



# 7. MASTER PLAN

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Map 7.1. Vilas Park Draft Final Master Plan







## DRAFT FINAL MASTER PLAN DESCRIPTION

This section first describes the Draft Final Master Plan in its entirety. Next, the comments received from the public, City and State Staff are summarized. Finally, the changes to the Draft Final Plan are identified, followed by a summary of recommendations and additional description of the Final Master Plan elements. This arrangement best follows the planning process and provides the context specific to each portion of the planning process as you move through the report.

### HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Feedback provided on the three concept plans presented in Phase II created the basis for the development of a draft final master plan. Overwhelmingly, comments approved of the plan's intent to close Vilas Park Drive to through traffic, although some respondents felt the closure would cause the loss of the pleasure drive character that has been part of Vilas Park since its inception. Ultimately, the planning team felt transitioning from a vehicular corridor to a pedestrian and bicycle route was the appropriate path forward. This and other difficult planning decisions were made based on analysis of both public comment, regulatory agency feedback and professional design standards. It is understood that the master plan will not equally please all residents. However, the plan aims to build consensus around a best alternative for the future of Vilas Park. What follows are descriptions of the improvements suggested for Vilas Park as shown in the draft final master plan. Feedback on the draft plan will be discussed later in the section as well as the edits made to arrive at the Final Master Plan.



## GATEWAYS

In the early 1900's, O. C. Simonds designed a formal entrance to Vilas Park (Figure 7.1) that was known as Elm Court (see Section 6 for a detailed description). The Simonds' design provided a main focal point near the intersection of Drake Street and Warren Street (now Randall Avenue) with a strong pedestrian connection to the neighborhood with two large sidewalks. In this plan, the term “gateway” describes a welcoming design with landscape enhancements, monuments or signage that create a sense of identity at entrances, reminiscent

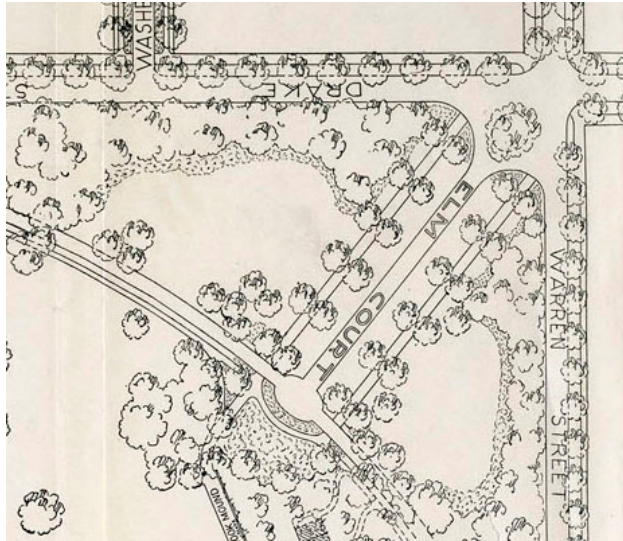


Figure 7.1. O. C. Simonds Elm Court Plan

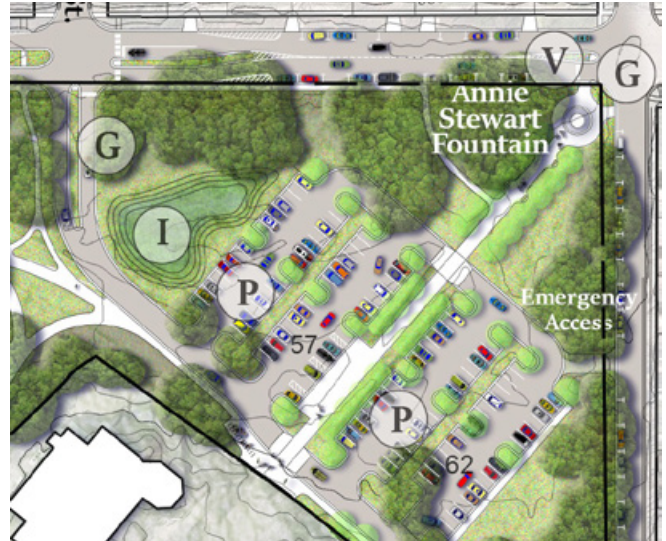


Figure 7.2. Proposed North Entrance

of the original Simonds intent. The gateways are indicated by the letter “G” on the draft final master plan (Figure 7.2, 7.3 & 7.4). While not new as thoroughfares into the park, each of these locations provides an important cross-roads of pedestrian and vehicular traffic as visitors and park users enter the park. Not shown on the plan, but recommended in the future planning are additional signage identifying parking areas and entrances, both to serve as acknowledgment of the park boundaries as well as provide visual aid to drivers navigating the neighborhood for the first time. This signage may need to extend to nearby collector roads such as Monroe Street and Park Street to help park and zoo visitors navigate the neighborhoods surrounding the park to find appropriate parking and amenities.

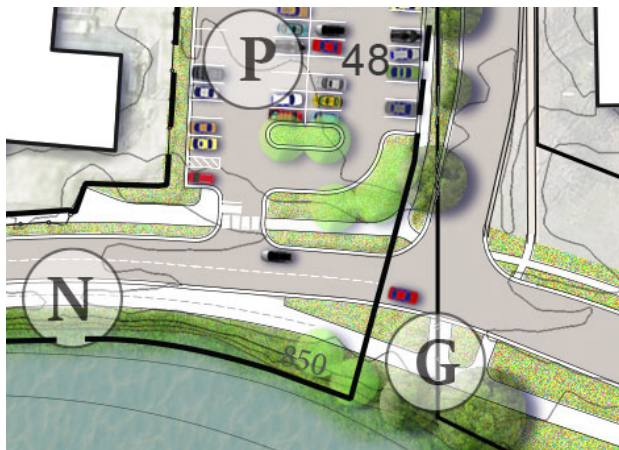


Figure 7.3. Proposed Wingra Drive Entrance

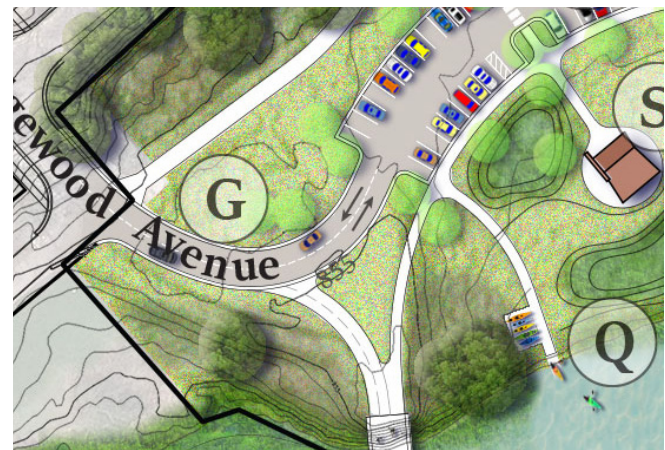


Figure 7.4. Proposed Edgewood Avenue Entrance





Figure 7.5. Proposed Campbell Street Entrance

### CAMPBELL ST. ENTRANCE AND PEDESTRIAN PROMENADE

As shown in the concept plans, the master plan shows the vehicular entrance to the Park and Henry Vilas Zoo's north entrance moved from the existing intersection of Drake and Randall to align with Campbell Street. The existing angled entry drive and five-point intersection is potentially hazardous to cross-traffic as well as pedestrians in the crosswalks. This type of intersection is typically avoided in current roadway design and with future improvements to the entrance would not be advisable if an alternate could be provided. City of Madison Traffic Engineering reviewed the Drake Street right-of-way and pending future study determined an entrance may be feasible at the intersection of Drake Street and Campbell Street (Figures 7.6 & 7.7).

Additionally, replacing the entry drive with a pedestrian walkway strengthens the connection to the neighborhoods by developing a grand promenade into the park, reminiscent of the Elm Court design proposed initially by the O.C Simmonds plan for Vilas Park. Moving the vehicular entrance to the opposite side of Drake Street from Campbell Street creates a properly designed four-way intersection (Figure 7.5). The pavement width of Drake Street provides enough space to add a left turn lane to go south into Vilas Park. When design development occurs, signage, turn limitations, access limitations, and other traffic control tools can address concerns related to traffic flow to Bear Mound Park and Vilas Avenue. City of Madison Traffic Engineering would lead the implementation of a change to City owned right-of-way, such as Drake Street. Additional traffic study and impact analysis is expected prior to construction. Future improvements would include signage and traffic control consistent with the City of Madison standards at the time of construction. The appropriate signing of entry points into Vilas Park and the zoo will dissuade visitors from traveling north onto Campbell Street and into the residential neighborhood.





Figure 7.6. Existing Intersection of Drake Street and Campbell Street



Figure 7.7. Proposed Campbell Street Entrance





Figure 7.8. Existing Intersection of Drake Street and Randall Avenue



Figure 7.9. Proposed Pedestrian Entrance (Promenade)

As noted in the Concepts Section (6) of the report, the installation of landscaped islands along Drake Street at the entrance require removing 13 parallel parking stalls, mostly used by park users on the south side of Drake Street, which can be recouped in the redesigned park parking lot. There is no reduction of on-street parking on the north side of Drake Street. The relocated entrance road allows for two-way traffic into and out of the park, eliminating the current one-way system that extends through the north boundary of the park. The proposed design allows for removal of the park exit at the intersection of Grant Street, Drake Street and Garfield Street. This as the Drake Street and Randall Avenue entrance is an atypical intersection with poor site lines for both vehicles and pedestrians. Neighbors of the park reported often observing drivers entering the exit road. This type of unexpected vehicular movement is dangerous to pedestrians and bicyclists. Its removal further promotes safe pedestrian and bicycle access into and around the park, an early goal of the master plan based on feedback on the existing park.



## NORTH PARKING LOT

Community input on the three concept plans, particularly from residents of the Greenbush and Vilas Neighborhoods indicated that participants felt the parking lot designs included too much parking in the north lot and too little greenspace along Randall Ave. In the draft master plan, the north parking area is shown with 123 parking stalls, which is reduced from 146 in Concept Plan A. The existing and proposed north parking lots are shown in Figures 7.10 and 7.11.



Figure 7.10. Existing North Parking Lot



Figure 7.11. Proposed North Parking Lot

## MAIN PARK SHELTER AND PARKING

The main shelter is sized to include restrooms, a community room, storage and mechanical space, and a covered open-sided shelter. Additionally, it is anticipated the existing small pump house near the north pedestrian bridge would be relocated to a mechanical space within the new shelter further opening views to the lagoon and lake and reducing the need to maintain a separate, lighted building. Placement of the shelter allows for access to the western half of the lagoon for winter skating and the inland hockey rink. Like the current shelter, the new shelter is intended to act as a warming house for winter recreation and equipment





Figure 7.12. Shelter as Viewed from West Side of Lagoon

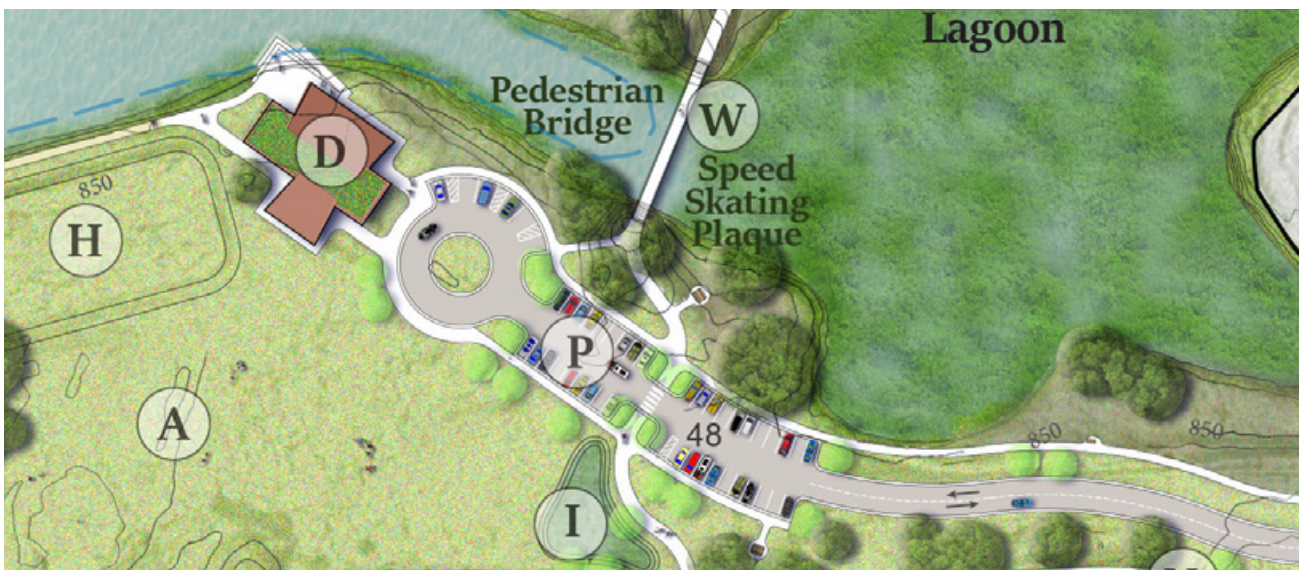


Figure 7.13. Proposed Shelter and Parking Lot

rental operations. The location of the shelter has a wide viewshed across the lagoons and central island but is situated in such a way that it does not impact the view from the meadow to Lake Wingra. This preserves an important characteristic of the park that came up early in neighborhood meetings. See Figure 7.12 for an artistic rendering of what a future shelter might look like. Final determination as to the building's design will be made with a future replacement project.

The main shelter ("D") would be served by two-way traffic from the east on the realigned Vilas Park Drive, terminating in a traffic circle/drop-off at the main shelter (see Figure 7.13). The parking lot ("P") serving the shelter would be reduced from the existing 65 stalls to approximately 48 stalls, including several ADA parking stalls.



## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

A need to retain the open space and rural feel of Vilas Park was identified early in the planning process during stakeholder engagement. Encroachment in native planting areas and removal of trees was considered closely and avoided where possible. The tree survey conducted during the planning process (see Section 5) identified a number of species that are undesirable in an urban tree canopy, such as ash. Improvements, like the Campbell Street entrance realignment, are designed to minimize the impact on healthy, desirable tree species such as oaks, maples and hickory. Ash and black walnut make up the majority of species impacted by the proposed park improvements.

The proposed natural areas within Vilas Park will be planned and maintained according to the Parks Land Management Plan and with future discussion with Park Operations staff. Characteristics such as final boundaries, plant heights, species selection and maintenance will come from additional site assessment and design development. Generally, the draft plan makes recommendations for lower height plantings along the lagoon and shoreline to maintain the viewshed while providing enhanced habitat and plant diversity. Examples of native plantings in other city parks are shown below in Figures 7.14 and 7.15.



