# MEMORANDUM

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**PLANNING DEPARTMENT**
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TO: Greenfield Neighborhood Plan Steering Committee
FROM: Brad Sippel, Community Development Planner
DATE: 5/27/2025
SUBJECT: Responses to Greenfield Neighborhood Plan Petition and Friends of Waubesa Wetlands Requests in Draft Plan

## Background

On December 2nd, 2024 the City of Fitchburg received a petition regarding the Greenfield Neighborhood Plan signed by 181 Fitchburg residents. On the same day the Friends of Waubesa Wetlands also submitted a letter to the Greenfield Steering Committee and project staff. The scheduled December 3rd Greenfield Steering Committee meeting was postponed until city staff and MSA could address the requests made in the petition and the letter, many of which are about stormwater, water quality, and utilities.

This memo lists the requests of each and how the plan was changed for each request. Staff comments are *italicized in blue* below each request.

## Recommendations by the Friends of Waubesa Wetlands

1. Utilize the attached map developed by Joanne Kline to ensure development within the Greenfield Neighborhood Plan maximizes the preservation of wetland resources, including the restoration of wetland area as shown and adequate buffer zones (again as shown) to preserve the wetlands in the area and the Murphy's Creek watershed.

   *The Kline study is referenced on pages 40 and 41. The Kline study was utilized to identify potentially restorable wetlands, which were prioritized based on their value to the water resources system on page 60 in Figure 4.1. Some of the identified restorable wetlands in the Kline study are conveyance ditches within farm fields - generally considered low-quality wetlands with buildup of contaminants. Wetland restoration in areas contiguous with Swan Creek and Murphy's Creek (priority 1) and existing high-quality wetlands (priority 2) were prioritized. Page 64 includes a recommendation to use the study to determine opportunities to restore wetlands within the neighborhood.*

   *Low-density development with properly designed and constructed stormwater best management practices (BMPs) will improve current conditions and will convey the stormwater that is treated prior to releasing some of the stormwater (that is not infiltrated into the soil) to higher quality wetlands.*

2. Estimate watershed impacts of development and require all development meet the goal of a zero increase in overall runoff through the use of permeable surfaces, rain gardens, settling ponds and other means as was done for the McGaw Neighborhood Plan.

   *Page 62 shows that the plan suggests a performance standard to require 100% stormwater stay-on rather than the typical 90%, as was done in the McGaw Park Neighborhood urban service area amendment. In 2017, State Statute 281.33(6)(a)(1) was changed to limit the ability of local governments to adopt higher standards for runoff quantity. The Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC) will need to include a 100% stay-on requirement as part of the urban service area amendment for this to be enforceable by the City.*

   *100% stay-on will increase the amount of stormwater management needed for new developments, but this is good practice to reduce stormwater flows in new development considering the importance and sensitivity of the Waubesa Wetlands and the existing stormwater issues in Greenfield. The conceptual stormwater management plan uses a 100% stay-on goal and pre-settlement conditions as the baseline for the stormwater modeling, rather than the existing conditions (agriculture) that are typically used.*

   *The City Engineer also has authority granted by City ordinance to require additional stormwater management to ensure runoff from new construction is discharged at non-erosive rates and does not exceed the flow capacity of downstream stormwater infrastructure.*

3. Retain ample open space for native vegetation, wildlife, and human well-being, including plans for citizen involvement in nature restoration and hands-on education and citizen science.

   *There are approximately 308 acres of protected open space as shown in Figure 2.1 on page 27, compared to approximately 122 acres of currently protected open space in the Greenfield study area. Stormwater management recommendation M13 that encourages volunteer restoration, education, and citizen science on public land was added on page 64. (Note: this does not include staff time and resources).*

4. Installation of a USGS monitoring station at the intersection of Murphy's Creek and Lalor Road, similar to that located at the intersection of Swan Creek and Lalor Road. The USGS, Town of Dunn and other partners may be available to work with the City and developers to fund the installation and operation of this station (as occurred with the Swan Creek USGS station).

   *Stormwater management recommendation M12 on page 64 was added to explore the installation of a USGS monitoring station at Lalor Road and Murphy's Creek.*

5. Consider recycling wastewater to reduce demand for new high-capacity wells.

   *Stormwater management recommendation M14 on page 64 was added to encourage developers to use alternative stormwater and water use reduction techniques.*

6. Use adaptive implementation: Phase development projects, assess each phase; determine which objectives were and were not met; solve problems and correct flaws to adopt solutions that are shown to be effective.

   *No change was made to the plan.*

**Requests by Greenfield Neighborhood Petition**

1. Conduct professional hydrologic and environmental assessments on development impacts to the area's natural springs, wetlands, and waterways before designating any land areas for development opportunities. Assessments should include stormwater and flooding impacts to safeguard properties. Evaluations should include input from expert engineers and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

   *The neighborhood plan is created to guide future development, but it is not a development plan in and of itself. The planning team has developed high-level – at an appropriate scale – hydrologic and environmental assessments to locate future land uses and stormwater facilities. These analyses were performed by professional engineers at MSA and reviewed by professional engineers on City staff.* ***These analyses are overviewed in Chapter 4 of the draft plan and the full stormwater study is available in Appendix C.***

   *More detailed assessments are not particularly helpful at the neighborhood planning scale and would likely not change the final neighborhood plan. More detailed professional hydrologic and environmental analyses must be done as part of all development projects, such as new subdivisions and new business parks, prior to any new roads and infrastructure. Site level development is the appropriate scale for more detailed engineering and planning.*

   *Staff believes that the 100% stay-on requirement noted above will address concerns regarding natural springs, wetlands, and waterways. The other options included in the plan to manage stormwater and infiltration further improve the condition of these hydrologic features. Staff has reviewed the plan with Wisconsin DNR water resource specialists.*

2. Ensure curb, gutter, sewer, and sidewalk are not installed on properties within the developed neighborhood, due to implications on stormwater drainage, costs, and disruption to homeowners.

