

## Administration

**To:** Plan Commission and Mayor McFarland

**From:** Mason Becker, Strategic Initiatives and Development Coordinator

**Date:** August 21, 2024

**Subject:** Staff response to public annexation comments/questions

## Background

This memo is intended to address some of the concerns and questions that were brought up at the public hearing on August 6, 2024, about the petition for direct annexation and future development of land by Greomar LLC at N9009 County Road A. The annexation item on the agenda at the August 6, 2024, Common Council meeting was tabled and sent back to Plan Commission, in order to allow the Plan Commission to review the public comments given.

The following major items were expressed as questions or concerns:

*Stormwater concerns:* City staff, including our stormwater project manager, will review the developer's stormwater plans before issuing any of the necessary pre or post stormwater permits. We will also investigate the status of the current pond to ensure it is being properly maintained. It is customary at this point in a development to not have engineered stormwater plans.

*Park and sidewalks:* We have consulted with the developer and also our Parks & Recreation Director, Kristine Butteris. A preliminary concept has been agreed to that would create a new neighborhood park on undeveloped lots within the current Hepp Heights subdivision. This park would serve residents in both the existing and the new subdivision. Further improvement and creation of additional public sidewalks would be an issue for the Public Works Commission to examine.

*Infrastructure and traffic flow:* Linda Lane and Ryan Ridge were both built with planned future expansion south. Further, an outlet going west is in their concept plan.

*Quality of homes built:* The developer, Loos Homes, has built many houses already in our community, including in Hepp Heights and Grandview Heights. We have heard some of these owners speak proudly of their homes in public meetings. The developer has indicated these will not be in a starter home price range, but in a range of \$400,000 and up.

*Lack of high-paying jobs/Watertown becoming a "bedroom/commuter" city:* We currently have at least one major employer looking at a possible expansion. We have also had several employers of

different sizes express that lack of available housing in Watertown is a key barrier to them attracting and retaining workforce. It could be argued that adding more housing will make it more likely that we attract additional employers and jobs, not less.

*Higher taxes due to increased city services:* Growing the City's tax base makes it more likely that the mill rate will remain more stable over time.

*Start of construction:* The developer has indicated a likely Spring 2025 start of construction.

## Budget Goal

1. Proactively maintains and improves our parks and infrastructure in an effort to ensure quality, safety, and compliance.
2. Promotes and fosters innovative approaches for community development and growth.

## Financial Impact

Annexation of this land into the City will generate property tax revenue, which will increase once the proposed subdivision is built. In turn, the new homes will generate economic activity within the city during and after construction and will help address our identified shortage of available housing.

## Recommendation

City staff recommend that the Plan Commission send this annexation back to the Common Council with a positive recommendation.