

ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

PROPOSED EAST WILSON STREET/SCHLEY PASS/DEWEY COURT NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Introduction

A request for creation of a Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) has been submitted to the Director of Planning and Community and Economic Development by a resident living in the East Wilson Street/Schley Pass/Dewey Court area in the Marquette Neighborhood. This report evaluates the proposed study area against the minimum eligibility criteria an area must meet to be considered for Neighborhood Conservation District designation.

Proposed NCD Study Area

The request to create a Neighborhood Conservation District did not specify the exact boundaries for the proposed district. Understanding that the area of a proposed Conservation District may be modified during the designation process, this eligibility determination considers an area generally consistent with the Conservation District recommended in the *East Rail Corridor Plan*, adopted by the Madison Common Council in January of 2004. The area evaluated includes several “transition area” identified both within and adjacent to the recommended District in the *East Rail Corridor Plan*, as well as a short segment of East Wilson Street that was in commercial/industrial uses in 2004, but has since been partly redeveloped with multi-family residential housing. While the transition area parcels and the recent multi-family project differ in scale and character from the predominant character of the area, it is useful to include them in the NCD study area, at least initially, because the requirements developed for Neighborhood Conservation Districts will need to consider issues of compatibility and transition regarding those properties that do not share the predominant physical characteristics that define the district as a whole.

Eligibility Criteria for Neighborhood Conservation Districts

Section 28.108(3), Madison General Ordinances, provides six specific criteria that an area must meet to be considered for designation as a Neighborhood Conservation District. An evaluation of the proposed East Wilson Street/Schley Pass/Dewey Court NCD study area against these criteria is presented below.

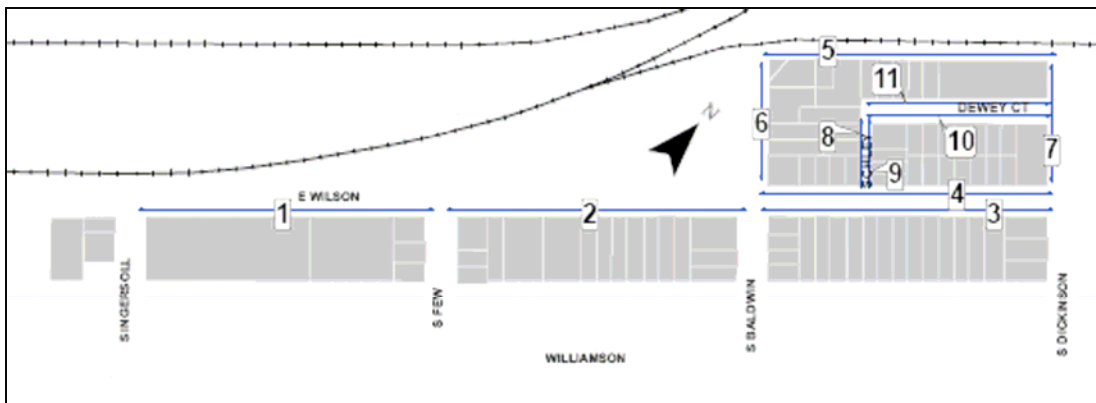
A) The proposed area shall be at least eight (8) contiguous block faces or 2,640 lineal feet of contiguous street frontage.

The area recommended as a Conservation District in the *East Rail Corridor Plan* skipped over a short commercial/industrial segment of East Wilson Street to include several parcels located west of South Ingersoll Street that were not contiguous with the others. The present proposed NCD study area was slightly modified to include these skipped parcels, which now have been partly developed with residential uses, as described above.

The defined East Wilson Street/Schley Pass/Dewey Court study area includes 11 contiguous block faces, not counting the parcels west of South Ingersoll Street or the partial blocks south of East Wilson Street, which comprise an additional eight partial block faces. This criterion can be met. (See table and map on following page.)

