

1999
Sabini/Steve

What You Can Do...

It is time for all the voices in the area to be heard one more time on this issue. The "Friends of Hudson Park" have managed to get the City's attention. We would now like to ask you and your friends and neighbors to join us for a neighborhood-wide meeting to review the City's report and to share views and possible solutions. Judy Olson and representatives from the Parks and Engineering departments will be on hand to answer your questions. Thereafter, it will be time to plan our next steps. As with any civic project, it is important to maintain the momentum by demonstrating to the City active and enthusiastic neighborhood involvement.

Please join us

**Tuesday, October 26 th
7:00 p.m.**

Olbrich Gardens

to discuss these issues, and to become a
Friend of Hudson Park.



*For questions or more information, please call
244-3573 and ask for Steve.*

*Friends
of Hudson Park*



1999

What Exactly Is Hudson Park?

Hudson Park stretches along Lakeland Avenue some 2,000 feet from Schiller Court on the West to Olbrich Hill on the East. The Park contains 3 effigy mounds, and a number of footpaths that were used by Native Americans through the 1920's to reach their summer campgrounds in Belle Isle, now the City of Monona. Hudson Park was the site of an early resort hotel, with Hudson Park beach and bathhouse as the primary public access to the Lake. This was the site of the all city swim meet on many occasions. The beach even had a pier stretching almost 100 feet into the Lake with diving boards at the end. Hudson Park was created in the mold of the Original Park and Pleasure Drive Association vision.

As an ecological remnant of the original oak opening, which typified this area, the Park remains to this day an invaluable link to Madison's past and a great asset, not only to the neighborhood, but to the entire East Side of Madison. In 1999, Hudson Park retains its importance to the community as part of the Monona Bike Path, as a prime area for bird watching, as a walking and exercise path for area residents, and as a site for outings and instructional activities sponsored by area schools.

What's The Problem?

Unfortunately, Hudson Park is no longer in its prime: The old bathhouse, a canvas for graffiti artists, and site for teenage romantic encounters, is scheduled to be torn down this winter. The storm drain entering the lake near Miller Avenue has failed and is causing a huge hole in the street, while the lakeshore in this area needs major stabilization. Hudson Beach is scheduled to be abandoned by the city next summer, but at present access to the beach is steep and unsafe, especially in winter. Erosion along lakeside footpaths has created ruts and steep slopes that are quite hazardous in some areas. Much of the vegetation on the slopes is dominated by non-native species, which block out the sunlight needed for the establishment of native groundcovers. This further contributes to shoreline erosion and run-off. In addition, the heavy undergrowth blocks lake breezes, and almost totally obscures even partial water views.



What's The Solution?

After a preliminary series of neighborhood meetings, most attended by our alderperson, Judy Olson, a group called "Friends of Hudson Park" was formed. The City's Engineering and Parks Departments, have made available for review a report that details the problems and some proposals for possible solutions. Since there are currently no funds in the Parks Department budget for this project, a neighborhood fundraising effort and possible release of city matching funds was proposed to finance the first phases of lakeshore renovation. If you are interested in reviewing the City's entire report, please call 244-3573, and we will get you a copy.

In light of the historical and recreational value of Hudson Park to the whole Eastside, some neighbors object to the City's proposed approach, and would like the Parks Department to take more financial responsibility. Others would be happy to participate in a neighborhood fundraising effort, but would prefer to do so only in the context of a master plan that addresses all of the needs of the Park. Not surprisingly, still others have reacted to the apparent status quo by "managing" their "own" portion of the shoreline.

(continued on back cover)

PROPOSED MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR HUDSON PARKWAY SHORELINE

The following proposal was developed by a team of Parks Supervisors working with neighborhood residents and Alderperson Judy Olson:

PARK USE AND ACCESS

The focal points for park use are three areas: Hudson Beach provides a trail close to the shoreline which is cleared for open views and water access at the beach. This trail and access can be maintained or enhanced with the removal of the bathhouse and any shoreline reconstruction east of the beach. The park at Maple Avenue provides an oak grove, historic effigy mounds and a high overlook of the lake. This park provides the best access for a reasonable grade trail to the Olbrich lakeshore. Olbrich Park has playground, restroom, and boat access near the end of Welch Avenue. Most public use, water access and public viewing should continue to be directed to these three areas.

