



OFFICE OF
CITY ENGINEER
CITY HALL
400 LA CROSSE ST
LA CROSSE WI 54601-3396
(608) 789-7505

TO: Andrea Trane, Director of Planning, Development, and Assessment
FROM: Matthew A. Gallagher, Director of Engineering & Public Works
CC: file
DATE: August 3 2023

RE: Parcel 50325-200
Pammel Creek
Rivercrest Village

Dear Director Trane:

This memo serves as a record of a cursory observation of the existing public infrastructure and property on and around the parcel of subject. It is my understanding that there has been some discussion regarding the current tenant and lease on this City-owned property. This memo does not address the subject of the lease or its terms, but rather the concerns related to Engineering and public safety of the area, given the proximity to the Pammel Creek Flood Control Project (herein referred to as Pammel Creek).

As shown in the attached picture, Exhibit 1, multiple structures currently occupy the parcel of subject. These structures are part of Rivercrest Village, a Mobile Home Park, managed by Nicolai Apartments. Approximately fourteen (14) structures, including mobile homes and freestanding garages and sheds, appear to occupy the parcel, with an additional structure encroaching across the property line from the parcel to the south.

The distances from the Pammel Creek eastern wall to the western property lines of the parcel of subject vary, approximately, from 35 feet, up to 75 feet. As shown in the aerial image, six (6) of the structures illegally encroach westward, or are entirely within, the City-owned property to the west. The property to the west, parcel 50325-39, includes the Pammel Creek drainageway proper.

Pammel Creek was funded, designed, and constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the City of La Crosse in the 1990s as a public works project. It was an approximately \$35M project that removed entire neighborhoods along the 2.4 miles of Pammel Creek completely out of the floodplain and constrained the floodplain to the drainageway itself. This allowed all homes previously within the floodplain of the watersheds to be excluded from the National Flood Insurance Program.

The Pammel Creek facility is a high capacity drainageway made of reinforced concrete that culminates at a discharge point into the Mississippi River backwaters near Rivercrest Village. As its point of discharge, the channel reaches an overall width of approximately two-hundred twenty five feet (225'), while its vertical retaining walls reach a maximum height of approximately sixteen and one-half feet (16.5'). This places the Rivercrest Village area about one and one-half stories above the floor of the Pammel Creek channel.

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Given the proximity of Pammel Creek to the parcel, there are concerns about ownership of the parcel and having any structures occupying it. This is due to long-term ownership and maintenance requirements of Pammel Creek as a public works facility, as well as the matter of public safety, including possible property damage and loss of life were a catastrophic event to occur that compromised or caused failure of any section of Pammel Creeks walls.

While Pammel Creek was constructed to last several decades, perpetual access to it is necessary for routine inspection and maintenance activities. Additionally, its eventual replacement or upgrade would necessitate use of adjacent lands to stage and conduct construction activities. The lands adjacent to Pammel Creek, having been acquired as part of the public works project, should rightfully stay in the possession of the public, as a need exists.

Of greater concern is the potential effect of a wall failure within Pammel Creek. Based upon the height of the walls, and the potential volume of water conveyed within Pammel Creek during large rain or flash flood events, a wall failure would erode the land outward for a considerable distance. It is reasonable to assume that a distance of more than twice the height of the wall, if not greater, would become unstable, be undermined, and continue to erode in flash flooding events, if a wall failure occurred. Existing structures would face the possibility of collapsing into the drainageway.

The recommendation of Engineering & Public Works is to retain the property in the name of the City of La Crosse and proceed with eviction and removal of those eight (8) structures that lie within an approximate 100-foot setback from the Pammel Creek east wall. These are shown outlined in green in the attached picture, Exhibit 2.

If policy makers at the City were to recommend splitting the parcel, to allow sale to a private owner, rather than continue negotiations over current and/or future over leases, it is recommended to retain, at a minimum, the area that is located approximately along (and west of) the red line depicted in Exhibit 2. This would allow for six (6) of the existing structures with the eastern half of the parcel to remain in place behind a 100-foot setback.



Exhibit 1



Exhibit 2