

**From:** Andrew Bent [mailto:afbent@wisc.edu]  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 05, 2009 3:18 PM  
**To:** Waidelich, Michael; Clear, Mark  
**Subject:** Shady Wood Neighborhood and Ice Age Trail

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April 5, 2009

To the Plan Commission, Madison Common Council, Mayor Cieslewicz, and City Planning Staff,

I am a Madison resident and homeowner. I write regarding the Shady Wood Neighborhood Plan that is currently being established. This area spans the designated trail corridor for the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. Madison can now approve a plan that makes the trail area a fantastic resource for the city – for locals and visitors. If it gets overdeveloped, it will be ruined. If it gets pinched in to a narrow corridor, it will defeat the entire purpose. The trail area will only be success if the trail corridor is VERY WIDE. The Neighborhood Plan should retain this width for the open space.

We have some very successful natural areas in Madison, such as Elver Park or Owen Conservation Area, and those get significant year-round use from Madison residents, myself included, because you really can get out away from houses and into a natural setting. Elver and Owen are not skinny-narrow. The Ice Age Trail is something that surpasses Elver and Owen – it is not just a local park. It is one of only eight National Scenic Trails, and it is about half-way built to date. Madison should show leadership, and economic wisdom, by making Madison's portions of the trail really beautiful and desirable for use. If the trail corridor is merely present but not wide, it will not be a success.

It is very relevant to the Shady Wood plan to look at Madison's other portions of the Ice Age Trail - an uneven but OK start. East of the planned Shady Wood neighborhood the trail crosses University Ridge Golf Course, open space that is sometimes odd for hikers (being close to golfers in a few spots) but often very remote and pleasant (but importantly for the locals – no dogs allowed). Then the trail crosses Dane County Parks land east of Hwy M that was purchased with Ice Age Trail money, and there one has great open space to the south but Madison neighborhoods pressing in visibly to the north. Then there is an extremely disappointing section through the "Ice Age Falls" subdivision and Meriter property (between Raymond Rd. and PD), where a huge irretrievable mistake was made of not keeping a wide trail corridor – and it shows – this is a sad section of trail. Then, south of PD, the trail again is in beautiful and preserved open space owned by Dane County Parks, and on south through Verona and southward the trail generally has very good surrounding open space. *The Ice Age Trail is generally a success, except for the*

*one area where Madison planners and Common Council allowed a mere ~200-ft. wide corridor past Ice Age Falls neighborhood and Meriter.*

Northwest of Shady Wood is similarly instructive. For a bit under a half mile the Ice Age Trail is forced very close to recently developed houses, in a segment that is not conducive to trail users, then it crosses Mound View Rd. and to the west gets into the beautiful and wide Valley View section.

The section from Woods Rd. to Mid-Town Rd. is a CRUCIAL section of the trail – it is the one missing link in Madison. The pending Shady Wood Neighborhood Plan, and follow-through, will have a big impact on whether Madison residents and visitors can enjoy a successful, or a disappointing, segment of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail.

The Appalachian Trail (another of only eight National Scenic Trails) succeeded through similar challenges. Some landowners wanted to maximize profit, at the expense of a national landmark. The present Shady Wood area landowners will make a significant profit – that is not in question – it is just a matter of how large of a profit. It would be incredibly unfortunate if Madison caved in and tried to fit an additional fifty single-family homes into an area that a thousand+ people could otherwise enjoy every year, for generations to come. PLEASE do not make the mistake of compromising this trail corridor for a few extra dollars or houses. This trail area should be protected at the widest possible width and maintained as a successful resource for many, not as a few additional home sites for a very few.

Thank you,  
Andrew Bent

cc: Mayor Cieslewicz