The sloped areas between these three parks are very steep, inaccessible and wooded, with a well-used trail along the narrow terrace of Lakeland Avenue. There is a need to control access to discourage hikers from walking straight up and down slopes to the lake. Currently the path along Lakeland Avenue consists of couple of rutted mud surfaces. It would be advisable to improve the trail surface by installing limestone screenings. This would provide an all weather-walking surface and eliminate further erosion. A low fence, wall or barricades may be necessary along the top edge of the slope in some areas. In these areas the space between the street curb and a steep 1:1 slope is less than five feet. Much of the Lakeshore Path is not suitable for use as a safe trail due to the extreme slope and close proximity to Lake Monona. The trail is eroded with steep sideslopes that make walking difficult. It would require extensive earthwork to create a path that would be safe and maintainable. A portion of the lakeshore path between Welch Avenue and Maple Avenue would be the best location for a maintained trail. Steps may be necessary on some of the steeper trail sections. Trail use should be discouraged on trails which cannot be maintained.

VEGETATION

Common Hackberry is the dominant tree species on this steep slope adjacent to Lake Monona. Native red oak, basswood, elm, and boxelder are also present. Herbaceous species present include tall bellflower, arrow leaf aster, elm leaf goldenrod, calico aster, false solomon's plume, virginia waterleaf, woodland wild rye grass. Historically the site likely was an open oak woodland which periodically burned. In the absence of fire the canopy has become more closed, and the herbaceous groundlayer is sparse due to shading. Exotic species (black locusts, norway maple, honeysuckle, buckthorn, and garlic mustard) also contribute to the shading problem. Bare ground is prevalent on the steep wooded slope.

EROSION

Erosion along this slope is a serious problem where trails run up and down the slope. In places the roadway is very close to the edge of the slope. The trail along the road is

worn down to a narrow rut, but water appears to run down the trail or back into the roadway, except where there are trails cutting down to the lake. Compacted turf located above the slope also contributes runoff. Dumping of grass clippings, and other yard waste kills vegetation necessary to hold the soil on the slope. Mike Dailey of the Engineering Division has also reviewed the shoreline erosion and feels that only 200 feet of shoreline is severe enough to require work in the near future.

AESTHETIC LAKE VIEWS FOR PARK USERS

In the past, parts of the steep shoreline sections have been clear-cut to provide "open window" views of Lake Monona. This temporary measure resulted in stumps resprouting, brush increasing in response to the increased availability of light, and luxuriant growth of tall weeds like giant ragweed. This method of management required regular cutting of woody growth to maintain the "window". Using a herbicide application on cut surfaces is a method used to prevent resprouting of stumps. In this case it requires knowledgeable applicators since the dominant tree species is hackberry which spreads by root suckers. Therefore, treating one individual hackberry tree may result in the loss of other desirable trees that are to remain. Managing the steep slopes as an open oak woodland would provide a filtered view of the lake. The low shoreline at Hudson Beach can be kept more open for a lakeshore trail and open viewing.

PROPOSED MANAGEMENT

Maintaining the wooded slope as an open oak woodland would be the best long-term biological solution (using prescribed fire by qualified volunteers or contractors). This would maintain the best groundcover to combat erosion. Hiring a contractor to do the burning would cost an estimated \$1,000-\$1,500 on an annual basis. The Parks Conservation section does not have the resources to manage this property. Their top priority is the conservation parks, and so far only one third of the acreage has been brought under active management.

This work is not well suited for volunteers due to the very steep slope along the lakeshore.

Because this is not a high priority Parks project, it would be necessary to generate some money to support this work, possibly assessing abutting residents or raising donations from them.

Continuing to clear-cut "windows" to preserve selected lake views is not recommended. It is a short-term fix that would not address the issues of erosion or long-term management for the entire site. These areas should be allowed to grow up and develop into an open woodland with a reduced understory, providing filtered views of the lake. Undesirable woody plants, chiefly exotic trees and shrubs, should be removed. There could be some planting of desirable native trees like white or swamp white oaks.

The first step would be to hire a private contractor to cut all exotic trees and shrubs along the steep wooded slope from Hudson Park to Olbrich Park. Estimated cost for this initial work would be \$15,000. This includes the cost of removing 9 trees (1 boxelder, 2 black locusts, and 6 norway maples) from the site. This cost could possibly be eligible

for our matching fund program (with neighbors contributing \$7,500). Most of the small trees and brush cut would remain on the site to help hold the soil and discourage walking on the steep slope. Some of the brush cut near the lake could possibly be used to construct fish cribs that could be sunk offshore. This could be a good volunteer project. To facilitate access for the project at least the portion adjacent to the lake would be more efficiently done in the winter so the contractor could work on the ice. These initial removals will allow more sunlight to reach the ground and help increase cover of native herbaceous species and native shrubs. This will help hold the soil and maintain or increase the diversity of oak woodland wildflowers on the site. Historically this site would have burned periodically and kept more open.

