

Date: April 27, 2021

To: Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway

From: James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation (JRUUC) Justice Leadership Team

Re: Strong Support for SavetheFarm Project

The Justice Leadership Team of JRUUC is extremely supportive of the SavetheFarm proposal, and very strongly encourages city and county financial support, for the following reasons:

1. The Voit Farm property includes unique attributes which would not be well utilized in a standard subdivision development. The SavetheFarm (STF) project capitalizes on all 3 facets of the property, in proposing restoration/conservation of the existing wetland/green-space, use of current farmland for an urban farm/CSA, and an excellent mix of affordable housing and commercial structures on buildable land adjacent to Milwaukee St.
2. Protecting the wetlands and enhancing the green-space buffer between housing and Starkweather Creek, including conversion of mono-culture farmland into an organic farm, will help reduce flooding and help with water quality issues we must address. In addition, the green-space would provide community-wide access to nature, with walking and biking trails and education opportunities, including acknowledgment of the Native American tribes who were the original inhabitants and care-takers of this land.
3. SavetheFarm has proposed a wide variety of housing types, from SRO structures, to tiny houses to coops to condos. This variety would provide options to meet a diverse set of needs, providing very low cost entry level housing for the most marginalized members of our community, while also offering privately owned residences which would be made available to BIPOC to facilitate home-ownership and accumulation of generational wealth.
4. The proposed urban organic farm would make low cost healthful food available to residents and would also provide revenue through its CSA to support job training and incubator help for low-income startup organic farmers. Production of value-added food products such as spices might also be considered.
5. Recognizing climate change and other environmental issues, the proposed housing would utilize extremely high energy efficiency and net-zero carbon building design and on-site solar energy supply. It also calls for an on-site bio-digester which would process the organic waste of the residents and organic garden to provide heat, cooling, and organic fertilizer in an environmentally friendly way.
6. Finally, the SavetheFarm features a neighborhood design with a smaller footprint and fewer roads than a typical car-centric subdivision, with plans to facilitate electric-car sharing and biking. This is beneficial both environmentally and health-wise, and also reduces the amount of earth to be paved over, improving permeability on the land.

We support this plan and ask the city and county to do the same. Traditional neighborhood design has contributed to our serious environmental problems. Now is the time and Voit farm is the place for exploring new ways of creating community, farming, and respecting the land. An extraordinary 65 acre parcel in the middle of Madison provides the opportunity for Madison and Dane County to demonstrate your commitment to creatively dealing with today's problems. Your financial support is critical to making this happen.

Sincerely,

Members of the JRUUC Justice Leadership Team