

Friends of Cherokee Marsh

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Comments on the proposed amendment to "Map W" of the Comprehensive Plan and Cherokee Special Area Plan

Mr. Murphy,

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh request the addition described below to the proposed amendment to "Map W" of the Comprehensive Plan. We are also including additional requests based on our concerns about stormwater and groundwater in Sub-area 1 of the Cherokee Special Area Plan.

The Friends continue to believe that the best use of Sub-area 1 is as conservancy land. However, since planning efforts are already underway to approve development in this area, we felt it best to submit our amendment addition and comments as soon as possible.

The City's Comprehensive Plan states that the City should approve development projects only if they are consistent with the overall intent of the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and similar special area plans. The Cherokee Special Area Plan also supports this principle.

Both the Comprehensive Plan and Cherokee Special Area Plan recognize that Cherokee Marsh is crucial to the health, beauty, and recreational value of Lake Mendota, the Yahara River, and other downstream waters. Sub-area 1 in the Cherokee Special Area Plan lies just south and uphill of hundreds of acres of public wetlands in Cherokee Marsh.

Our requests on the following pages are consistent with the plans' recommendations for population density and environmental protection for the area.

Added Note: The referenced amendment to "Map W" is now a Track 2 amendment requested by Cherokee Park, Inc. and summarized on Locator Map 4.

To protect, preserve, and restore the beauty, value, and health of the Cherokee Marsh and upper Yahara River watershed.

Directors: Jan Axelson (President) • Justin Sargent (Vice President) • Dana Erlandsen (Treasurer)
Dorothy Wheeler (Secretary) • Timothy Baker • Janet Battista • Sheri Harper • Muriel Simms • Dick Walker
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Add Open Space to the "Map W" Amendment

To compensate for the requested increased population density and increased building size for the parcel indicated in "Map W", the amendment should dedicate a minimum of twelve additional acres of open space in Sub-area 1, adjacent to the City-owned wetlands to the north.

The Parks Division, in cooperation with the Planning Division and the property owner, can work together to determine the boundaries of the additional open space.

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh believe it would be appropriate for the City to acquire the new open space land in Sub-area 1 as an addition to Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park and would encourage such an acquisition using parkland dedication and other funding sources.

Reasons

Twelve acres of open space would bring the average density of the development proposed for "Map W" plus the added open space in line with the densities recommended for this area by the Comprehensive and Special Area Plans. Additional open space between the development and Cherokee Marsh would also compensate for the increase in building size and height over the recommendations for Sub-area 1 in the Special Area Plan.

Dedicating land for a wetland buffer is consistent with these goals of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Balance land development proposals with the preservation and restoration of natural communities and resources.

- Recognize the interrelationship of adjacent landscape types and avoid breaking valuable ecological linkages.

- Use all practicable methods for increasing vegetative cover within urban areas.

- Work with property owners, City agencies, and commissions to protect high quality natural environments.

Wetland buffers are also consistent with these goals of the Special Area Plan:

- Provide buffers between development and Cherokee Marsh to the greatest extent possible.

- Design development to protect, to the greatest degree possible, natural features such as Cherokee Marsh.

- Provide generous building setbacks, buffers and landscaping between development and Cherokee Marsh to help preserve the integrity of the Marsh.

Additional Requests for Sub-area 1

In addition to our request for designating open space in the proposed amendment, the Friends of Cherokee Marsh have the following requests relating to development that may occur in Sub-area 1:

Protect the Marsh from Stormwater

To ensure that the development doesn't degrade the marsh ecosystem, stormwater runoff that exceeds the design capacity of detention basins should be routed away from wetlands and other public land in Cherokee Marsh.

As a condition of developing in Sub-area 1, the developer should route Sub-area 1's excess stormwater so it flows to the west of North Sherman Ave. near the Cherokee County Club buildings and then north to enter the golf-course drainage system.

During construction, the developer should provide an independent inspector to ensure wetland protection and runoff control. After construction, the developer should provide an independent inspector to ensure maintenance of stormwater management infrastructure.

Reasons

The Cherokee Special Area Plan recommends that stormwater management facilities should be designed to protect Cherokee Marsh to the greatest degree possible. The Plan also recommends rerouting Sub-area 1's stormwater away from City-owned wetlands as we have proposed.

Complete a Groundwater Study

To ensure that the development doesn't affect marsh water levels, before development proceeds in Sub-area 1, a detailed study of groundwater resources and restoration of groundwater and surface water levels should be completed.

Reasons

The Cherokee Special Area Plan and the Parks and Open Space Plan place a high priority on completing a detailed study of groundwater resources and restoration of groundwater and surface water levels to protect the State Natural Area in the eastern part of the marsh.

Please consider these requests as conditions of approving development in Sub-area 1 of the Cherokee Special Area Plan.

Jan Axelson
President
Friends of Cherokee Marsh