Figure 7.14. Native Plantings (Olin Park, Madison, WI)



Figure 7.15. Native Plantings in Stormwater Basin (Olbrich Park, Madison, WI)

A frequent complaint from staff and park users is the soggy condition of the meadow (also noted on master plan as "open space for active and passive recreation"). A future lagoon dredging project could, in turn, accompany improvements to the grading and drainage of the fields ("A" in Figure 7.17). Additional stormwater treatment around the lagoon and the addition of native planting buffers would be designed to treat runoff from the fields to protect the lagoons from nutrients from grass clippings and fertilizers needed to maintain high-quality turf for recreation purposes. Management practices such as these would also assist in deterring resident populations of Canada geese, which was often cited as a problematic condition in the park in surveys and through comments received from the Friends of Lake Wingra.



Winter recreation in Vilas Park is just as important as the summertime activities, and maintaining an inland hockey rink was determined to be a priority early on. On the draft plan, the hockey rink (“H” in Figure 7.17) is moved to allow for a larger green space on the peninsula while maintaining proximity to the shelter for skate rental, restrooms, and access to the warming house. The existing rink’s depressed design makes it marshy in the summer. Redesign of the rink could allow for better drainage, possibly allowing for use as a summertime recreation space.

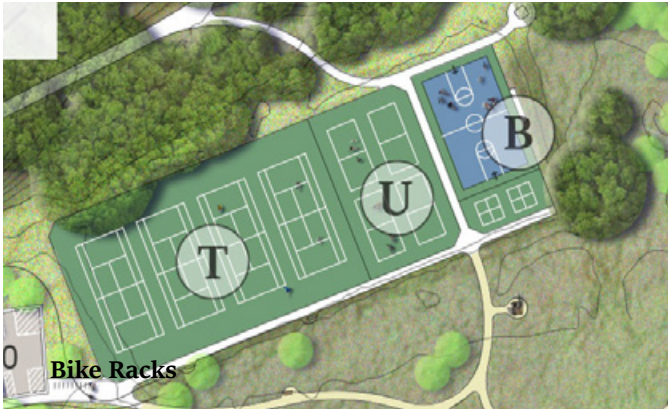


Figure 7.16. Proposed Layout of Court Sports



Figure 7.17. Proposed Inland Hockey Rink

Public input on the concept plans indicated that tennis was still a popular use in the park despite ranking low on the surveys and initial community meetings. Similarly, interest in pickleball expressed during the concept phase suggested that this was an amenity that would be a welcome addition to the park. The final plan shows four tennis courts (“T”), four pickleball courts (“U”), a basketball court (“B”), and two four square courts (see Figure 7.16). Basketball was moved south from its current location to be combined into a single court sports complex. The overall footprint is about the same as the existing six tennis courts and basketball court and allows for a contiguous sports complex connected through accessible pathways to adjacent parking.

## LAGOON

The lagoon is an iconic feature of Vilas Park, existing in some form since the initial development of the park. The draft plan maintains the lagoon, but offers differing levels of management for the two halves based on public input, maintenance costs, and considerations of lagoon health and sustainability (Figure 7.18). Public comments desired maintaining the lagoon both for the character it provides to the park as well as opportunities for recreation including ice skating, hockey and fishing.

The health of the lagoon is a concern of many park users, and many of the proposed changes in the draft plan are designed to improve the lagoon. The expansion of native, no-mow landscapes serve to manage stormwater runoff and reduce goose populations, which helps limit the amount of bacteria that enters the water. Native plantings are also lower maintenance, which will allow city staff to spend more time on the upkeep of



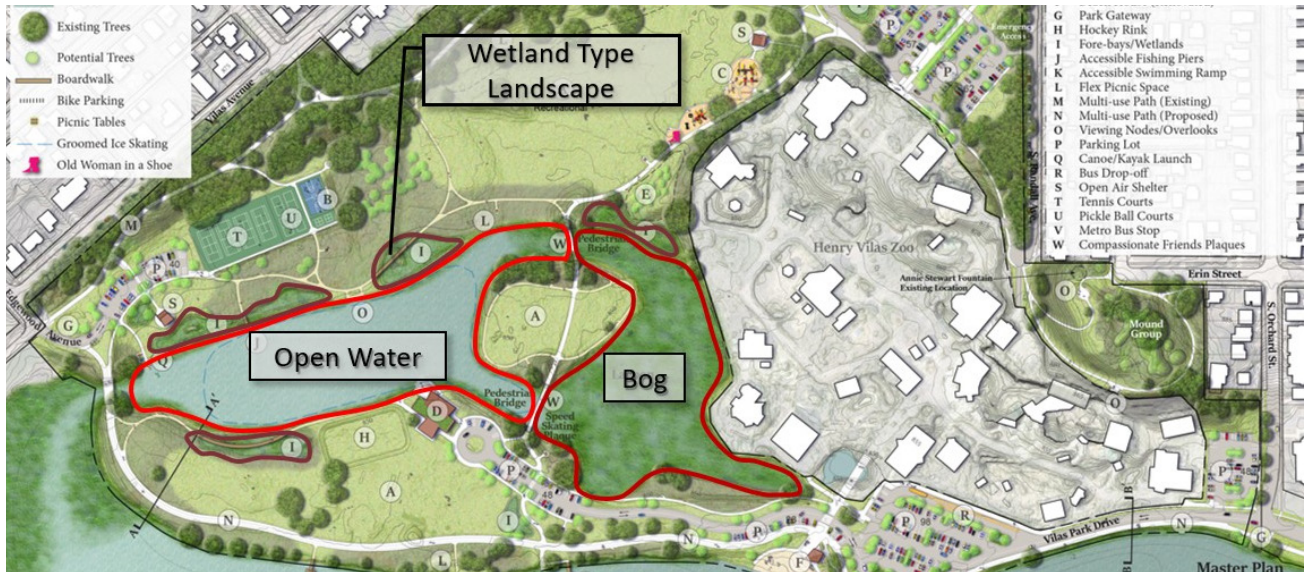


Figure 7.18. Lagoon Treatment

playgrounds, athletic fields and shelters.

The west section of the lagoon is proposed to be maintained as open water, which will require significant ongoing maintenance, including dredging and weed cutting activities. The east portion of the lagoon is allowed to continue to transition to a wetland type landscape (Figure 7.18). The specific transition and maintenance plan is to be determined. Some images of the possible progression are included below in Figures 7.19 and 7.20.

Parks records indicate that the lagoon may not have not been dredged since the original installation. One goal of the 2021 Master Plan is to improve the water quality of the lagoons and maintain the ability to use a portion of the lagoon for ice skating, which was an interest expressed throughout the project as a priority to park users. To achieve these goals, the plan provides recommendation for forebays, native planting treatment on the shoreline, and the dredging of the west pond and the naturalization of the east pond. These recommendations

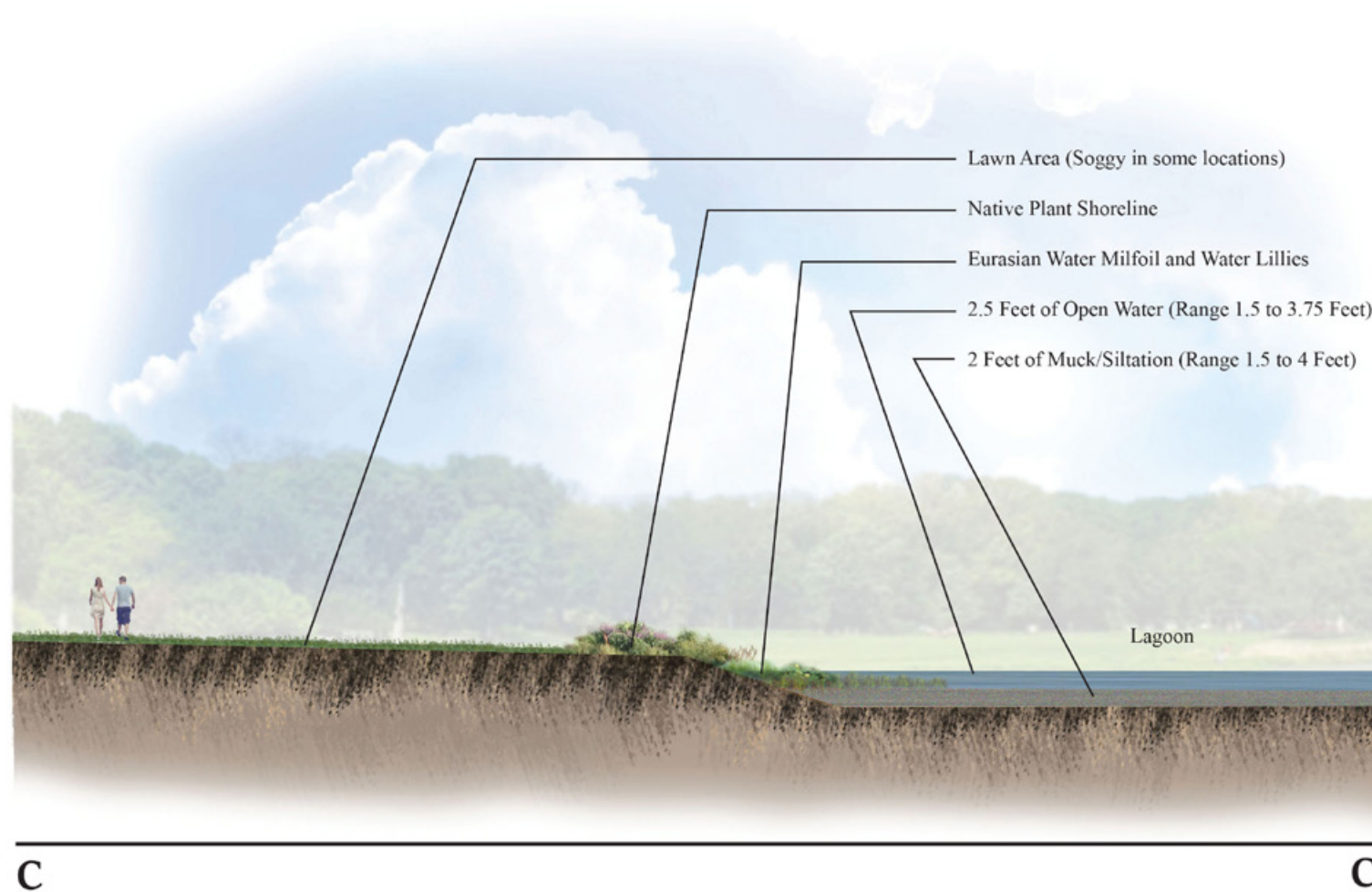


Figure 7.19. Native Plantings (Olin Park, Madison, WI)

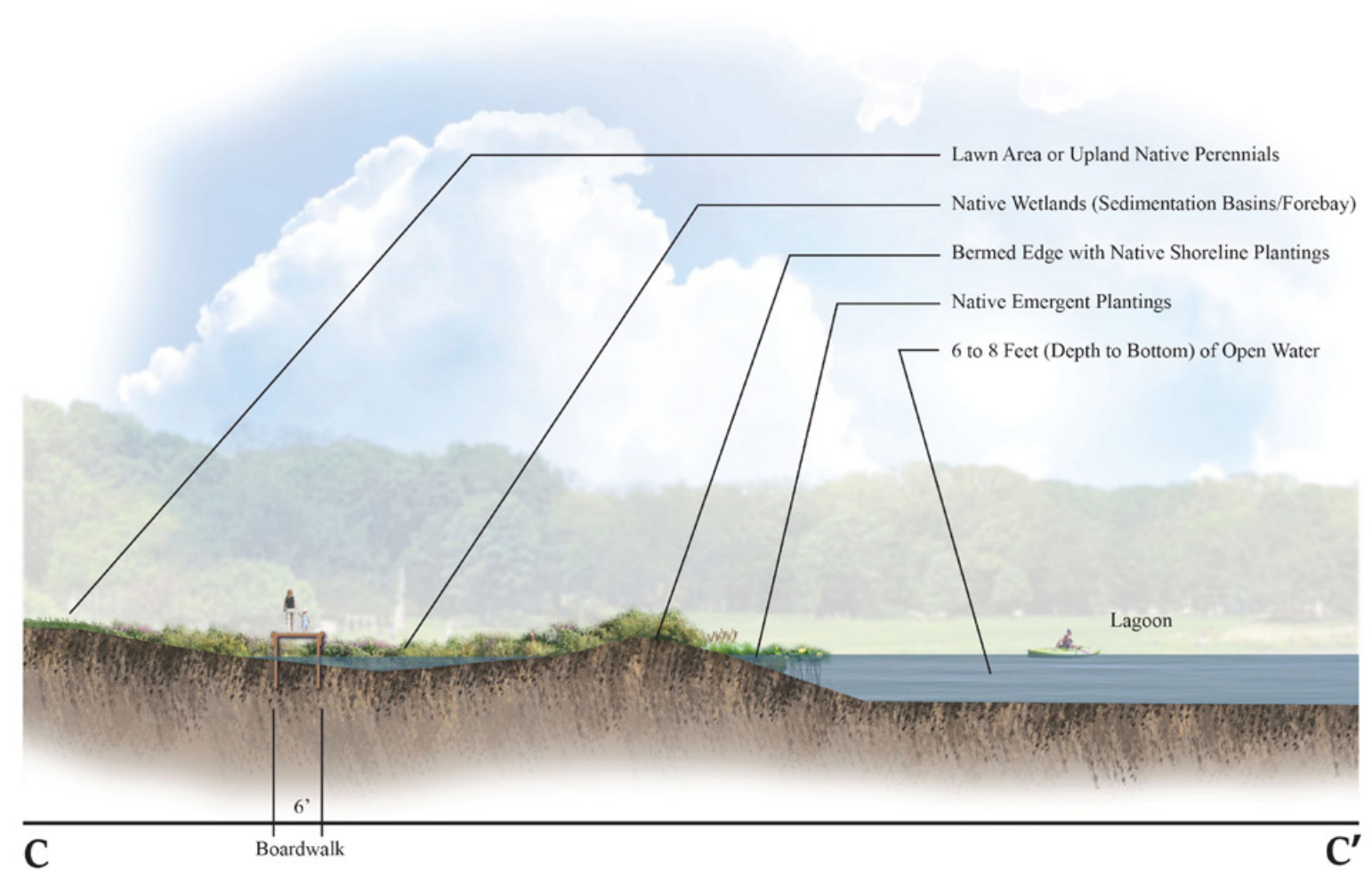


Figure 7.20. Native Plantings in Stormwater Basin (Olbrich Park, Madison, WI)





VILAS PARK LAGOON CROSS-SECTION - EXISTING CONDITIONS



VILAS PARK LAGOON CROSS-SECTION - PROPOSED NATIVE WETLAND EDGE

Figure 7.21. Lagoon Cross-Sections (Existing and Proposed)