   *The plan does not propose curb and gutter, sidewalks, or sanitary sewer for much of the existing neighborhood. Sanitary sewer in the existing developed area is proposed only where necessary to serve new development on the west side of the neighborhood (and potentially further west toward Fish Hatchery Road). These locations are along Irish Lane and Old Indian Trail. Planning staff cannot ensure that infrastructure will never be installed in the neighborhood. At some point, for example due to failing septic systems, the neighborhood property owners may request sanitary sewer. Current practice is to install curb, gutter, sidewalk, and sanitary sewer where necessary due to new development, safety, stormwater, or sanitary issues.*

3. Create Low Density Residential buffers adjacent to existing single-family homes. Ensure building heights are compatible in scale with existing properties. The height of any proposed structure shall not exceed two (2) stories above ground level in height within two hundred (200) feet of an existing single-family or duplex lot.

   *Housing Strategy #1.3 was added on page 17 to establish mitigation techniques for new development adjacent to the established neighborhood. The strategy in this plan should not be more stringent than the allowed building heights within the established neighborhood. Fitchburg's existing R-L, R-LM, and R-M (Low Density Residential, Low-Medium Density Residential, and Medium Density Residential) zoning districts allow up to three stories or 35 feet. A map showing the 200-foot buffer is also included in the plan on the same page.*

4. Ensure streets within the developed Greenfield Neighborhood are not connected to new development areas. Remove extension of Old Indian Trail. Connect the southern bike/pedestrian path at Gold Drive instead of Old Indian Trail. Remove the bike/pedestrian path connection at West Hill Drive.

   *No change was made to the plan. Path connections are shown at both East Hill Drive and West Hill Drive, but that doesn't necessarily mean both will be added, it provides multiple options depending on the feasibility of a path. Gold Drive has water and terrain issues that make it difficult to connect. Staff believe the east-west connections are essential for neighborhood connectivity, consistent with Fitchburg's Comprehensive Plan, and an improvement in emergency services access and road maintenance efficiency. The connections at West Hill Drive and East Hill Drive are proposed as multi-use paths. Old Indian Trail is the only street connection proposed between Irish Lane and Byrne Road. There is* ***one mile*** *between Byrne Road and Irish Lane, which far exceeds the typical distance between streets in urban and suburban neighborhoods. A typical urban neighborhood might have 200-1,000 feet between streets, while a typical suburban neighborhood might have 300-1,500 feet between streets. The proposed street connection at Old Indian Trail still leaves* ***over 3,000 feet*** *between Irish Lane and Old Indian Trail, and* ***over 2,000 feet*** *between Old Indian Trail and Byrne Road.*

   *The Old Indian Trail right of way is public and it was clearly intended to continue to the west as the Greenfield Neighborhood continued to develop. The likely route for a sanitary sewer extension to serve the southwest portion of the study area runs west along Old Indian Trail. Regardless, the Old Indian Trail extension will need to host public utilities if and when the property to the west develops, and the land will either remain a public right-of-way or have a public utility easement.*

   *The City owns a narrow strip of land west of West Hill Drive that would allow for connecting the multi-use path with no impact to the existing properties on West Hill Drive. We understand concerns about traffic increases on streets without sidewalks. We believe that a multi-use path connection as proposed at West Hill Drive and/or East Hill Drive will not increase traffic and there will be no undue burdens on the existing residents.*

5. Further reduce land areas assigned as Business Park and High Density or Medium-High Density Residential.

   *No further changes were made after the preferred concept was developed. These areas have been significantly reduced throughout the planning process. The business park and higher density land uses were kept to the east side of the neighborhood for this reason.*

*Further reducing residential density and employment opportunities would have a long-term impact. Studies have repeatedly shown that low density residential costs more in public services than it generates in tax revenue. Land costs in the Dane County region are high and the initial investment in infrastructure is expensive, meaning that low density residential costs significantly more to build than higher densities. Although this initial cost is passed onto future occupants of the new homes, the long-term maintenance of streets and utilities is carried by all residents of the City, including the existing Greenfield property owners.*

6. Preserve existing agricultural lands on key properties as Farming/Agriculture to maintain the historical nature of the community and respect property owner intentions.

   *No change was made to the plan. Agricultural property owners are free to preserve existing agricultural lands. Nothing in the plan requires the agricultural areas to develop. Existing agricultural land uses can continue if the property owners wish, for as long as they wish. This plan helps guide decisions should a landowner decide to develop or sell their land for development. Densities have been reduced adjacent to the existing neighborhood through this planning process, and areas have been identified for agrihood, allowing this use to continue and/or include clustered homes.*