Contiguous Block Faces Included in the Proposed Conservation District

#	Frontage	From	To
1	South side of E Wilson St.	S Ingersoll St.	S Few St.
2	South side of E Wilson St.	S Few St.	S Baldwin St.
3	South side of E Wilson St.	S Baldwin St.	S Dickinson St.
4	North side of E Wilson St.	S Baldwin St.	S Dickinson St.
5	South side of RR	S Baldwin St.	S Dickinson St.
6	East side of S Baldwin St.	E Wilson St.	RR
7	West side of S Dickinson St.	E Wilson St.	RR
8	West side of Schley Pass	E Wilson St.	Dewey Ct.
9	East side of Schley Pass	E Wilson St.	Dewey Ct.
10	South side of Dewey Ct.	Schley Pass	S Dickinson St.
11	North side of Dewey Ct.	Schley Pass	S Dickinson St.



B) The proposed area shall possess consistent, identifiable built or natural environment characteristics to be preserved.

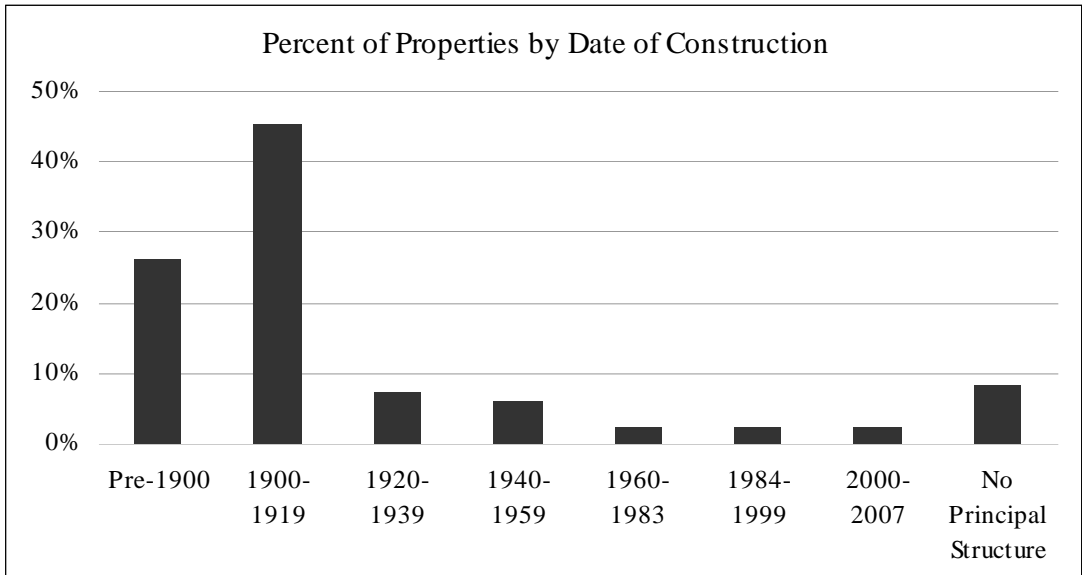
This criterion can also be met. The East Wilson Street/Schley Pass/Dewey Court area is generally characterized by small lots predominantly developed with relatively small houses. Several of the houses have been converted to two- or three-unit occupancy, but the primary use is single-family. There are also a few parcels with multi-family, small commercial, and light industrial uses within the proposed NCD area, including the “transition parcels” at its edges. While similar housing stock can be found elsewhere on the Isthmus, this area is unique in that it has survived as an “enclave” of small, primarily residential parcels and structures surrounded by larger commercial and industrial properties on all sides. The former industrial and railroad uses north of the 1100 and 1200 Blocks of East Wilson Street are being phased out, and this area is planned to eventually become a large public Central Park, which will further enhance the attractiveness of this unique area as a residential location.

The built environment in the proposed NCD study area is dominated by one and two-story residential structures of Old Style architecture on small, narrow lots. Most of the structures are single-family, but the two and three-unit structures are also generally similar in style. Residential structures with three or fewer units have a median livable area of 1,134 square feet, and range from 608 square feet to 2,510 square feet in size. According to Assessor’s records, lot sizes for the 64 residential properties with three or fewer units range from 1,964 square feet to 8,712 square feet, with a median size of just 2,706 square feet. Only three residential lots are larger than 5,000 square feet. Of the 84 parcels in the entire proposed study area, 53 (63%) have a 33-foot lot width, and 65 (77%) have a lot width of 40 feet or less. The small, narrow lots in the proposed study area help determine the size and bulk of the structures built on them.