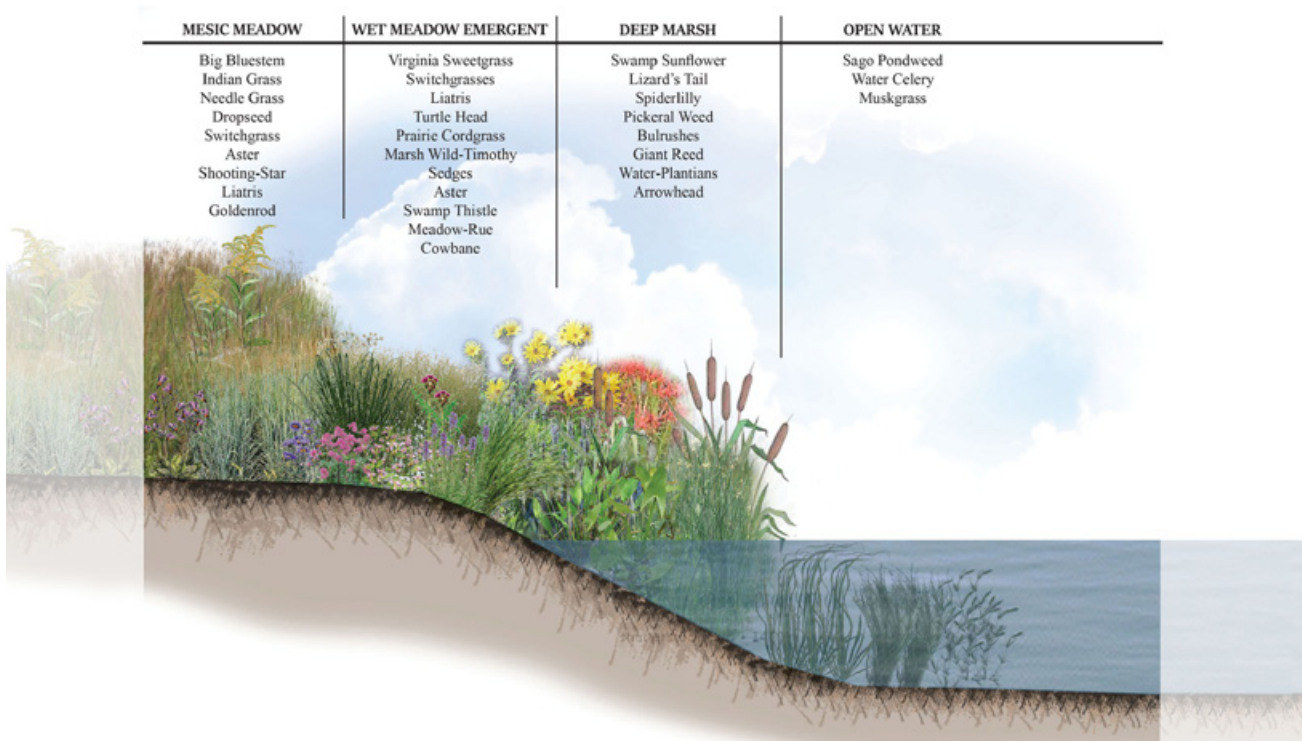


Figure 7.22. Typical Shoreline Vegetation Zones (Species selections from WI DNR).

are based on discussions that the project team had with Wisconsin DNR staff and current design best practices. Parks will contract with a consultant specializing in water quality improvements for water bodies similar to the Vilas lagoon to further study options to improve water quality, and to determine the best management practices to preserve them for the future.

Analysis of the lagoon and stormwater runoff by UW-Madison Civil Engineering 2020 Capstone Project<sup>1</sup> indicated the use of fore-bays would also help to improve lagoon water quality. Fore-bays are sedimentation zones that are a best management practice (BMP) for stormwater runoff. They allow sediment to settle out from incoming stormwater from piped systems and hardscapes prior to entering the lagoon. Another suggestion originating from the UW Capstone project appearing in the final master plan is the suggestion to allow the easternmost "finger" of the east side of the lagoon to return to the most vegetated condition. This design move was supported by the team's client, Clean Lakes Alliance.

A fore-bay is usually linear in plan layout and located adjacent to the larger BMP, or in this case, the lagoon. The fore-bay is separated by a narrow landmass that is set at an elevation higher than the high water mark. The vegetation is wetland and deep marsh natives in the lower basin portion along with the option to have some standing water or marsh. The edges are typically wet meadow emergent native plants transitioning into mesic meadow in dryer areas (Figure 7.22).

<sup>1</sup> UW-Madison Dept. of Civil and Environmental Engineering CEE 578 - Senior Capstone Design - Improvements to Vilas Park



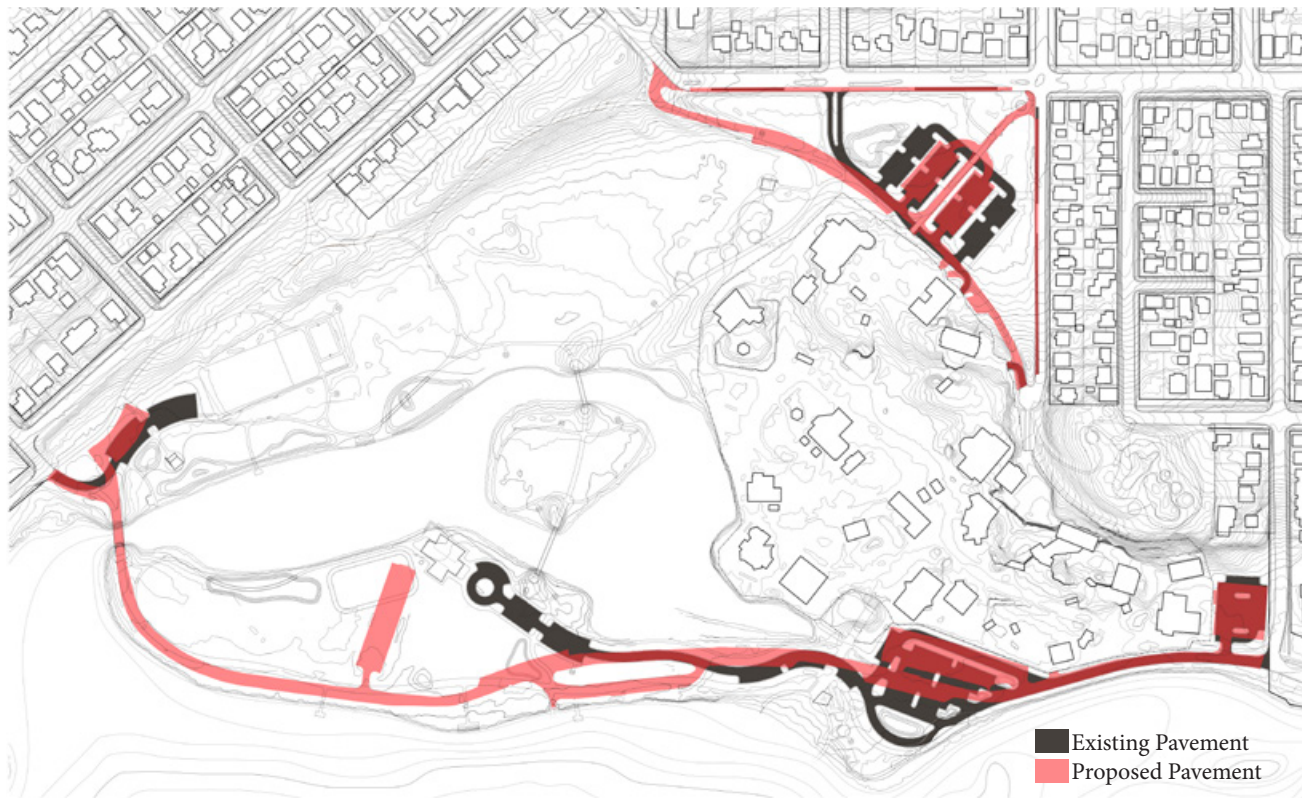


Figure 7.23. Vehicular Pavement Comparison.

### VILAS PARK DRIVE

The most significant change shown in the draft plan is the closure of Vilas Park Drive to through-traffic (Figure 7.23) and its conversion to a multi-use path. Specifically, removing the roadway from the historic bridge near Edgewood Avenue to the proposed main shelter location. This change was favored in comments received in public meetings and surveys. Some comments were received that indicated a desire to maintain the road as a pleasure drive and others were concerned about accessibility to the shoreline, but overall public preference was in favor of removal and replacement with a multi-use path. For these reasons, the priority shifted to ensuring pedestrian and bicycle safety within the park. Figure 7.24 shows a cross-section of the proposed multi-use path and sidewalk on the peninsula.

Concerns regarding accessibility of the shoreline with removal of Vilas Park Drive are addressed in several ways. First, accessible parking stalls are shown in both the western lot near Edgewood Ave. and the main shelter parking lot. These spaces, in conjunction with shoreline improvements including additional ADA fishing piers, provide for accessible connections to the waterfront of both Lake Wingra and the lagoon. Lastly, an individual in a wheelchair or other mobility device should not have to travel more than 300 ft. from an accessible parking stall to reach the nearest accessible water access point from either parking lot.





Figure 7.24. Existing Vilas Park Drive and South Parking Lot



Figure 7.25. Proposed Vilas Park Drive and South Parking Lot



## PARKING AND ROADWAY SURFACES

The plan seeks to strike a balance between maintain adequate parking and access for all visitors, while improving safety and predictability of roadways, and protecting water quality. Figure 7.23 shows existing and proposed pavement. The proposed plan shows 422 parking stalls, while the existing conditions provide 429 stalls.

The draft plan parking breakdown:

- North parking (including Drake Street and Randal Avenue parallel parking on park side) - 152
- Erin Street parking - 8 (no change)
- South lot parking - 174
- Main shelter and beach parking - 48
- Small shelter, basketball and tennis court parking - 40 (Figure 7.26)

Even though several of the parking lot footprints are enlarged, the plan stills shows a significant reduction of pavement dedicated to vehicles. This is due, in part, to the elimination of Vilas Park Drive from the historic bridge to the relocated main shelter and also to the reduction in pavement at the north end of the park, due to the elimination of the vehicular nose-in parking and travel lane existing at Grant and Drake Streets. Also, the south parking area is consolidated from several existing linear lots along Vilas Park Drive, which shortens internal service roads connecting the main lots together (see Figure 7.23). The existing pavement accounts for approximately 262,500 sq. ft., whereas the proposed improvements reduce that amount to 203,117 sq. ft. This difference returns approximately 1.3 acres of parkland to the site as greenspace without vehicular intrusion.

Figure 7.26 shows the proposed west parking lot. The lot is enlarged from the existing 30 stalls, by 10 spaces, to 40. Observations during the COVID-19 related closure of Vilas Park Drive during the summer of 2020 showed increased parking use at this end of the park. It is expected that with the proposed permanent closure of Vilas Park Drive this would continue.

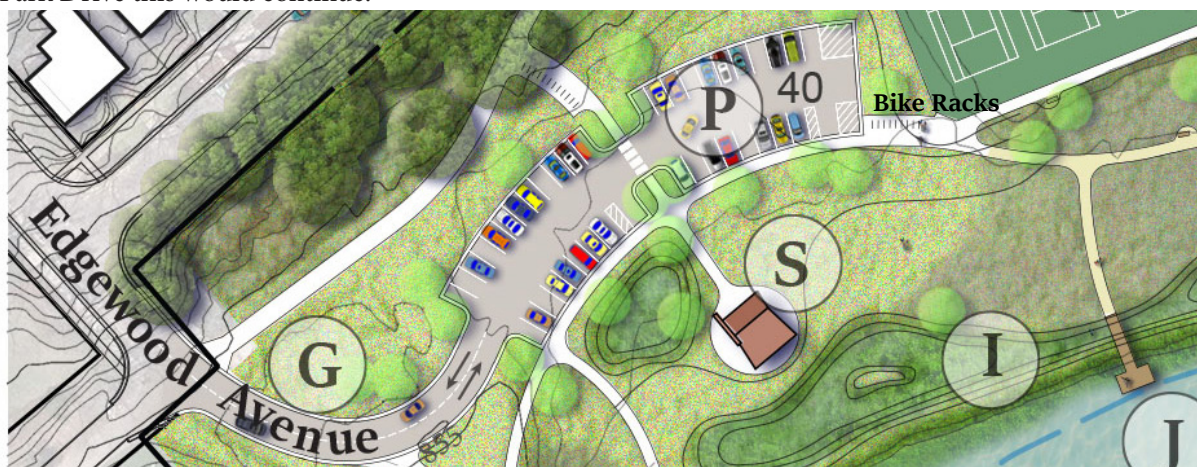


Figure 7.26. Proposed West Parking Lot



Legend

- (A) Shoreline Restoration with Native Plants
- (B) Natural Areas
- (C) Open Lawn
- (D) Wetlands
- (E) Bench

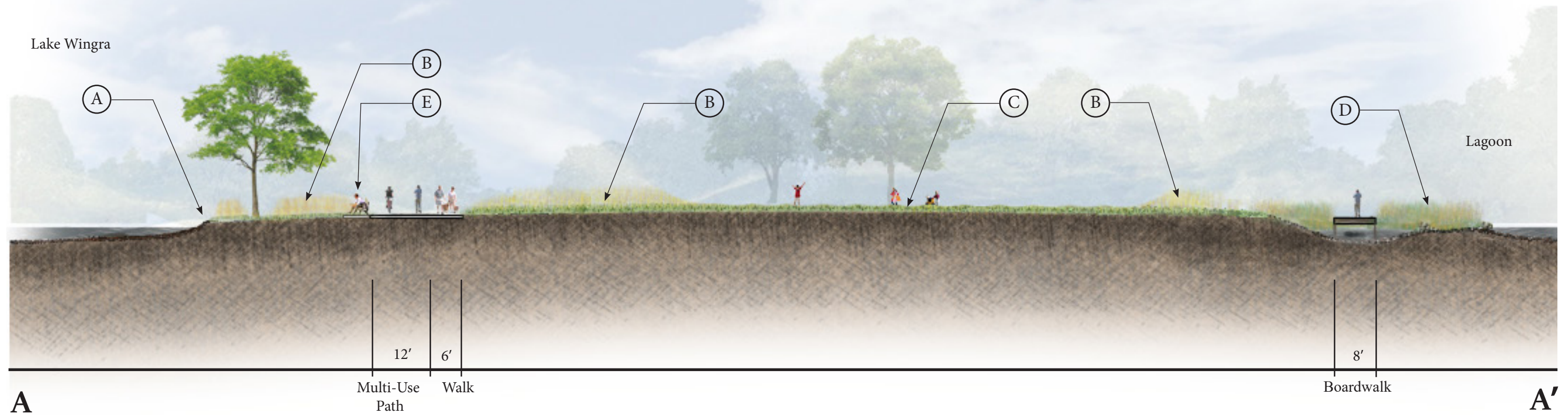


Figure 7.28. Vilas Park Drive and Peninsula Cross Section





One of the early recommendations from City staff reviewing the concepts was the need for improvements to the park to meet City of Madison ordinance. Two areas of particular note are the lack of stormwater controls on the current roadway and parking lots and the extent of parking lots featuring long ranks of stalls without landscape islands. Both conditions would not be permitted currently and the plan addresses both through the proposed addition of planted islands, bioswales and other best management practices. The features shown in the plan are approximate and representative of the potential constructed condition. Further analysis of infiltration, treatment capacity and maintenance practices would be considered at the time of construction design document preparation. Figure 7.27 shows some examples of currently accepted treatments from Goodman Park in Madison.



