Commission may find that standard 2 is met despite no evidence being provided that the existing well house is in deteriorated condition and further, that there are no structural or fire hazards, unlawful uses, or public nuisances present on the property. Indeed, Unit Well 12 is a working facility that appears to be in good condition, much the same as it has been since it was first constructed in 1957.

However, staff believes that factors exist that outweigh the public interest in preserving the historic resource, which should be considered by the Plan Commission. The Water Utility indicates that the new well house is needed to replace aging infrastructure that has reached the end of its useful service life for municipal water supply and to improve water supply resiliency and redundancy while bringing the facility into compliance with State codes. The Water Utility has indicated to staff that the reuse of the existing building as part of the project is infeasible. The new well building has been designed to reflect the style of the existing well building, including reuse of the stone identification sign that sits above the street-facing door of the 1957 building on the western façade of the new well house.

In approving a demolition permit, the Plan Commission may stipulate conditions and restrictions on the proposed building demolition as deemed necessary to promote the public health, safety and general welfare of the community, and to secure compliance with the standards of approval. Conditions may include plans to mitigate the loss of the building to include relocation, salvage of historic materials, adaptive reuse of portions of existing structures, interpretive installations at the site, or other creative mitigation measures. The proposed conditions for this demolition may be found in the ‘Recommendation’ section of the report, which follows.

Consideration of the Conditional Use Standards

A conditional use is defined in the Zoning Code as “a use which, because of its unique or varying characteristics, cannot be properly classified as a permitted use in a particular district.” The Plan Commission shall not approve an application for a conditional use unless it can find that all of the standards found in Section 28.183(6)(a), Approval Standards for Conditional Uses, are met. That section states: “The City Plan Commission shall not approve a conditional use without due consideration of the recommendations in the City of Madison Comprehensive Plan and any applicable, neighborhood, neighborhood development, or special area plan, including design guidelines adopted as supplements to these plans. No application for a conditional use shall be granted by the Plan Commission unless it finds that all of the [standards for approval in Section 28.183(6) are met].” Before granting a conditional use, the Plan Commission may stipulate conditions and restrictions on the establishment, location, construction, maintenance and operation of the conditional use. Additionally, state law requires that conditional use findings must be based on “substantial evidence” that directly pertains to each standard and not based on personal preference or speculation.

Conditional use standards 1–6 and 8 are applicable to this request.

Planning staff believes that the Plan Commission may find that the applicable standards for approval are met. The uses, values and enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood for purposes already established will not be substantially impaired or diminished in any foreseeable manner by the reconstruction of the well house and construction of the new, larger reservoir at the rear of the site. Likewise, the continuation of the water pumping station and reservoir conditional use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of

the surrounding property for uses permitted, which include residences located 250 feet northeast of the well behind a noise attenuation wall located along the northern edge of the Beltline right of way, and a YMCA located over 425 feet to the northwest. No comments have been received from reviewing agencies that would suggest that the City is unable to provide services to the property, or that the utilities, access roads, drainage, internal circulation improvements and other site improvements proposed with the conditional use project are inadequate.

However, standard 6 requires that the conditional use conforms to all applicable regulations of the district in which it is located. In this case, the Zoning Administrator has determined that the side yard setback proposed on the south side of the new well house will not meet the 30-foot setback required in the proposed PR zoning district, which will require that a variance be granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals as a condition of approval of the conditional use prior to issuance of building permits for the new well house. As noted in the Project Description section above, the Water Utility will be reusing the existing well head (versus drilling a new one), which informs the proposed placement of the new well house closer than the setback required in the requested PR zoning district. See the Zoning condition in the following section.

Review by the Urban Design Commission

The proposed facility is a “public building” as defined by Section 33.24(4)(d) of the Urban Design Commission ordinance, which requires approval by the Urban Design Commission. The Urban Design Commission reviewed the project at its November 5, 2025 meeting and granted **final approval**. More information on the UDC review of the project may be found [here](#) (ID 90175).

Conclusion

The Madison Water Utility is requesting approvals to demolish its existing Unit Well 12 building and reservoir and construct a new well house and reservoir on the 1.06-acre site in the northeastern quadrant of the S Whitney Way-Beltline Highway interchange. The lot coverage of the proposed improvements exceeds the five percent maximum allowed in the existing CN zoning. Therefore, the Water Utility is seeking PR zoning, which has no lot coverage standard, to allow development of the new facilities. Staff believes that the proposed zoning district is consistent with the Parks and Open Space land use recommended for the site by the West Area Plan and that the standards for conditional use approval can be met for the new well house and reservoir. However, the new well house will require approval of a side yard setback variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals prior to the issuance of building permits if the conditional use is approved.

