

Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation

Dane County Chapter

April 10, 2009

To the City of Madison Planning Division and the Plan Commission,

I write to provide specific comments and suggestions regarding the Shady Wood Neighborhood Development Plan that is currently being formulated by the City of Madison. I am writing as the Chair of the Trails Committee for the Dane County Chapter of the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation. In this volunteer position I have had significant training in trail layout/design/building/maintenance, at events partially sponsored by our National Park Service trail partners. I provide a few hundred of hours of work toward the trail every year, and I directly coordinate the work of over 500 volunteer hours of trail work per year at events that I lead (other chapter leaders host many additional events). I would like to suggest the following changes to the Shady Wood Neighborhood Development Plan, on behalf of the 400+ dues-paying members of the Dane County Chapter of the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation, including 301 who presently list Madison as their mailing address, and on behalf of thousands of Ice Age Trail users. Gary Werner (our Chapter Coordinator) may also be providing separate comments, and IAPTF and NPS paid staff of course are also available to you for professional consultation.

The March 11, 2009 draft of the Shady Wood Neighborhood Development Plan is overall excellent, and we compliment the planners and stakeholders who clearly understand the positive value of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail resource and the features required to make a successful trail corridor.

Specific changes are suggested in three areas of the Plan:

1) Immediately NW of Richardson Cave there is a need to widen IAT corridor further toward the N. There are three reasons for this:

- i) The trail very likely will need to ascend/descend steep slope immediately W of Richardson Cave, which will require a traverse route. Traverse will have to be S-N (rather than E-W) because of wet lands immediately S of Richardson Cave. Hence trail will probably loop appreciably far N (immediately NW of cave entrance), requiring a broader band of open-space protection to the north. This protection could be done by removing planned house lots on S side of the street that is envisioned immediately NW of Richardson Cave, thereby maintaining green space right up to the street edge as is done in other places in the Shady Wood Neighborhood plan.
- ii) Houses (not just private property, but existing houses) pinch trail from S in that area, hence trail should not be close to those lot lines to the south. Need more space toward N.
- iii) Absence of trees makes the views to future development particularly open at this location. A future prairie that goes up to street edge, with views of S-facing fronts of houses located on N side of the street, would provide a significantly nicer resource both for trail users and homeowners, rather than having trail users looking N right into some back yards at very close range.

2) Along Woods Rd., in the center of that edge of the Cowling property, the plan should preserve a ~500 ft. wide band of protected green space to provide a link to S edge of University of Wisconsin “University Ridge” lands that are on E side of Woods Rd. This is the site of the new UW Varsity Cross Country course - an area that is likely to gain significantly in year-round use, especially by runners of many age groups, but also others. We envision a compelling future desire for direct access between the UW area and the terminal moraine/views and kettles on the Cowling property. Runners and cross country skiers are likely user groups for this site as well as walkers, and a corridor for wildlife would also result. The March 11 2009 draft of the Shady Wood Neighborhood Development Plan presently has two "conservation development" neighborhoods (housing sites) at NE and SE areas of the Cowling lot, with a thin band of conservation development housing sites connecting the two along Woods Rd. That thin connecting band should be removed, so that the NE and SE areas of the lot could remain designated for conservation development, but the E-central portion of the Cowling lot is explicitly preserved as open space that connects with UW lands. It is important to reemphasize that this would connect the S portion of the envisioned Ice Age trail system, the only part that is on the terminal moraine and with the beautiful SW views from terminal moraine, to the UW open space/recreational lands on other side of Woods Rd.

3) Text revisions regarding Recommended Housing Types and Densities:

pp. 15-16 current draft states in two places that apartment buildings and other higher-density dwellings may be inappropriate for Shady Wood except at specific locations such as near public parks or planned open space. This should be corrected to clarify that such development may be appropriate near parks in the “Phase A” area (NE corner, near intersection of Woods Rd. and Mid-Town Rd.), but, due to the height/mass and outdoor lighting common to such buildings, it would be generally inappropriate to site such buildings near the Ice Age trail.

Suggested wording:

p. 15 (in paragraph beginning with “Duplexes”): “..such as by a park or other shared open space that is not adjacent to the Ice Age Trail open space conservation area, or as a transition... “

p. 16 (in paragraph beginning with “As discussed”): “Appropriate locations could include areas along the major entry boulevards or other neighborhood focal points or activity centers, or closer to planned parks that are not adjacent to the Ice Age Trail open space conservation area.”

Similarly:

p. 41 bottom, append to end of last sentence: (higher density developments must show how designs maintain street orientation, pedestrian-friendly street character...) “, and lack of visual impact on the Ice Age National Scenic Trail.”

To repeat, the March 11, 2009 draft is excellent overall and it is and will be greatly appreciated by numerous Ice Age Trail users and Madison residents. As I stated in a separate, more personal letter sent last week, the most important thing is to maintain the width of the trail conservation area so that trail users (many of whom will be nearby residents) are not bombarded with views of houses, and instead can enjoy a natural setting appropriate to a National Scenic Trail. The Conservation Corridor Design Parameters stated on p. 19 of the plan, and the text of pp. 18-22, are an accurate and effective statement of what is needed for a successful Ice Age National Scenic Trail in the Shady Wood planning area. Many local residents who are members

of the Dane County Chapter of the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation will be working both financially (with county, state and national partners) and politically to help the City of Madison protect a wide and effective trail corridor as part of the Shady Wood area development plan.

I would be happy to provide further input regarding the plan via conversation, in writing, or through site visits at any time.

Thank you,

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