Figure 7.27. Example Parking Island Plantings from Goodman Pool in City of Madison

## TRAILS AND PATHS

The plan replaces Vilas Park Drive with a multi-use path to provide improved safety and access for bicycles using the park as well as a thoroughfare to connect to the Wingra bike path and downtown Madison (Figure 7.29). The path is shown as a 12 foot wide paved surface (asphalt) with an adjacent 6 foot wide pedestrian sidewalk for separation from faster moving bicycle traffic (Figure 7.30). The path is continuous from Edgewood Avenue to S. Orchard Street, creating safe pedestrian and bicycle corridor missing from the existing park (Figure 7.31).



Figure 7.29. Example of multi-use path



Figure 7.30. Stabilized gravel trail

Legend

- (A) Shoreline Restoration with Native Plants
- (B) Terrace/Lawn
- (C) Zoo Fence

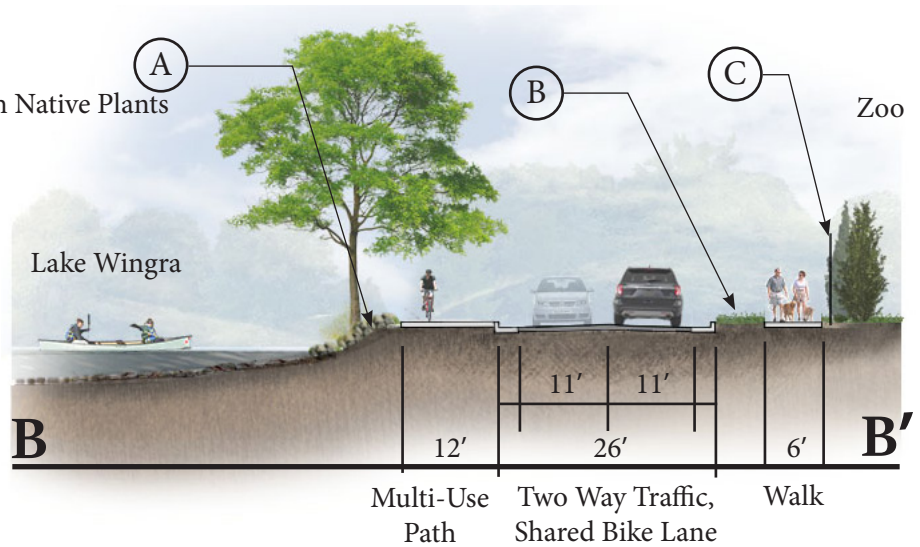


Figure 7.31. Vilas Park Drive cross-section at section B on plan

In locations where a formal paved path is not required, the plan recommends permeable pavement or gravel walking surfaces. These trails would be approximately 6 feet wide to accommodate walking in two directions. The surface chosen should maintain accessibility in a variety of conditions (wet or dry). A stabilized gravel path is one such option that is less costly to implement than asphalt or concrete and is easily maintained or repaired with common tools (Figure 7.30).

**FISHING PIERS**

Access to the lagoons for fishing is enhanced through the addition of several accessible fishing piers (“J” on Map 7.1). The existing accessible pier on the Lake Wingra shoreline is maintained, and an additional pier is added near the half-way point of the peninsula. A third pier is proposed in the lagoon. Fishing from the shoreline at unimproved locations such as piers or steps would generally still be allowed, although native vegetation would replace turf along much of the shoreline. Access point cut-throughs can be added as the naturalized vegetation matures for particularly popular locations for on-shore casting.. The piers and other improvements are provided to improve accessibility to the water for a variety of user abilities.

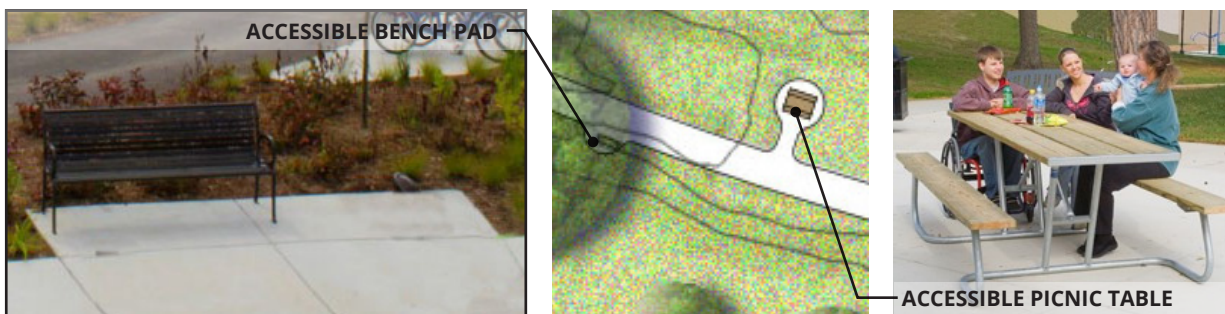


Figure 7.32. Accessible Bench and Tables



## **BENCHES AND PICNIC TABLES**

The master plan shows possible locations for ADA accessible picnicking locations with paved pads for picnic tables connected to accessible routes. Similarly, benches are located throughout the park on accessible routes.

## **COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS PLAQUES**

The Compassionate Friends of Madison were consulted to provide feedback on the future of the memorial benches within the park. Several of the existing benches need replacement and alternative placement options were discussed, including the possibility of relocating plaques to the recently replaced pedestrian bridges crossing the lagoon. City of Madison Parks and the Compassionate Friends will continue to discuss the memorial program outside of the scope of the master plan.

## **WINGRA OVERLOOK**

Parks has made the determination, working in close consultation with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for The Ho-Chunk Nation, that the focus of the mound sites will be to preserve and honor the sacred land in accordance with established standards – and that in its role as current and future stewards of the mounds within the City of Madison Parks system, it will not be placing children’s play environments in proximity to mound sites. The plan shows a winding path to the perimeter of the identified mound group to connect the Erin Street and Greenbush neighborhoods to the park with an accessible route (less than 5% slope) (Figure 7.33) which is an amenity that Ho-Chunk representatives felt would enhance the site for their community's use for gatherings and offer appropriate access to those park visitors wishing to view the mounds and to further appreciate the qualities that this area of the park offers. Two introspective gathering spaces are shown ("O"), one at the zoo perimeter overlooking Lake Wingra. The other is near the existing location of the Annie Stewart fountain. Figures 7.34 and 7.35 show the existing and proposed conditions. This space provides room for small gatherings and could be constructed in such a way as to limit excavation and disturbance of the site as outlined by the City of Madison’s Mound Management Plan and State Historic Preservation Guidelines. Figures 7.36 and 7.37 show the known extent of the mounds.



Figure 7.33. Plan view of "Wingra Overlook" space and mound group



Figure 7.34. Existing view from existing "Wingra Overlook" space



Figure 7.35. Proposed improvements at the "Wingra Overlook"



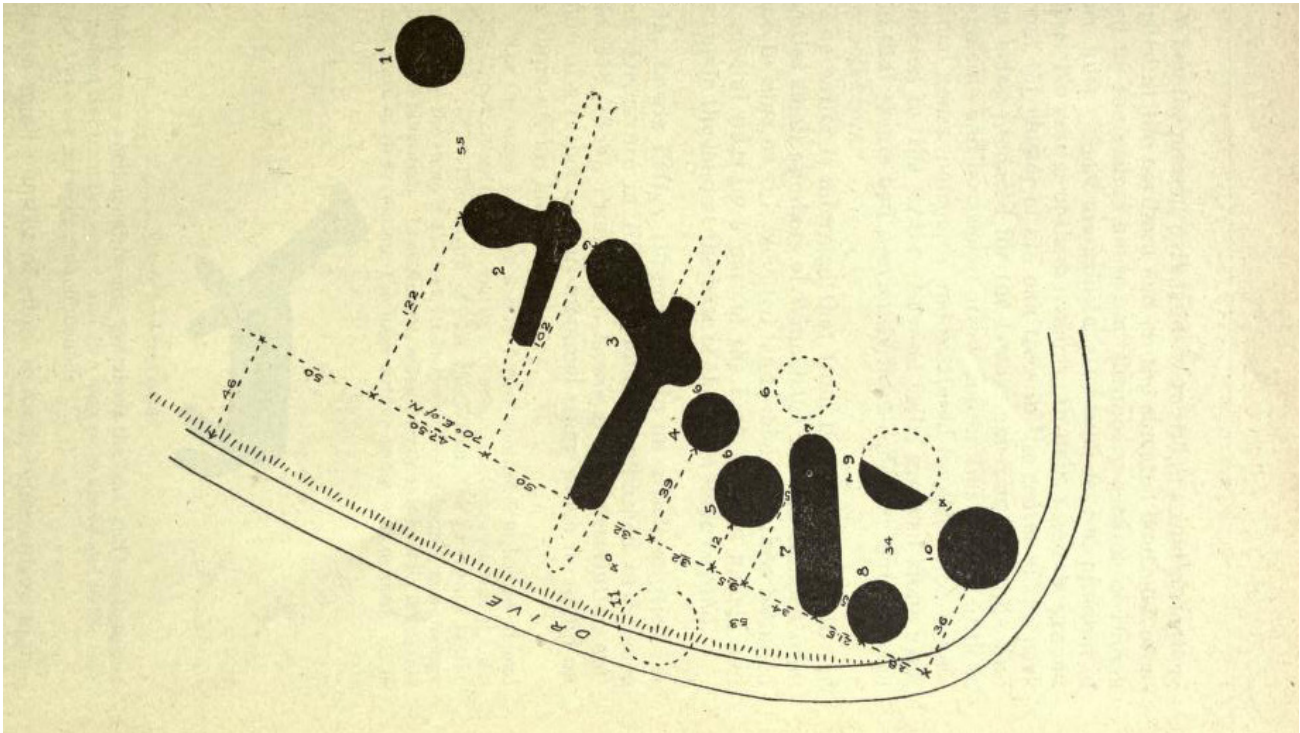


Figure 7.36. Dividing Ridge - Original Survey by Increase A Lapham 1850, Redrawn by W W Warner 1914 (above)

*“The preservation of the mounds now remaining was secured through the purchase by the City of Madison, in the years 1910 and 1913 of the hill-top and adjoining lower land. As may be noted from the accompanying plate there originally were in this group a total of eleven mounds. Eight of these were conical (burial), one a linear and two effigy mounds. One of the burial mounds was destroyed and several of the other mounds mutilated in past years by the erection of several swelling houses, the cultivation of garden patches and the cutting of a rad across the land. Portions of the wings of both of the bird effigies were thus removed.”*

The Wisconsin Archaeologist Lake Wingra, Charles E. Brown, Vol. 14 September 1915



Figure 7.37. Lapham map overlay

## PLAYGROUNDS

Community Parks within the City of Madison Park system typically have a large playground featuring equipment designed for both 2-5 year olds and 5-12 year olds. The plan calls for maintaining the iconic Old Woman in the Shoe playground by developing a larger multi-faceted play area to replace the existing eastern and western meadow playgrounds (Figure 7.38). The western playground is omitted from the draft plan in favor of the inclusion of a playground by the beach (Figure 7.39). Access to a shelter and restroom from the playground came up in public comments, and the beach location provides both. The added amenity serves users of the beach as well.

The dinosaur playground is removed from the plan per the mound management discussion in the preceding section. Because its location infringes on historic mound footprints as identified by Lapham in 1859 (Figure 7.37, see further discussion under the Wingra Overlook section), removal of the equipment will need to be performed under the guidance of the Wisconsin Historical Society and Ho-Chunk Nation and will likely limit the ability to reuse the existing equipment elsewhere.. Its location infringes on historic mound footprints as identified by Lapham in 1859 (Figures 7.37, see further discussion under the Wingra Overlook section).

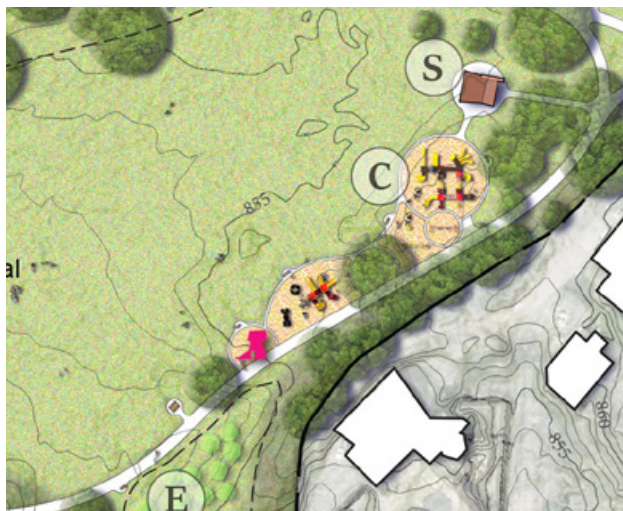


Figure 7.38. Main Playground

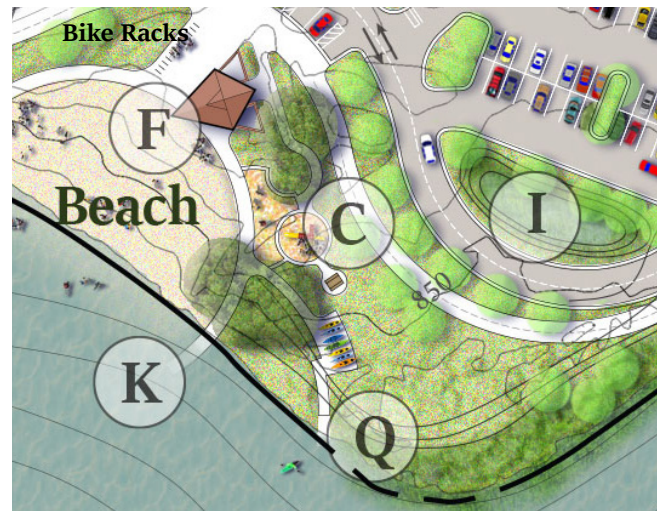


Figure 7.39. Beach Playground



## REVIEW AND INPUT ON THE DRAFT FINAL MASTER PLAN

In Phase III the effects of COVID-19 pandemic continued to keep public engagement virtual. The draft final master plan was presented to the community at a public meeting and, as with the concepts, was accompanied by an online public survey. The survey was open for two weeks following the Resident Resource and Community Partner Advisory Groups meeting and accompanied the official public comment period on the draft, which extended the opportunity to those interested in doing so to provide comments via email as well. The stakeholder groups and City of Madison interagency staff also provided feedback on the draft plan and it was shared at the City's Development Assistance Team (DAT) for further agency review and feedback. Appearance at the DAT session led to informational presentations at the Urban Design Commission (UDC) and South Metropolitan Planning Council (SMPC) as well. Outreach specific to the focus groups was challenged by a lack of ongoing programming due to COVID-19. Analysis of the survey responses, however, showed that the respondents were representative of the focus groups.

Several design decisions were controversial to neighbors of the park and several formal statements regarding neighborhood resident positions on the plan were received and are included in this report. It is important to note that while neighborhood input was valued and that many changes appearing in the final master plan are reflective of that input, Vilas Park is a community park with a wide service area, which also needed to be considered when developing the draft final plan. The following pages are a summary of feedback received from the community and interagency staff.