During its review of the demolition of the existing well house, the Landmarks Commission found that the building has historic value but that the building itself is not historically, architecturally or culturally significant – a Category B finding. Category B historic value findings require that the Plan Commission approve the demolition in order for permits to be issued. In order for the Plan Commission to approve the demolition, it shall find that the standards in Section 28.185(6)(c) are met. Staff believes that the Plan Commission may find those standards met, noting that construction of a larger, modern well house to serve two pressure zones outweighs the public interest in preserving the historic resource due to the need to replace aging infrastructure that has reached the end of its useful service life. The Water Utility has indicated to staff that the reuse of the existing building as part of the project is infeasible. As a condition of approval of the demolition, the applicant will be required to submit documentation of existing conditions to meet historic survey standards, which shall be approved by the City’s preservation planner prior to issuance of permits.

Recommendation

Planning Division Recommendation (Contact Timothy M. Parks, (608) 261-9632)

That the Plan Commission may find that the standards for demolition permits are met to **approve** demolition of the existing well house located at 801 S Whitney Way subject to input at the public hearing and the conditions from reviewing agencies that follow.

That the Plan Commission find the standards are met and forward Zoning Map Amendment ID 28.022-00730, rezoning 801 S Whitney Way from CN to PR, to the Common Council with a recommendation of **approval**.

That the Plan Commission find that the standards for conditional uses met to **approve** allow reconstruction of Unit Well 12 and its reservoir subject to the conditions from reviewing agencies subject to input at the public hearing and the conditions from reviewing agencies that follow.

Recommended Conditions of Approval Major/Non-Standard Conditions are Shaded

Planning Division

1. Prior to issuance of permits to raze the existing well house, the applicant shall submit documentation of existing conditions to meet historic survey standards. The documentation submitted shall be acceptable to the City's preservation planner.

City Engineering Division (Contact Kathleen Kane, (608) 266-4098)

2. Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) charges are due and payable prior to City Engineering Division sign-off, unless otherwise collected with a Developer's / Subdivision Contract. Contact Mark Moder ((608) 261-9250) to obtain the final MMSD billing a minimum of two (2) working days prior to requesting City Engineering signoff.
3. Obtain a permanent sewer plug permit for each existing sanitary sewer lateral serving a property that is not to be reused, and a temporary sewer plug permit for each sewer lateral that is to be reused by the development.
4. An Erosion Control Permit is required for this project.
5. This project will disturb 4,000 square feet or more of land area and require an Erosion Control Permit. Submit the Erosion Control Permit Application (with USLE calculations and associated fee) to Megan Eberhardt (west) at meberhardt@cityofmadison.com, or Daniel Olivares (east) at daolivares@cityofmadison.com, for approval.
6. Demonstrate compliance with MGO Sections 37.07 and 37.08 regarding permissible soil loss rates. Include Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE) computations for the construction period with the erosion control plan. Measures shall be implemented in order to maintain a soil loss rate below 5.0 tons per acre per year.
7. Existing and proposed impervious on the site remain below the 10,000 square-foot threshold that would trigger stormwater requirements. No stormwater management plan is required.

City Engineering Division – Mapping Section (Contact Jeffrey Quamme, (608) 266-4097)

8. Show and label the five (5)-foot wide sidewalk easement along the west side of the parcel per Document No. 5419018.

9. The Removals Plan denotes removal of a guy and overhead utilities. The applicant should confirm if there are easements or rights that should be removed from title prior to construction of the proposed reservoir to be constructed within this removal area.
10. Provide bearings and distances for the boundary of the parcel. Per the previous approval of the on-site generator there was attached boundary information of the site. Confirm the boundary has been determined by a professional land surveyor. There are important setbacks for this proposal, and an accurate boundary is necessary.

Traffic Engineering Division (Contact Sean Malloy, (608) 266-5987)

This agency has reviewed the request and recommended no conditions of approval.

Parking Division (Contact Trent W. Schultz, (608) 246-5806)

The agency reviewed this project and determined a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan is not required as part of approving the proposed site changes.

Zoning Administrator (Contact Jacob Moskowitz, (608) 266-4560)

11. The side yard setback on the south side of the well building does not meet the required 30 feet in the PR zoning district. A zoning variance approval by the Zoning Board of Appeals will be required prior to final sign off.

Fire Department (Contact Matt Hamilton, (608) 266-4457)

This agency has reviewed the request and recommended no conditions of approval.

Parks Division (Contact Izzy Wilde, (608) 261-9671)

This agency has reviewed the request and recommended no conditions of approval.

Water Utility (Contact Jeff Belshaw, (608) 261-9835)

12. This property is in a Wellhead Protection District–Zone (WP-12). The applicant shall provide the Madison Water Utility with confirmation that no hazardous and/or toxic materials will be stored on site, and that all proposed uses of this site comply with the City of Madison Wellhead Protection Ordinance. Any future change in use for this property will require review by the Madison Water Utility General Manager or his designated representative. Contact Sarah Scroggins at Sscroggins@madisonwater.org for additional information, including a summary of the submittal requirements.

Forestry Section (Contact Zachary Eckberg, zeckberg@cityofmadison.com)

This agency has reviewed the request and recommended no conditions of approval.

Metro Transit (Contact Tim Sobota, (608) 261-4289)

This agency has reviewed the request and recommended no conditions of approval.