There are a few properties among the 84 parcels included in the proposed NCD area that do not conform to the predominant pattern. Of the three properties with larger multi-family residential structures, two adjacent parcels at 1207 and 1217 East Wilson Street each have 10-unit structures, and the newly developed Park Central Apartments at 301 S. Ingersoll Street has 78 units. The Park Central Apartments differ most significantly from the majority of the parcels with regard to bulk, height, and massing, but are included to retain contiguity with the parcels west of Ingersoll Street that retain the predominant small-lot character. Larger nonresidential buildings abutting Baldwin and Dickinson Streets near the railroad tracks were designated in the East Rail Corridor Plan as “Transition Areas” within the recommended Conservation District. If this area is eventually designated as a Neighborhood Conservation District, it is likely that requirements applicable to these larger existing developments will establish different standards to guide any future redevelopment. As noted above, there is merit to including these parcels in the NCD study area so that issues related to insuring their continued compatibility with the district as a whole can be considered in subsequent steps of the planning process.

C) At least seventy-five percent (75%) of the lots in the proposed district must have been developed with a principal structure for at least twenty-five (25) years.

This criterion is met. Based on data from the City of Madison Assessor’s Office, eighty-six percent (86%) of the lots in the proposed NCD study area have been developed with the existing principal structure for at least 25 years. In fact, the majority of existing principal structures in the area were constructed before 1920, and only four principal structures have been constructed within the last 25 years. Seven parcels currently have no principal structure (three are vacant, three are surface parking lots, and one contains only a garage).



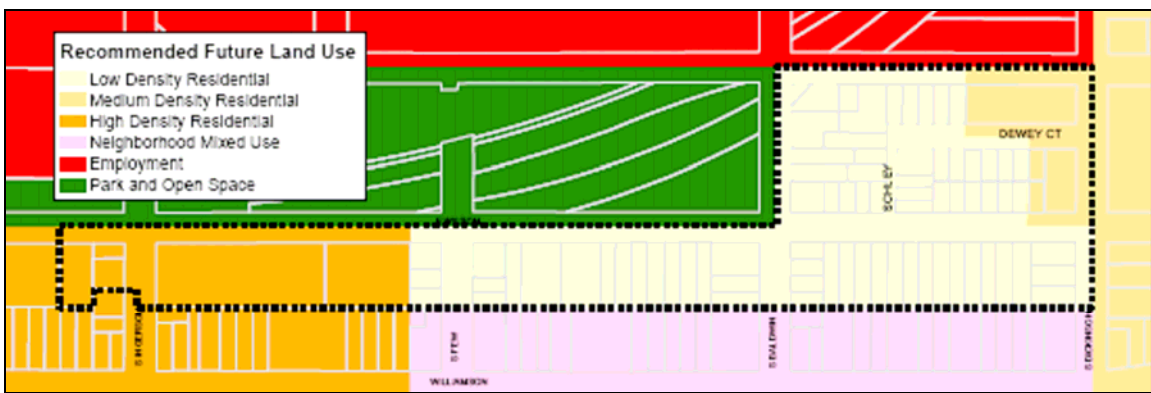
Source: City of Madison Assessor’s Office

D) The proposed requirements for a Neighborhood Conservation District shall be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and existing neighborhood plans.

This criterion can be met. The creation of, and proposed requirements for, an East Wilson Street/Schley Pass/Dewey Court Neighborhood Conservation District must be consistent with the *City of Madison Comprehensive Plan* and the *East Rail Corridor Plan*.

City of Madison Comprehensive Plan

The *City of Madison Comprehensive Plan*, adopted in January 2006, includes recommended future land uses for the proposed NCD area as shown in the map below. The Generalized Future Land Use Plan map in the *Comprehensive Plan* makes broad land use recommendations at a relatively large scale and should not be considered parcel-specific.