## STAKEHOLDERS

### **Community Partners Advisory Group and Resident Resource Group**

The public engagement kickoff to review the concept plans was a combined meeting of the Community Partners Advisory Group (CPAG) and the Resident Resource Group (RRG), which was held virtually via Zoom on October 15, 2020. Participants were provided with the presentation prior to the meeting and asked to come to the meeting with specific questions about the draft plan. A completed response and chat transcript can be found in Appendix B.

Takeaways from the meeting included:

- Additional analysis of traffic and parking needs was desired relative to the proposed changes in the North parking lots and the intersection of Drake Street and Campbell Street.
- Participants felt that too much space near the north entrance was dedicated to parking at the loss of a well-used open space.

- Participants felt that the area dedicated to natural areas was too high, specifically around the west side of the lagoon. A better balance of natural plantings and open lawn was desired for picnicking and recreation.
- Closure of Vilas Park Drive to through traffic was supported.
- Treatment and maintenance of the lagoon should be based on science and the ecological impacts on Lake Wingra and benefits to local fauna.
- Definition of the type and extent of natural areas shown on the plan should be included in the report.

### **Vilas Neighborhood Association Statement**

Below is an excerpt from the statement, which was submitted on May 3, 2020, by association president Sarah Buddohin on behalf of the Vilas Neighborhood Association. The full statement is available in Appendix B.

*“Thank you for providing this opportunity for public comment on the Draft Vilas Park Master Plan. The following is a statement of the Vilas Neighborhood Association on the draft plan, including comments and recommendations based on input from residents of the neighborhood we represent.*

*The VNA has been involved in the park planning process since its early days. We have two appointed representatives on the Resident Resource Group advising the plan who provided updates at our monthly VNA Council meetings, which neighbors are encouraged to attend. We have solicited input from our neighborhood on key points throughout the process. Our outreach and input have included hosting an in-person neighborhood discussion of issues relating to future of the park in January 2020, soliciting written comments from neighbors on the three design concepts presented in May, and hosting a virtual meeting on the draft plan on November 18, 2020, followed by an invitation to submit written comments. The results of our outreach have been shared with the park planners at each step.*

*This statement represents a consensus position of the neighborhood in areas where there is widespread agreement, based on response to the draft plan and backed up by results of our earlier outreach efforts. We have not taken a position on those issues where there is insufficient information or where opinion is divided and there is no widespread, general agreement. The absence of an express endorsement of or opposition to any particular feature of the plan should not be taken as implied support; it simply means that we are unable to take a position at this time.*

*There is much to like in the plan, and there are some significant features that warrant reconsideration. Our comments and recommendations fall into the following categories: (1) support for elements included in the Master Plan; (2) requests for changes to the draft plan; and (3) identification of issues where additional analysis is needed prior to making decisions about what to include in the final plan.”*

#### *(1) Support for Elements in the Draft Master Plan*

*The Vilas Neighborhood Association supports the following elements included in the draft Vilas Park Master Plan:*

- 1. Ending commuter and other vehicular through traffic on Vilas Park Drive*
- 2. Maintaining open, flexible use of green space.*
- 3. Improvements to pedestrian and bicyclist safety at the “pinch point” between Lake Wingra and the Zoo*



4. *Improving walkways that currently suffer from drainage problems*
5. *Retaining and expanding the Shoe playground*
6. *Creating a playground at the beach*
7. *Maintaining ice skating on the lagoon and dredging at least half of the lagoon if needed to improve ice quality and safety.*
8. *Fixing drainage problems throughout the park.*
9. *Retaining and improving the tennis courts.*
10. *Adding bicycle parking and a bus stop to provide alternative ways of accessing the park.*

(2) *Requested Changes to the Draft Master Plan*

*The Vilas Neighborhood Association recommends incorporating the following changes to the draft Vilas Park Master Plan:*

1. *Retain and improve the Van Buren Street playground*
2. *Remove the proposed parking lot expansion and small picnic shelter west of the tennis courts from the plan.*
3. *Remove the relocated north entry to the Park and the Zoo at Drake and Campbell Streets from the plan.*
4. *Remove the eastward expansion of the north parking lot from the plan.*
5. *Designate additional shoreline areas to be accessible for informal recreational uses.*

**South Randall Avenue Neighbors Statement**

Eleven property owners on the 500 block of South Randall Ave. co-authored a series of questions in reply to the draft plan. An excerpt of the statement is included below, and the full statement can be found in Appendix B.

*"We appreciate you taking the time to listen to our concerns, answer our questions and provide some clarification to the northeast corner of the Vilas Park Master Plan. We were left with some additional questions that we're hoping you can answer and help clarify regarding the North parking Lot and the emergency exit. We have also offered some parking solutions in order to distribute parking more equitably throughout the park.*

*Q1. Why does the North Lot by the zoo require a second access road but the south parking lot by the shelter has none? As we expressed, we believe the existing road should be maintained rather than a new exit placed in the middle of our street. Not only do we believe there are several safety concerns with adding an exit to our very narrow street, this new exit would mean a loss of valuable street parking.*

*Q2. What is the proposed capacity for the North Lot as there are conflicting numbers? The Decision Matrix & RRG/CPAG Q&A states 119 while the current draft plan indicates 123 (61+62). The RRG/CPAG Q&A indicates that this has been updated in presentation but we are not seeing it. Also, it is unclear if S. Randall Ave street parking counted as part of the total parking capacity of the North Area. If it is not included, can you share why?*

*Q3. Can the North Lot be expanded only to the west and additional parking be distributed more equitably throughout the park? Expansion of the East Wing in the North Lot eliminates most to all of the green space, which is the only buffer for S. Randall homes to the parking lot. All other adjacent homes to Vilas Park have substantial buffer zones and are not visible from much or most of the park. These homes are afforded a greater sense of separation and spaciousness. This green space is widely used by park and zoo goers*

*alike as it is shady, flat, dry and free of goose poop. We would encourage Parks to consider adding some picnic tables to this area. We ask that Parks consider reconfiguring the parking lots in other areas of Vilas Park in order to eliminate the expansion of the East Wing of North Lot and distribute the parking more equitably throughout the park. We have come up with a few solutions.*

*Solution 1. Expand west wing of north lot to 83 spots as shown in Concept C.*

*Per Concept C plan, this would maintain and support the wetland. This would bring the total at the north end to 159 spots, which is 10 shy of most current proposal BUT 15 more than currently exists.*

*Solution 2. Maintain hockey rinks where they are currently located and pave them so they could double as parking lots during peak months. In winter, these parking lots may be flooded to create two adjacent hockey rinks. In summer, more parking for beach and lake use. Here are a few websites that discuss turning hard surfaces into ice rinks.*

*Solution 3. Expand the South end parking lot "P" near the shelter described in Concept B and would add 111 spots. This is an additional 13 spots compared to most current proposed plan.*

*Q4. It was mentioned that Parks doesn't design parking for peak demand? If that's the case, how is parking demand measured and quantified?*

*Q5. Has City Parks had discussions with Madison Metro regarding the possibility of a bus route on Drake Street?*

*Q6. We are concerned about what feels like a lack of transparency in how information is gathered from the community and how decisions are made. The first survey failed to include questions about parking and removing green space. You also indicated that there is no current plan to send out another survey. We feel strongly that a survey should be done related to parking and the removal of the greenspace along S. Randall Ave. Furthermore, we'd like to better understand what process (exactly) will be used to decide on details (how many parking stalls, what trees need to be lost, what vegetation will be planted to provide screening for neighbors, what signage will be used, etc.) for now and later on (a few/several years from now), when implementation is being planned and budgeted?*

*Q7. Equity has been mentioned several times in conversations regarding VPMP. It was brought up again in conjunction with our concerns to the expanded parking lot. Can you define equity as it relates to the VPMP? Can you elaborate on how equity is being assessed? What areas have been identified as inequitable and what steps are being put in place to address inequity in these identified areas?*

*Thank you for help in addressing our additional questions.*

*Sincerely,*

*Patrick Corcoran 509 S. Randall*

*Cindy Schlichte & Alex Wong, 513 S. Randall*

*Tim & Eileen Storm, 517 S. Randall*

*Bob Andresen, 521 S. Randall*

*Rhonda Lanford, 529 S. Randall*

*Taralinda & Dale Willis, 533 S. Randall*

*Karolyn & Jason Pionek, 537 S. Randall*

*Jaime Kulbel, 541 & 543 S. Randall*

*Kelli & Erich Palecek, 545 S. Randall*

*Peter & Deena Williams, 547 S. Randall*

*Sharon Hutchinson, 551 S. Randall*

## FOCUS GROUPS



## Accessibility

Email correspondence with Keith Wanta, from Access to Independence, provided the following suggestions:

*"1. First and foremost, make ALL handicap parking space [accessible aisle] width 96". It's a huge headache to get parked in and can't get into your own vehicle because someone is ignorant of what a [accessible aisle] is!!!"*

*"2. Crosswalks are in these maps? These are very difficult for blind or visually impaired individuals. We'll probably need to have a really clear crosswalk indicator on the ground (bumps for their cane) or something a visually impaired person recognizes easily. They are terrified of them! That and stairs. I'm wondering if they have a standard for them? Spoke to some blind friends of mine on Facebook. I think it'll be important to implement an APS at each crosswalk and some kind of map for blind people. If you'd like to discuss the APS options and map more, we should set up a call together."*

## Online Survey

A copy of the online public survey was distributed by the Badger Rock Neighborhood Center. The survey was available in both English and Spanish. Despite several attempts to promote the survey only two responses were received. These were combined with the overall survey results due to the small sample size.

The effort to reach underrepresented residents has been challenging with social distancing regulations in place. In the current phase of the project, this effort has continued to focus on the neighborhood centers known to serve those residents, including the Badger Rock Neighborhood Center and Bayview Community Center. We sought input by promoting the online survey to and through each community center. Badger Rock staff were responsive to our outreach and posted the information to their social media page, resulting in several survey responses. Bayview staff had indicated earlier this year that they were operating with limited client contacts and reduced staffing. They were not responsive to contacts seeking help promoting the survey in this phase.

## **INTERAGENCY REGULATORY MEETINGS**

### **City of Madison Interagency Staff**

In September 2020, representatives from City of Madison Traffic Engineering, Parks Division, Engineering and Planning Divisions, as well as representatives from the UW Arboretum, Henry Vilas Zoo and Madison Metro Transit met to review and provide feedback on the draft master plan. Interagency staff provided insights on functionality and maintenance requirements of potential changes to the park and how best to balance wants and needs. Key takeaways from this meeting are summarized below by topic.

### Metro Transit

- Possible shuttle service to park (south zoo entrance) from existing routes/stops, future bus rapid transit, etc.
- Bus drop-off must accommodate bus passing. Buses prefer to not cross pedestrian travel areas.
- Shortest route possible needed to make route feasible.
- Look at revising east lot for turnaround.

- Consider routing of Erin -> Orchard -> Vilas Park Drive/Wingra Creek Drive.
- Drake St. and Grant St. as a possible bus route. Sidewalk on south side of Grant and Drake needed for wheelchair access.

#### Henry Vilas Zoo

- Desires an emergency access to east onto Randall as shown in draft.
- 800,000 + visitors in 2019, parking is a necessity to manage congestion in neighborhoods.
- New main entry alignment to the north is consistent with master plan. Timeline for improvement is within the next 5 years.
- Semi-deliveries to south-west parking lot.
- Zoo will likely maintain 2 public entrances for public safety and access control.
- South entrance is only closed during current COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Stormwater

What are allowable treatment types – detention basins, catch basins, subsurface treatment, etc.?

- [https://www.cityofmadison.com/engineering/documents/MGO37\\_changes\\_2-10.pdf](https://www.cityofmadison.com/engineering/documents/MGO37_changes_2-10.pdf) - see link for current ordinances and stormwater requirements.
- Target improvements at 80% TMDL [total maximum daily load] reduction as if it were all new development (60% required for redevelopment).
- Treatment/bio-retention will be required – plan will not show specific treatment options other than approximate areas dedicated to surface treatment. Recreational facilities (basketball courts, park shelters etc) count towards the added impervious surface, but since they have such low TSS loading, it usually only makes sense to treat the parking lot.

Other thoughts to consider closer to the actual implementation of the master plan:

- A creative way to help reach TSS goals could be a Delaware skimmer and sediment traps.
- Depending on construction phasing: if dredging the lagoons is part of the project, then plan to use lagoons as a treatment area. If no dredging, then plans should identify space to control erosion and protect the lagoons as a separate system.

#### Traffic

Feasibility of relocating entry on Drake St. at Campbell St.?

- Not part of original scope, but conceptual operational analysis possibly desired.
- Signage potentially needed to keep traffic from going north on Campbell.
- Width of Drake should allow for appropriate turn lane and possible central median.
- 5 point intersection increases congestion, as it is not efficient for traffic movement.
- Drake is not at design capacity and could allow for bike lanes.
- Impact of traffic on Grant St. is of more concern than Drake St. City of Madison Traffic Engineering can analyze earlier tube counts vs. known neighborhood streets data and estimate impacts if Vilas Park Drive were to be closed.

Actual feasibility of closing Vilas Park Drive to through traffic?

- If desired, will need to know what the process and timeframe is for an actual closure – i.e., study, review, approvals.
- Additional public input possibly required.
- Main concern is about emergency access – EMS/PD has confirmed Vilas Park drive is NOT a necessary access route.



- Volume (trip count) on Vilas Park Dr. is limited, diverting traffic should have a limited effect on the surrounding road network.
- From a Parks standpoint, either terminating through-traffic or improving a section of Vilas Park Dr. would both mitigate traffic-pedestrian conflicts.

### **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources**

The project team corresponded with the WI DNR via email. Below are comments from DNR staff regarding the lagoon that the project team will address in the final master plan or master plan report:

- *"Our conversation centered around the desired open water scenario on the west lagoon, where an open water condition is desirable for fishing and paddling access but I am not as familiar as Sue w/ the current plant status or species in there. From their plans/ goals, we discussed dredging depths to get to a 'doughnut hole' look with a littoral rim vegetation with a deeper middle area where it is too deep for plants to get sunlight and dominate, what depth would you recommend to achieve a true open water with few plants? I suggested 6 ft minimum for the west lagoon. The current plan indicates keeping the eastern portion largely as -is with minimal dredging, allowing emergent plants but managing for ice skating access. "*
- *"quiet lagoons like these are very difficult to manage for plants anywhere. Eurasian watermilfoil can grow in very deep water and is quite tolerant of turbidity – this seems to be one of this species' advantages as an aggressive weed.*
- *"In addition to EWM being a surface-matting, aggressive species, our native coontail is also turbidity tolerant, and lacking true roots, tends to show dense surface matting. Both of these species do very well in quiet, nutrient rich waters like the Vilas lagoons. In short, I would not expect open water in the summer and fall in the Vilas lagoons, despite dredging as deep as possible. If open water is a high priority, you should expect the necessity of ongoing plant management techniques, all of which are publicly visible, often controversial, and never cheap. I am certainly willing to sit down and discuss the pros and cons of various methods, and what could possibly be helpful in this setting."*

### **COMMUNITY INPUT MEETING (#3)**

On November 16, 2020, a meeting was held via Zoom to publicly present the draft final master plan and provide time for discussion. About 160 participants registered for the meeting. The meeting began with a presentation, which provided a description of the draft plan broken down by the key design elements:

- Traffic on Vilas Park Drive
- Location of the main park shelter
- Parking layout
- Open space and recreation opportunities
- Playground location
- Lagoon (and ice skating) management

Numerous individuals spoke or submitted comments expressing a desire to omit or request further study of

the proposed entrance at Drake Street and Campbell Street. Comments included:

- *"Concern about the Campbell Street entrance pushing traffic around the Bear Mound Park. Narrow street and sidewalks with families walking down the road and cars moving in the wrong direction on the one-way circle. Safety issues."*
- *" Could cars exiting the park per the new design be required to turn left or right onto Drake only (and not cross straight onto Campbell)."*
- *"The traffic problems at the current zoo entrance are not a function of folks turning into the zoo, its cars rolling through straight on Drake St"*

Additionally, several participants expressed concern that additional options for the entrance had not been presented publicly. During the meeting, an argument was also made for maintaining a second playground in the location of the existing western playground. Some referenced the ability to walk to the playground from the neighborhood or fond memories of their children running across the meadow between the two playgrounds.