The second phase would involve thinning some of the numerous hackberry saplings and trimming some trees to further reduce shading and create a filtered view. However, the goal would be to keep a canopy, not clear-cut areas for wide-open views. This is compatible with managing as an open woodland. The openings would be dictated by the location of desirable trees on the site, not by the proximity of anyone's particular view. Park staff would mark the trees for removal, then use a private contractor to clear marked trees. This process should be repeated every 5-10 years, with matching funds or a similar shared cost responsibility.

The following steps would also improve native plant diversity and wildlife habitat if the initial thinning and long-term burning programs could be implemented:

- Add seeds of aggressive open woodland species to help hold soil on the steep slope.
- Back off mowing edges near the slope drop off where space allows, to facilitate growth of native plants. This will create a filter strip to check surface runoff from compacted turf and help control access to the slope.
- Work with engineering staff to determine how to protect the street from slope erosion, while providing pedestrian access along the street. A low wall may be the solution. Hiking surface could be limestone screenings, which allow for water infiltration.
- Educate and enforce the No Dumping ordinance to stop illegal dumping on park property.
- Work with our Forestry Section to phase out the use of Norway Maples as street trees adjacent to this area. The street trees are seeding into the wooded lakeshore, and cast a dense shade, which decreases native groundcovers.

TIMELINE

November. Park Commission approval of matching funds to implement proposed management.

December – April. Contractor removal of large trees and exotic shrubs, depending on the time donations are received.

January – February. Remove old bathhouse walls when ground is frozen (Parks staff).

Spring – Fall. Volunteer removal of garlic mustard, planting seeds of open oak woodland, and removing, cutting, treating additional exotic species.

Summer – Winter. Parks Division will designate additional trees to be thinned or trimmed by Forestry staff, volunteers, contractors.

??????? – Design and install rock walls and shoreline protection for the Bathhouse area and shoreline from beach to Miller Avenue (Parks and Engineering staff and budget).

Mike Dailey has assessed the shoreline from an Engineering Division standpoint and makes the following observations and recommendations:

Hudson Park:

South and West of the Beach - This area has some steepness, some erosion, not really severe. It had many nice, major trees. Recommendation would be to do nothing here.

North and East of the Beach - There is about a 200-foot stretch of steep bank and erosion, some severe. The scope of a repair is a big question mark. To do a proper long-term stabilization, would require clearing of the embankment. While the trees aren't as nice in this stretch, it may still be counter what the neighbors would want. To do like this would cost about \$50,000. Lesser repairs could be attempted with no tree removal for around \$10,000. However these type of repairs would have less chance of long term success. Also of note in this stretch is that there has been a failure of the storm box that comes from Miller Street to the Lake. The resulting 'hole' will be repaired regardless of shoreline work - this could be a substantial cost. Also, this hole may have prompted the neighborhood input regarding erosion.

Miller to the Park @ Maple:

This stretch has very steep banks, very wooded and brushy, adjacent to the street ROW. Fairly stable, recommend do nothing here.

Small Park @ Maple:

This Park appears to be an Indian Memorial and / or Indian Mound. The banks are high, steep, brushy and wooded. The brush cover seems to naturally protect the banks pretty well.

In Summary, I see work only on the 200-foot stretch noted above, with the scope of that work dependent on neighborhood input. Presently, the erosion is bad enough to be considered for a project here at any time. All 1999 monies are earmarked. Beyond that this project could be weighed against all other backlog of shoreline work projects and compete for available funding accordingly.

Agenda
Tuesday, October 26, 7 PM
Friends of Hudson Park
Hudson Park Shoreline Project
Olbrich Gardens

1999

1. Friends of Hudson Park Introduction
Intro steering committee, history, goals
of this meeting. Bill White
Linda Baldwin
2. Review of City Process and Proposal Alderperson Judy Olson
3. Presentation of Revised
Shoreline Management Plan Si Widstrand
Parks Staff

Review Walk/Tour
Comments, Questions
4. Next Steps White, Baldwin, Olson,
Widstrand
 - a. Neighborhood Approval of Plan

Set up committee to liaison with city
to implement plan. Call for volunteers. Baldwin for Gary Werner

Bird Guide introduction. Tod Highsmith
 - b. Fund-raising Plan/Timeline O'Neill/White/Baldwin

Fund-raising committee report O'Neill
Call for volunteers.
 - c. Future of Friends of Hudson Park Baldwin/White

Other committees?
5. Next meeting date & agenda
6. Distribute pledge forms/discuss open issues.
7. Adjourn