High Density Residential Uses

The five properties located west of those with frontage on Few Street are recommended for High Density Residential uses. This recommendation primarily reflects the new multi-family development at 301 South Ingersoll Street, and does not distinguish the smaller parcels east and west of that site. Maintaining parcels with lower-density use within the larger recommended High Density area would not be inconsistent with the recommendation.

Medium Density Residential Uses

The four properties in the northeast corner of the proposed area are recommended for Medium Density Residential uses. These are the Transition Area parcels identified in the *East Rail Corridor Plan* and include 1348 East Wilson Street, 1347, Dewey Court, 1334 Dewey Court, and 210 South Dickinson Street.

Low Density Residential Uses

The remaining 75 properties, located between the west side of Few Street and the west side of Dickinson Street, are recommended for Low Density Residential uses. In the *Comprehensive Plan*, low density is defined as less 16 units per net acre.

The Generalized Future Land Use Plan map also includes the following map note that summarizes the recommendation made for the area in the *East Rail Corridor Plan*:

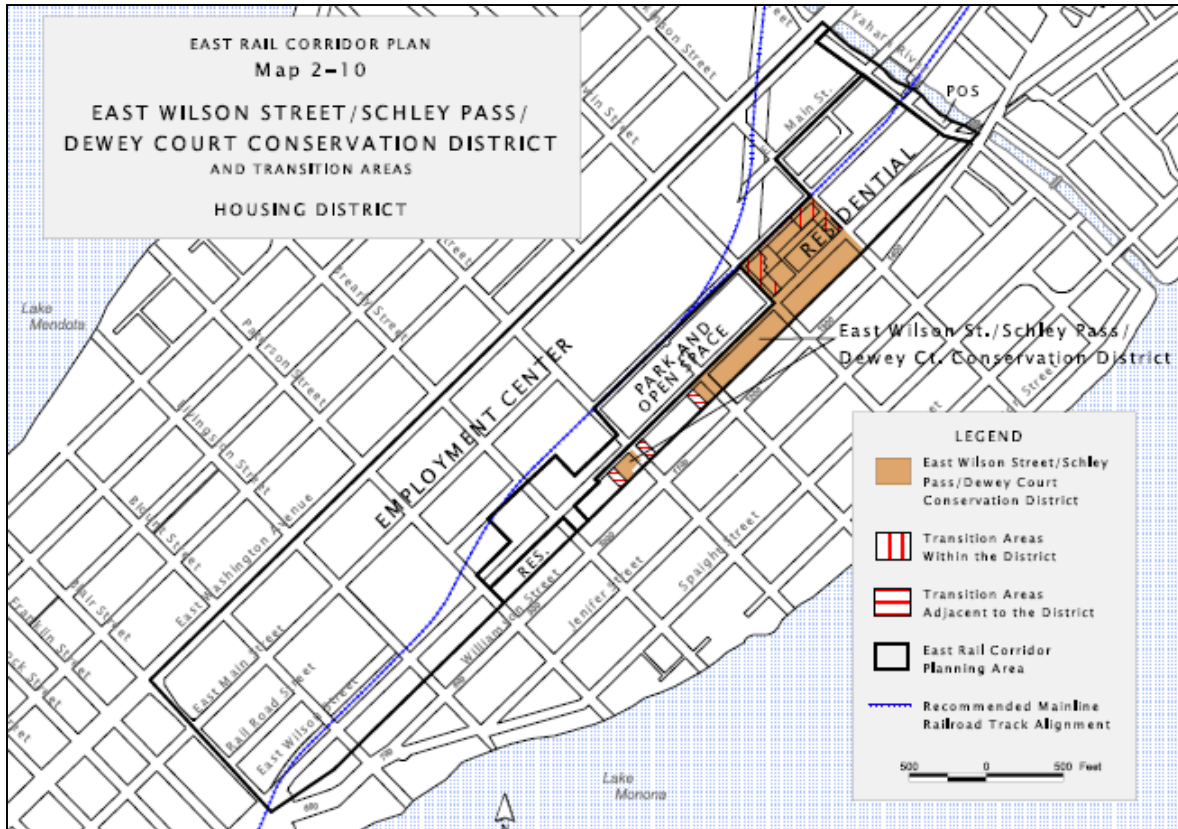
Creation of a conservation district is recommended for the East Wilson Street/Schley Pass/Dewey Court area to preserve the unique character of the existing cluster of housing along these streets. The district should be designed to preserve the residential use and the essential character, small scale, and identity of the area, rather than necessarily to preserve the physical historical fabric.