Other comments included:

- *"I would like to see the drive retained. I know many elderly people who park along the drive to enjoy the park.... I see it as an accessibility issue as well as a way to enjoy the shore and offer greater equity in essence since it would keep open the option to fish alongside your gear etc."*
- *"Our park represents one of the few where you can drive up, park next to a lake, get out and enjoy sitting lakeside (between bridge and beach). Especially important for those with accessibility issues. Proposed plan eliminates that feature"*
- *"A BCycle station at the Zoo entrance would encourage bike visitors and reduce car traffic."*
- *"The BCycle station at the entrance to the Arboretum is heavily used; often with all bikes out. A Bicycle Station at both entrances to the Zoo (when both are open again) would be well used. And/or a Bicycle station at the Beach."*
- *"have you reached out to St Mary's about a public-private partnership for parking rather than having so much of the park itself lost to parking?"*
- *"With the proposed mutli-use path and drive for cars to/from the shelter, won't there be access for people to park and then access the lake shore with wheel chairs, walkers, on foot, etc. They won't be able to drive all the way through any more, but design of walkways and dedicated handicap parking slots could still provide access to the lakeshore for those who need it. Perhaps even improved access."*
- *"Please plant trees between soccer courts to provide shade."*
- *"Will the tennis leagues be able to play with less than 6 courts?"*
- *"I think creating separate pickle ball courts is a poor use of space. Pickle ball can be played on tennis courts. Tennis cannot be played on pickle ball courts."*



- *"thank you for prioritizing preservation of the important mound group and supporting indigenous reparations and cultural reclamation."*
- *"I understand the issue with the mounds, but what about the side of the fountain? There was a comment that the play ground degrades the mounds. But there is people playing frisbee and drinking and the latter would certainly increase without the playground."*

## ONLINE PUBLIC SURVEY

Following the Community Information Meeting, from November 16, 2020 to December 4, 2020, a public survey was available through a link posted on the City of Madison Parks Division's Vilas Park Master Plan Project website. The distribution of the survey link occurred through postings on City social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter), as a City of Madison website news item<sup>1</sup> and during the community and stakeholder group meetings. Additionally, the survey was shared through the Badger Rock Neighborhood Center's social media. A Spanish language version of the survey was also made available. A total of 298 responses were received to the survey, 297 to the English version and one to the Spanish.

The survey presented short descriptions of the draft final plan's design to provide context to respondents who may not have participated in previous project meetings or surveys. The survey then asked respondents to select if they agreed that the draft plan either met an objective ("Yes"), did not meet an objective ("No"), or were "Unsure" of the plans ability to satisfy the stated goal. The survey results are summarized below. The full results can be found in Appendix B.

Demographic information provided by respondents suggests that the most common survey taker was between 30-39 years old (24.7%), consistent with responses to the concept survey completed during Phase II of the project, but not a direct reflection of the City of Madison demographics. According to Data USA, the highest percentage of Madison residents are between 18-24 years of age (see Figure 7.40)<sup>2</sup>. Although the relative percentages of age groups from the survey did not correlate exactly to Madison's numbers, the survey was able to obtain input from a broad range of ages, from persons 10 or younger up to 70 or older (Figure 7.41).

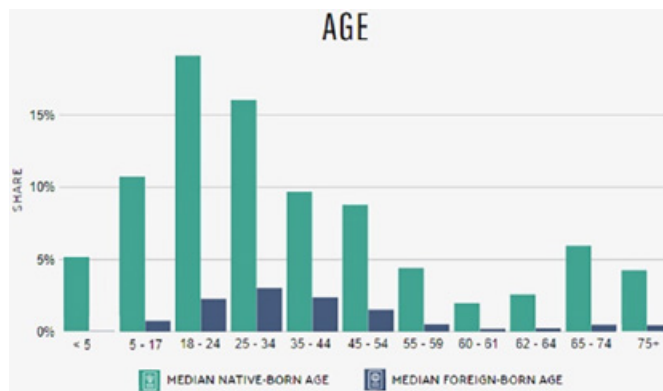


Figure 7.40. Data USA City of Madison Demographics

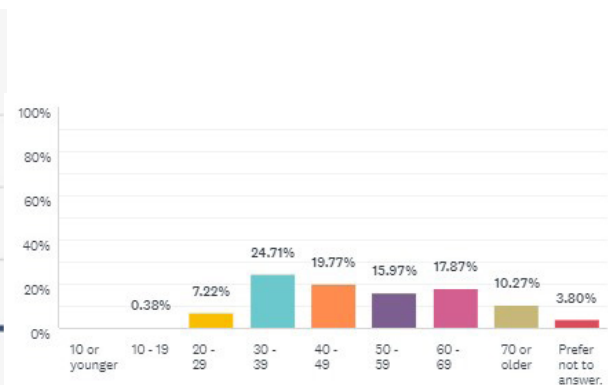


Figure 7.41. Public Survey Respondents by Age

1 <https://www.cityofmadison.com/calendar/vilas-park-community-input-meeting-3>

2 <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/madison-wi/#demographics-2017>



Survey respondents were also asked to identify their race/ethnicity and also their neighborhood of residence (Figures 7.42 and 7.43). Eighteen respondents (7%) identified as something other than “White/Caucasian” or “Prefer not to Answer.” Seven respondents (3%) indicated the 53713 zip code as home, which has a lower household income and higher minority resident profile than other areas. Review of responses from these stakeholder subsets shows a wide variety of interests and perspectives. Among these responses, the majority support the various design directions, while disagreements or critiques are consistent with others heard from the full sample of stakeholders, including preferences for more playgrounds, less on-site parking, and keeping the status quo on the number of tennis courts.

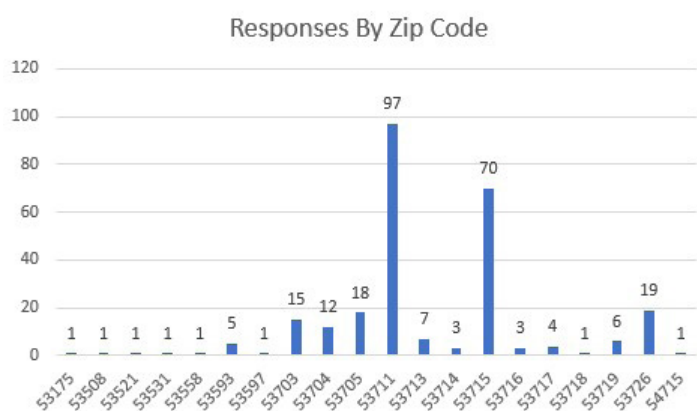


Figure 7.42. Responses by Zip Code

49	Vilas
45	Greenbush
40	Dudgeon-Monroe
17	Regent
12	Bay Creek
6	Westmorland
5	Sunset Village
4	Midvale Heights
3	Nakoma
3	University Heights

Figure 7.43. Top 10 Neighborhoods by # of Responses

Residents from neighborhoods surrounding Vilas Park, which include the Greenbush and Vilas neighborhoods as well as the Dudgeon-Monroe neighborhood, made up 54.5% of the survey responses. This is notable as these three neighborhoods also were represented within the Resident Resource Group stakeholder meetings, providing them with additional access to the planning process.

Question 1 (Responses = 295): "Community responses across all platforms (public survey, stakeholders, focus groups) preferred the option to remove Vilas Park Drive as a vehicular thoroughfare. The plan puts emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle circulation along the Lake Wingra shoreline and lagoon. The draft final master plan proposes a multi-use path connection to replace Vilas Park Drive." The question asked : "Do you feel the draft final master plan has accomplished the goal of reducing vehicular traffic within the park and provided better pedestrian and bicycle amenities?"

Respondents strongly agreed that the Draft Master Plan met the stated goal. About 82% of respondents answered "Yes," 7.8% chose "No" and 9.8% were "Unsure" (Figure 7.44). When viewed by geography, the surrounding neighborhoods (Vilas, Greenbush and Dudgeon-Monroe) were 10% less likely to agree with the plan. The surrounding neighborhoods responded 77% - Yes, 13% - No, and 10% - Unsure.

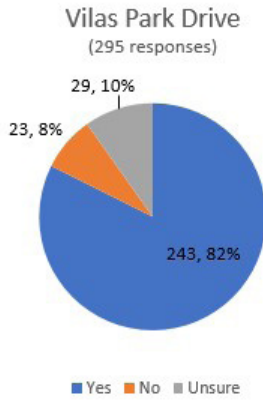


Figure 7.44. Public Survey Question 1 Results

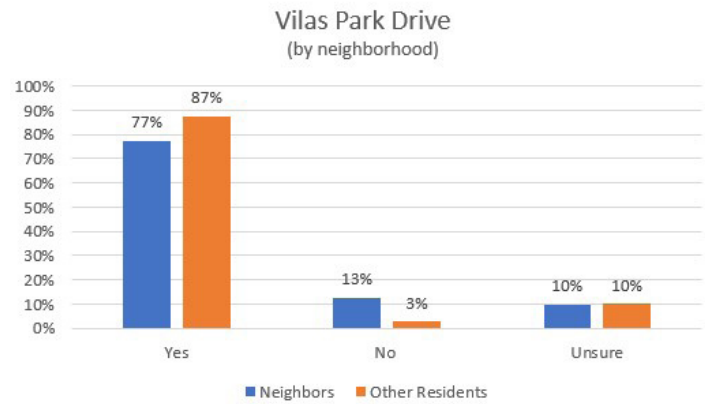


Figure 7.45. Public Survey Question 1 Results by Neighborhood

Comments (66) submitted to the question included:

- *"Do not expand parking lot in zoo area - do not live entrance so can keep street parking on Drake. Keep northern section parking lot next to tennis courts the same size."*
- *"I also appreciate that you can still access the shelters by car, which is important for disability accessibility."*
- *"In some ways yes, the plan reduces vehicular traffic such as restricting commuter traffic, however, I think the access road to the new shelter should be limited in use similar to Garner Park and that parking for winter activities for the shelter can be at the south zoo lot when zoo use is down. The south zoo lot is less than 1/4 mile away and according to the City of Madison that is a "walkable distance" for bus stops so why not here? That way kids using the bridge path do not have to cross through an area with motor vehicles."*
- *"While there is definitely improved pedestrian and bicycle amenities, the draft master plan closes Vilas Park Drive and then re-introduces vehicular traffic through the park with the proposed location of the shelter. Move the shelter to the other side of the bridge to reduce vehicular traffic and prevent a serious impediment to pedestrian safety and enjoyment of the park (as walking and enjoying nature/views has consistently been important and consistent public input responses)."*

Question 2 (Responses = 288): "The proposed main shelter is located to support the desire for maintaining both lagoon and land rink skating. Amenities such as a community meeting room, restrooms, and covered picnic table area are also well served at this location. The addition of two covered, open-sided picnic shelters was identified in public comment and supported by the high demand within the Park system." The question asked : "Do the proposed shelter facilities meet the needs of each part of the park?"

Responses were heavily in support of the placement of shelters within the park: 79.2% of respondents said they agreed with the stated objective, 8.3% chose "No" and 12.5% were "Unsure" (Figure 7.46). Similar to Question 1, the respondent's neighborhood did not significantly affect the survey results. The surrounding neighborhoods responded 75% - Yes, 9% - No, and 16% - Unsure (Figure 7.47).



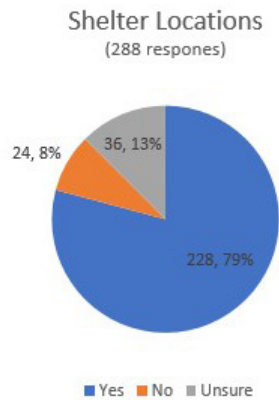


Figure 7.46. Public Survey Question 2 Results

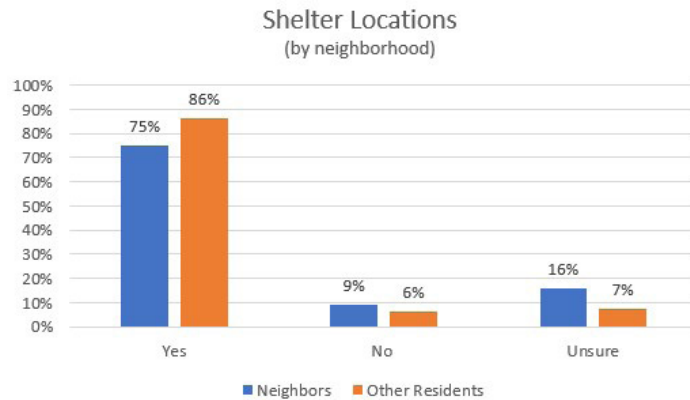


Figure 7.47. Public Survey Question 2 Results by Neighborhood

Comments (60) submitted to the question included:

- *"I think so, yes. I do not think the shelter amenities have to be at all fancy - they can be very basic in terms of amenities and still achieve their function."*
- *"The main shelter location may be better situated for ice skating if it is to the east of the pedestrian bridge along the lagoon. When the lagoon was maintained for ice skating around the island (and under the bridges) it was wonderful. The 2 proposed open-sided picnic shelters are not necessary in Vilas Park and will be a detriment to the current uses enjoyed there; we need more open space for recreation and flexible picnicking--these shelters will diminish the diverse uses currently enjoyed in the park"*
- *"Would prefer to also see restrooms on the north side of the lagoon - either near the courts or the zoo."*
- *"I think one of the main goals of having park land is to preserve natural, open/wooded areas within the city. Adding additional buildings to the park (the 2 new open sided shelters) works against this, and I think having just one main shelter is preferable."*
- *"The two new covered picnic shelters are unnecessary. The additional level of maintenance that seems like would be required does not seem justified. Do the shelters require concrete pads as well? I'd rather have additional playground space if you are going to add maintenance burden. The main shelter continues to make sense and supporting both the skating on the lagoon and the man-made rinks makes sense."*

Question 3 (Responses = 288): "The plan seeks to maintain adequate parking and facility access for all visitors while improving safety, predictability, and water quality protection (which will be enhanced with each new project). The question asked: "Does the plan provide an acceptable balance of those demands?"

Responses were generally in support of the parking layout: 56.4% of overall responses said they agreed with the stated objective, 26.2% chose "No" and 17.4% were "Unsure" (Figure 7.48). In the surrounding neighborhoods, responses were 51% - Yes, 33% - No, and 17% - Unsure. Responses from the remaining neighborhoods not surrounding the park were slightly more favorable: 64% - Yes, 19% - No, and 17% - Unsure (Figure 7.49).

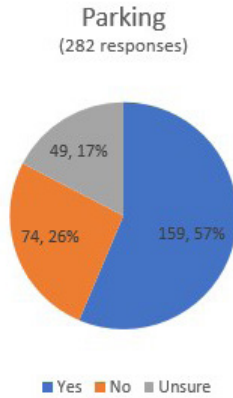


Figure 7.48. Public Survey Question 3 Results

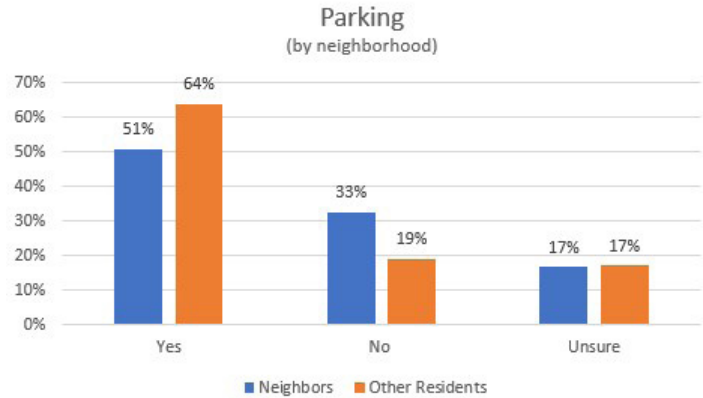


Figure 7.49. Public Survey Question 3 Results by Neighborhood

Comments (125) submitted to the question included:

- "It still seems like there is too much of the park dedicated to parking on the south side, I am particularly thinking of the small east section of parking lot C and wondering if that could be removed to provide for more room for people to enjoy the beach and surrounding shoreline."*
- "Green space is precious in the city, and even though the proposed number of parking spaces is slightly fewer than in the park today, that isn't the perception created by the plan. Larger parking lots make it look like there is more parking, even when there isn't, and that detracts from the park. Ideally, I would like to see a parking garage at the southeast entrance to the drive, in the lot across from the St. Mary's day care center. It would not visually dominate the park and could actually increase parking capacity. Even if cost prevents something like this in the near future, I think it would be better than expanding the surface lots. That said, I do think the bus access by the south Zoo entrance is a good idea, and so is some landscaping for the parking lots. I find it hard to answer the questions with a yes, no or unsure. I am not unsure, and I don't want to seem to endorse the plan in its entirety. Nor do I want to reject it. It has a mix of good things and things that I would like to see changed."*
- "The only issue I have is the loss of greenspace to the east of the beach, between the road and the lake. This area is very commonly used by people who want to be near the beach, but not at it, especially as an area for frisbee, catch, picnicking, and other activities that use larger space. Reducing the area of this spot would lessen enjoyment of the beach area more than I feel is acceptable."*
- "Please see the answer to question 1. The pedestrian experience in the park would be greatly improved by not placing a parking lot right at the end of the path with the pedestrian bridges, and it would be safer and more tranquil to have the possibility of walking through the park and to the shoreline multi-use path without having to worry about traffic or walk through a parking lot."*
- "Parking is a huge issue for neighbors, and it seems that more could be done to address neighbor's concerns. I live about 1/2 mile from the park and almost walk or bike to reach the park. I largely agree with adding more parking near the zoo at location A. However, the Master Plan has not made a strong case for re-aligning the entrance and exit at lot A. It may be that doing so makes a lot of sense and will enhance the park (and neighborhood). ...."*



- *"Concerned about the overall loss of parking as it's already difficult to find parking near the zoo when it gets busy."*
- *"I would still like to see less pavement and parking. I worry the large new parking lot near the beach will detract from the serene setting that existed."*

Question 4 (Responses = 280): "Public feedback was in support of flexible, open space for recreation consistent with the existing park uses. The plan will recommend (but does not show graphically) modification to improve drainage of the existing and proposed recreation areas. Additionally, maintenance of the existing court sports (tennis and basketball) and the addition of pickleball was supported by public comments. The youth focus group suggested foursquare be included as an additional amenity. The overall pavement area for the proposed courts is about the same as the existing park. The plan also shows multiple improvements for access to the lagoon and Lake Wingra for fishing. The existing accessible pier is maintained, with additional piers and access points (stone steps) added. Fishing is not limited to these areas; these are locations where ADA and other access improvements are focused." The question asked : "Do you feel the proposed uses are an appropriate mix of options for this park?"

Responses were heavily in support of the placement of shelters within the park: 77.5% of overall respondents said they agreed with the stated objective, 10.4% chose "No" and 12.1% were "Unsure" (Figure 7.50). The respondents neighborhood did not significantly affect the survey results. The surrounding neighborhoods responded 74% - Yes, 13% - No, and 13% - Unsure. Responses from the neighborhoods not surrounding the park were 83% - Yes, 5% - No, and 12% - Unsure (Figure 7.51).

Comments (78) submitted to the question included:

- *"Although it seems like the area between the shore and the multiuse path is quite narrow, thereby inhibiting people hanging out near the shoreline, for picnics, reading, hammocking, just taking in the view, etc. The beach area seems very small, similar to what it is currently. I would like to see the beach area expanded. I am wondering if the intent is to get rid of the second land ice rink and only have the lagoon and hockey rinks. I think that could be fine. However, I am thinking of 2 years ago when the lagoon ice was inconsistent and it was nice to have the second land ice rink. I wonder with warming winters, if it would be nice to keep the second land ice rink."*
- *"I'm occasionally use the existing softball field with my Senior League team, and we would like to maintain this field (improved, preferably) because it is centrally located to virtually our entire team."*
- *"I love the addition of foursquare (great idea!), however much of the current maintained open flexible recreational space is removed in the draft plan for natural areas and wetland/bog. These maintained open spaces that are proposed for removal are heavily used now for diverse forms of recreation such as fishing, picnicking cross country skiing, ice skating, hammocking, playing etc., Vilas Park is an active park, not an arboretum."*

Open Space and Recreation  
(280 responses)

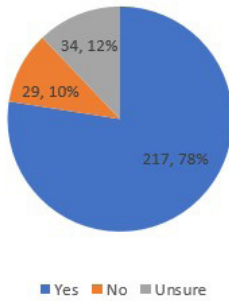


Figure 7.50. Public Survey Question 4 Results

Open Space and Recreation  
(by neighborhood)

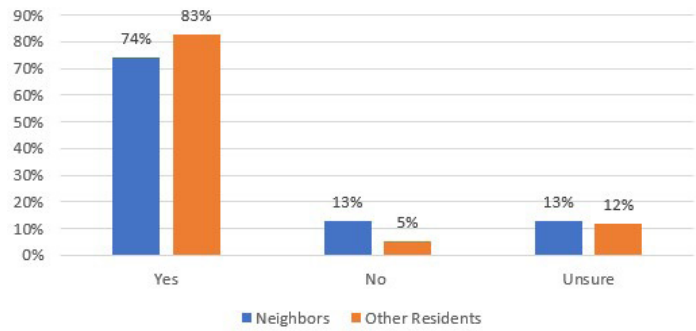


Figure 7.51. Public Survey Question 4 Results by Neighborhood

- *"I would like to see some of the large open space dedicated to a soccer field and/or volleyball courts."*
- *"Though I'd prefer that the basketball courts were removed. Also, there is no reason why the multi-purpose open space for recreation couldn't have more peripheral landscaping done to enhance the park experience. For example, flowering shrubs and trees could be added at the edges to add to color and fragrance. Sports enthusiasts could then enjoy playing or watching in shaded areas and smell the flowers of a bush as they enjoy watching the game. It could be better than just grass. Even the tennis court fences could have native vines or clematis growing on it. We need more botanical/horticultural planning integrated in with our park plans. Sports and good landscaping can and should be integrated to compliment each other and enhance the park-goers' holistic experience."*
- *"Would like to see parking added to hockey area instead of area A ... that lot could double as the hockey rink in winter."*

Question 5 (Responses = 276): "All of the existing playground equipment in Vilas Park is near the end of its life cycle. Main/Shoe Playground - The draft plan proposes the two playgrounds in the meadow be consolidated into one. This will allow for a single multi-faceted playground space with features designed for multi-age ranges and abilities. Less duplication of play features will enable Parks to provide a site with higher play value. Additionally, the design allows for the "Shoe" to remain in its current location. Dinosaur Playground (Near the intersection of Erin Street and Wingra Street) - Parks has made the determination, working in close consultation with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for The Ho-Chunk Nation, that the focus of the mound site at Vilas Park will be to preserve and honor the sacred land in accordance with established standards – and that in its role as current and future stewards of the mounds within the City of Madison Parks system, it will not be placing children’s play environments in proximity to mound sites. Beach Playground - As an outcome of public engagement, a playground near a shelter or restroom was desired. The addition of a playground at the beach allows for another type of play to be introduced into the beach area and the existing bathhouse provides the desired infrastructure without additional cost." The question asked : "Are proposed



playground locations acceptable to meet the needs of both neighborhood and regional visitors?"

Responses were in support of the placement of playgrounds within the park: 64.9% of responses said they agreed with the stated objective, 22.8% chose "No" and 12.3% were "Unsure" (Figure 7.52). More so than in previous questions, the respondents neighborhood was more likely to provided some variability in survey results. The surrounding neighborhoods were 17% less likely to feel the plan's approach to playgrounds was appropriate. Neighboring residents responded 56% - Yes, 31% - No, and 13% - Unsure. Responses from the neighborhoods not surrounding the park were 73% - Yes, 13% - No, and 14% - Unsure (Figure 7.53).

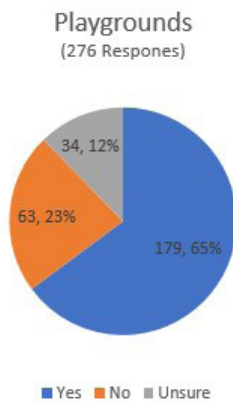


Figure 7.52. Public Survey Question 5 Results

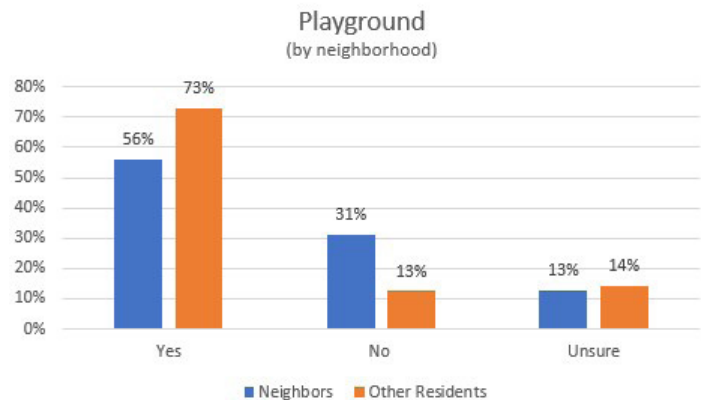


Figure 7.53. Public Survey Question 5 Results by Neighborhood

Comments (111) submitted to the question included:

- "I encourage the park to consider natural playgrounds. The preschool playground at the Aldo Leopold Nature Center could be a model, although designed for a wider age range of kids, especially older kids. I know there are other innovative playgrounds around the country that are able to keep kids outside and active much more than that of typical standard playgrounds that stop challenging and interesting kids when they are still in elementary school."
- "As with other things about the plan, I like some of what is proposed for playgrounds and not others. Adding a small playground near the beach and beach area picnicking is a good idea. The dinosaur park is distinctive and charming, but in this more culturally sensitive era, it is probably time to see it go. If feasible, perhaps the dinosaur climbing structure could be moved to one of the new playgrounds. Everybody loves the Shoe and I am glad to see it incorporated into the new playground plan. A little more play equipment in this area could also be an asset, given that it is so heavily used. Neither of the above changes should require elimination of the westernmost playground, which is also heavily used. This playground serves the neighborhood well and is also used by visitors from other parts of the city and region. It's location near the Vilas/Van Buren St. access to the park means that people can (and do) park their cars on Vilas Avenue and surrounding streets and walk the short distance to the park and playground."
- "The separate small playgrounds with different types of equipment have always been one of the main attractionS of Vilas Park. For parents of young children it is much better to have

*the small playground spaces where you can easily keep track of your children and allow them more of a free roaming experience. We used to make a day or half day excursion out of it by going from one playground to the other, getting a change of location and type of play as we moved. Each playground had its own character, and there were unique features (the train for young children, the balancing structures for older kids) that were unique. If you have kids of different ages parents can stay with the younger kids while letting older children go to the other playground "on their own" which is exciting for middle aged kids."*

- *"A greater respect for the mounds is a good move, and past due."*
- *"It would be nice to have another playground near the tennis/basketball courts"*
- *"I'm happy to see the the playgrounds more concentrated. I would love to see a large and semi enclosed dream park like Monona has. When my kids were young it was very stressful having them spread out and pulling towards different play areas across the park."*

Question 6 (Responses = 280): "The west section is proposed to be maintained as open water, which will require significant effort, including dredging and ongoing maintenance. The east portion of the lagoon is allowed to continue to transition to a wetland/bog type landscape. The plan will include upstream stormwater runoff treatment to help improve water quality in the lagoon. The specific transition and maintenance plan is to be determined. Additional research is required for full analysis of the proposed changes on the overall success of the lagoon, however, a recent analysis by UW-Madison Civil Engineering Capstone Students<sup>3</sup> found the proposal to be viable and an acceptable compromise between the cost of maintaining open water throughout the entire lagoon and letting the lagoon revert to a wetland or bog-like state." The question asked : "Is the treatment of the lagoon an acceptable balance of aesthetic, recreation, ecological, and cost factors?"

Responses were in support of the plan for the lagoon (68.6%) (Figure 7.54). However, a greater number were "Unsure" (21.5%) than other questions. Several comments submitted suggested respondents felt more data was need to make a determination. 9.8% said they did not feel the lagoon treatment was acceptable. The respondents neighborhood of residence did not significantly affect the survey results. The surrounding neighborhoods responded 68% - Yes, 21% - Unsure, and 11% - No, while the remaining responses were 75% - Yes, 21% - Unsure, and 5% - No (Figure 7.55).