The proposed residential use and conservation of essential neighborhood character that would be part of a Neighborhood Conservation District created in the East Wilson Street/Schley Pass/Dewey Court area would be fully consistent with the recommendations of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

East Rail Corridor Plan

The *East Rail Corridor Plan & Recommendations*, adopted in January 2004, specifically recommends creation of a Conservation District in the East Wilson Street/Schley Pass/Dewey Court area. The Conservation District was conceived as a way to preserve the residential use and the essential character, scale, and identity of the area, rather than necessarily preserve the physical historical fabric, as a historic district designation might do. The Plan expressed a sense of urgency that a Conservation District be established prior to the creation of an East Rail Corridor Tax Increment Finance District or other actions, such as implementation of the proposed Central Park (also recommended in the East Rail Corridor Plan), that might encourage further price increases, parcel assembly, or speculative investment.

The *East Rail Corridor Plan* also identified Transition Areas at the edges of the proposed Conservation District, and recommended that necessary development standards be provided to ensure that future development adjacent to the proposed Conservation District would create an appropriate transition to the small-scale, fine-grained character of the District.



The currently-proposed East Wilson Street/Schley Pass/Dewey Court NCD area is consistent with the recommendations in the *East Rail Corridor Plan*. The only difference between the configuration of the Conservation District now being proposed and that shown in the *East Rail Corridor Plan* is the inclusion of the parcels at 301 South Ingersoll Street and 1133 E Wilson Street. As noted above, these are included to maintain contiguity with the proposed NCD parcels west of Ingersoll Street and to facilitate consideration of these and other “non-typical” properties as part of the Neighborhood Conservation Study if it proceeds.

E) The proposed area must contain at least one of the following features:

1. Distinctive building attributes: scale, mass, distinctive architectural characteristics, e.g., front porches, height, roof styles.
2. Distinctive land use patterns: mixed uses, parks/open spaces, or unique uses or activities.
3. Distinctive streetscape characteristics: lighting, street layout, materials, and landscaping.
4. Distinctive lot features: lot layouts and sizes, setbacks, alleys, and landscaping

These features will be studied much more thoroughly in a future Neighborhood Conservation Study. However, as discussed above in section B, the small lot sizes, housing styles, and general scale, mass, and height of buildings in this residential enclave create a distinctive physical character that differs significantly from surrounding properties. In addition, the very small lots and shallow building setbacks in the Schley Pass/Dewey Court portion of the proposed NCD are unique even within this distinctive context.

F) Neighborhood Conservation Districts may not be placed in an existing local historic district or Urban Design District

The East Wilson Street/Schley Pass/Dewey Court area proposed for consideration as a potential Neighborhood Conservation District does not overlap with any Madison Historic District or Urban Design District, and this criterion is met. The Third Lake Ridge Local Historic District is located immediately to the south of the proposed NCD area, and Urban Design District No. 4, and proposed Urban Design District No. 8, are located one block to the north.

Conclusion and Eligibility Determination

Based on the evaluation summarized above, Planning Division staff conclude that the East Wilson Street/Schley Pass/East Wilson Street area defined on the attached map can meet all of the minimum eligibility criteria established in Section 28.108(3), Madison General Ordinances, to be considered for designation as a Neighborhood Conservation District.

This determination is only the second of seven steps defined in Section 28.108 for creating a Neighborhood Conservation District. It allows an informational meeting to be held regarding the District designation process, and a survey of owners and occupants of the proposed District regarding the desirability of the proposed District. Following the survey, authorization by the Common Council is required to proceed with a Neighborhood Conservation Study to explore the feasibility and potential benefits of establishing a Neighborhood Conservation District for the area. The requirements of this study are also defined in Section 28.108 MGO.

Approved by



Mark A. Olinger, Director
Department of Planning and Community and Economic Development

October 1, 2008