Comments (94) submitted to the question included:

- *"In theory this sounds good but I would like more information on the impact to the wildlife in the area as well as potential issues that may arise from dredging and maintaining the lagoon area."*
- *"I like the idea of the eastern portion going back to a natural bog. I'm curious what this will look like and what habitat it will create."*
- *"I think it makes more sense to just let the entire lagoon transition back to wetlands. Maintaining open water seems wasteful and ecologically unsound. Dredging does a lot of*

<sup>3</sup> UW-Madison Dept. of Civil and Environmental Engineering CEE 578 - Senior Capstone Design - Improvements to Vilas Park



- damage to the ecosystem, and the ongoing maintenance required would be costly and detract from the natural beauty of the area. We have a bunch of open water in the lake right next door for fishing and boating, and there are many other locations (including the artificial rink) where people can skate in the winter. This area is obviously naturally inclined to be wetlands, and the ecological balance of the park will be much healthier when we let it transition back."
- "For aesthetic and recreational purposes, this is a good compromise, though it would be up to ecologists, and not engineers or the public, as to whether it is acceptable not to return the entire lagoon to a wetland state for the health of the ecosystem. With winters getting shorter and shorter due to climate change, there is less and less reason to keep the open water maintained for skating.."
  - "Don't know enough"
  - "I like the concept here, but can't speak to acceptable balance of cost factors without seeing what the cost elements are..."
  - "I like the idea of improving the ice quality and water quality of the lagoon. If dredging is the best way for that to happen, that's fine. Also think about climate adaption re: ice skating. Could native conifers be planted on the south side and west sides of the hockey rinks to provide shading from the late winter sun? Trees could also double as dispersed picnicking/hammocking spots in summer. This is a minor point, but as a professional ecologist, I strongly advise you to not call the undredged portion of the lagoon a "bog". Bogs rarely occur in southern Wisconsin, and then take 1000s of years to develop. If unmaintained, the area will eventually become a cat-tail marsh dominated by non-native species (hybrid cat-tail, Phragmites, etc.), and in the short term (possibly for the next 50-100 years), it will be continue to be filled with algae, pondweeds, and dense beds of Eurasian water milfoil, which I don't think is what most people want...."

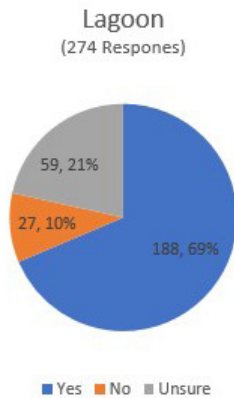


Figure 7.54. Public Survey Question 6 Results

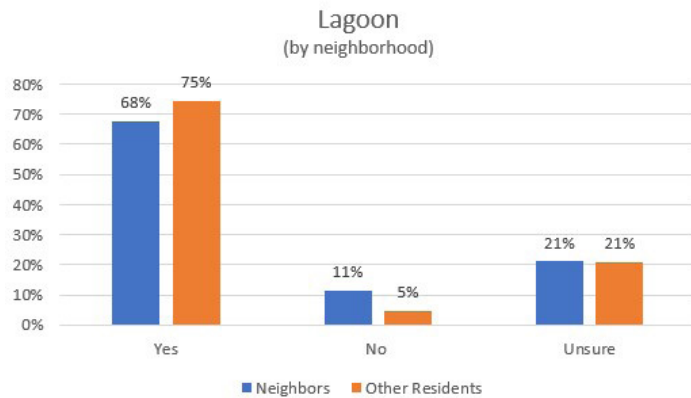


Figure 7.55. Public Survey Question 6 Results by Neighborhood

Overall, the responses to the survey showed a positive perception of the draft master plan, but identified several areas where revisions or more description were needed.

Key takeaways from the survey:

- Parking needs to be developed that ensures the lowest impact to existing open space and vegetation.
- Closure of Vilas Park Drive and replacing the road with a multi-use path is preferred.
- Additional information needs to be presented on the impacts of the new entrance at Campbell Street prior to implementation.
- Additional playgrounds are desired.
- The final plan should describe type and quality of vegetation in and around the lagoon and other natural areas.

## EMAIL AND PHONE COMMENTS

Following the community meetings, public comment was also accepted via email through December 4, 2020. Over 70 emails were received. The full emails from the public comment period can be found in Appendix B. A summary of the responses is included below.

Many of the comments submitted expressed concern regarding the proposed entrance at Drake Street and Campbell Street. Some had questions about the specific design of the proposed intersection, others expressed concerns about removal of trees and the potential impact of a perceived increase in traffic on Vilas Avenue, surrounding Bear Mound Park.

*"we strongly oppose the proposal to move the park entrance the corner of Campbell and Drake St and prefer to keep the entrance at the 4 way stop at Randall and Drake. Moving the entrance to Campbell street will undoubtedly increase the traffic on Campbell and around Bear Mound Park."*

*"Homes on Drake St. are not currently visible from much or most of the park, creating a sense of separation and spaciousness. How will the Campbell St. entrance affect the view from the Park? How wide will the opening be and how many trees will be cut down?"*

*"The 5-way intersection at Grant is horrible, and I am happy to see it gone. Without the driveway there, would the stop sign be retained? It is a rolling stop that nearly nobody stops at today. Without the driveway there, it will become moot. (Turning left from Garfield to Drake already is not often possible because of this). Similarly, it is unclear to pedestrians if they should cross on the Drake portion or further up. Coming from the south, this is compounded by missing sidewalks to the north of the intersection."*



*"I'm most concerned about the area near Drake Street. I oppose the proposed entrance/exit at Campbell Street, across from my house. The proposal is a rehash of 1970s proposal that was rejected. Collector streets vs. narrow, winding Campbell St. Concern for the Native American burials and mound in Bear Mound Park at Campbell and Vilas.*

- *We were told at the November 9 meeting that two of the large trees near the proposed entrance/exit could be saved. But we were not allowed to plant trees that near the corner; how would the park get away with it?*
- *Drake Street is for more than park users. A new park entrance would require removal of parking spaces used by delivery people and guests coming to the neighborhood. Our mail carrier has expressed opposition to the proposed road.*
- *Traffic: The proposed traffic patterns would mean more left turns and more backed-up traffic*
- *Cost"*

Some respondents offered suggestions for the Campbell Street entrance.

*"If the north entrance (and exit) "must" be moved to Campbell then*

- *that exit should allow only right or left turns--i.e. no through traffic across to Campbell as the grade and narrows are a definite pinch point.*
- *Similarly, traffic entering the intersection from Campbell should also be allowed only right or left turns*
- *This issue was mentioned in the plan--but without specifying these as possible mitigations."*

Other general comments:

*"One of the great things about the Lake Wingra shore is looking over towards the arboretum and seeing almost nothing but trees. Coming into Vilas Park one gets a spectacular view of mixed shade and open green space--with Wingra beyond! Let's keep it that way. Clearly there has been a lot of effort put into this plan--thank you all so much for working so hard for these beautiful gems."*

*"Grass areas need to be maintained in the Vilas Park Master plan -not taken away. These grass areas are multi- use locations for many activities, sports, and gatherings and are being obliterated by too many paths – whether concrete, porous, or woodchips. (uncertain of material) People and groups are very creative at using this grass space."*

## FINAL MASTER PLAN

The draft final plan was modified based on public and professional comments identified in this section to produce the final master plan. As outlined in earlier phases of the project, the development of the final master plan followed the following themes:

### MOBILITY AND SAFETY

- Improve pedestrian safety along the Vilas Park Drive corridor by considering the closure of Vilas Park Drive to through traffic and replace with a multi-use path.
- Design all new trails and park features to be accessible.

### ENVIRONMENT

- Protect the existing character of the park while improving balance between passive natural areas and active use areas. Decisions impacting existing trees, vegetation, shoreline and open space should be transparent and defensible.
- Improve lagoon water quality and shoreline access and aesthetics through habitat enhancement.
- Increase quality and size of natural areas within the park through the consolidation of pavement and high use areas.
- Address stormwater and drainage issues on paths and in recreation areas.

### COMMUNITY

- Continue engaging with neighborhoods and park users to discuss improvements and programming changes.
- Provide space for community events.
- Incorporate park history into design and programming.

### A PARK FOR EVERYONE

- Offer programmed active spaces for youth and adults.
- Consider allowing dogs in some areas of the park consistent with current Madison General Ordinances.
- Continue to offer amenities and activities

### CONNECTIVITY

- Improve the interconnection between Vilas Park and the City through increased multimodal transportation options (i.e. public transit, bike/pedestrian trails, bike rentals, canoe/kayak access).
- Improve existing connections and continue to expand pedestrian connections within the park and throughout the zoo.
- Improve wayfinding to alleviate traffic congestion during heavy traffic times.

A major challenge of this planning process has been balancing the needs and desires of neighbors of the park with other City of Madison residents and those who visit from outside of the City. The final master plan reflects the thousands of individual comments and feedback received throughout the planning process. Specific changes to the draft final master plan are outlined in the following section.









## MODIFICATIONS TO THE DRAFT MASTER PLAN

The following are specific changes to the draft master plan as presented at the community information meeting on November 16, 2020. Figure 7.56 shows the approximate location of the changed feature(s).

### I. Reduced parking capacity in north lot to retain additional green space.

Public comment, specifically from the Greenbush neighborhood advocated for the reduction in total parking in the north lot to preserve existing lawn space that functions as a picnic area and neighborhood open space. This change has a limited impact on the overall number of parking stalls. A total of approximately 30 stalls were removed from the draft master plan with this change.

### II. Added nature-based play area east of Vilas Ave. on west side of meadow.

Results of the survey and comments at the community meetings clarified the importance of the western playground to the community, specifically Vilas neighborhood residents. To minimize the duplication of play offerings in the proposed eastern playground (the shoe playground), a nature-themed play area is proposed to replace the existing play equipment in this location.

### III. Removed several of the proposed paths around the lagoon to reduce amount of impervious surface.

Public feedback suggested the plan had too many paths on the west side of the lagoon. The reduction and realignment of proposed paths still meet required accessibility guidelines. There was little support to maintain the extra paths, so removal was deemed inconsequential.

### IV. Reduced parking capacity and moved open shelter closer to tennis courts. Flipped location of tennis courts with pickleball courts. Added 'wall ball'/bounding board. Added call-out for sledding hill northwest of parking.

In response to public comment, the parking lot at the tennis courts was reduced from 40 to 36 stalls. This allows for additional open space at the bottom of the slope that runs parallel to the multi-use trail that is used by some as a sledding hill. The shelter is moved closer to the tennis courts which are flipped with the pickleball courts. A bounding board is added for wall ball.

### V. Reduced amount of space dedicated to "natural areas" west of lagoon, now shown as "maintained open space."

While many public comments were interested in sustainability and natural areas in the park, many felt the draft plan dedicated too much valuable open space to natural areas around the lagoon. The final plan maintains a buffer of native species around much of the perimeter of the lagoon to aid in stormwater management, reduce goose population and improve aesthetics. It was noted during the community and stakeholder meetings that the





Figure 7.56. Final Master Plan with changes to draft plan noted.

final species selection and extent of natural areas would be refined during construction. Any plantings would be maintained as outlined in the City's Natural Areas Management Plan.

VI. Recommending further study of lagoon management.

Responses to the online survey clearly identified a need to better describe the intent of the lagoon treatments identified in the draft master plan. While the scope of the master planning process did not include formal study of the lagoon's vegetation or hydrology, several basic assumptions can be made.

- The entire lagoon is unlikely to continue as clear, open water. Dredging will be required to make these improvements to water quality/clarity.
- Further study will be conducted at the time improvements are implemented. This may include a maintenance plan and environmental impact statement.
- All improvements will be permitted and approved by the WI DNR and Army Corps of Engineers, and follow all applicable City of Madison ordinances in place at the time of construction.

VII. Playground by beach was removed in favor of a nature-based play area per item II above.

Early in the planning process, the Parks Division identified the desire to consolidate the playground areas within Vilas Park to allow for reduced implementation and maintenance costs associated with new playgrounds. Strong opinion for maintaining two playgrounds within the meadow area meant the beach

playground would be removed to avoid duplication of similar amenities within the park, allowing the two proposed play areas to have maximum play value.

VIII. Possible Metro Transit stop shown at intersection of Orchard Street and Wingra Drive.

In keeping with the need to improve access for public transit, Metro suggested a possible stop at the corner of Orchard Street and Wingra Drive. Metro is unlikely to service the interior of the park due to the number and scale of pedestrian movements. This proposed stop, along with a potential stop at the corner of Drake Street and Randall Avenue, would be improvements to the current access at Erin Street and Mills Street. Any routes would need to be discussed and approved by Metro. At the time of the master planning process, Metro was undergoing a route analysis. Final determination of any stop would be made outside of the scope of this master plan.

An event or peak hours shuttle could also be considered and evaluated as part of future planning efforts. Additionally, the City has begun discussions with St. Mary's about possible use of a staff parking lot for weekend park and zoo visitors. No decision has been made at the time of this report.

IX. The Annie Stewart Fountain is shown in its original location. A separate planning effort is underway to determine the future of the fountain.

Despite the intent to show an option for the Annie Stewart fountain to be relocated, it was determined that any discussion about the future of the Annie Stewart fountain should remain the focus of specific planning efforts related to the fountain. The final master plan shows a placeholder at the Drake and Randall Avenue entry gateway for a future feature.

**COMMUNITY COMMENTS ON THE FINAL MASTER PLAN**

**COMMUNITY INPUT MEETING (#4)**

On February 4, 2021, a virtual meeting was held to publicly present the final park master plan and provide time for questions and comments. Registration to the meeting was requested by more than 135 people. The meeting began with a short presentation to review the plan for those who may not have participated in past meetings. The presentation included descriptions of the concepts broken down by the key design elements:

- Traffic on Vilas Park Drive
- Location of the main park shelter
- Parking layout
- Open space and recreation opportunities
- Playground location
- Lagoon (and ice skating) management



Participants were allowed three minutes each to speak during the meeting to provide comments or ask questions about the master plan. Some participants expressed concerns about the Campbell Street entrance including possible traffic leaving the park and heading north on Campbell Street into the narrow Vilas Avenue circle around Bear Mound Park. Others were more generally concerned about signage and logistics at the entrance. Some of the comments included:

*"Since there is so much neighborhood concern about increasing traffic on Campbell Street with the new north entrance, have you considered making Campbell Street one way or even closing it to Vilas Ave so that vehicles exiting or entering the park could only do so from Vilas Ave? Just a thought."*

*" Campbell Street entrance - there are also several medium/large oak trees there which it appears will be cut down."*

*"There is a lot of concern in the Vilas neighborhood about the proposed new entrance on Drake and Campbell. Could you talk about why you need to make that change."*

In addition to the Campbell Street entrance discussion, several participants expressed a desire for a playground to be shown at the beach as was in the draft master plan.

*"When removing the playground by the beach and not the natural playground on the west side of the park, did you consider equity at all? The people who access the fishing area and the beach from the south side of Madison are generally lower-income and more people of color than the neighborhood on the west side of the park (which will now have 2 playgrounds)"*

*"I want to second having a small playground by the beach - swing set and a slide - might be enough. This shouldn't really be much maintenance and would add a lot to the beach atmosphere."*

## EMAIL AND PHONE COMMENTS

Following the community meetings, public comment was also accepted via email and phone through February 18th, 2020. Forty-three emails were received, including statements from the Vilas Neighborhood Association, Greenbush Neighborhood Association and Friends of Lake Wingra. Comments from these three groups is discussed as part of the Resident Resource Group to which all are members. The full emails from the public comment period can be found in Appendix B. A summary of the responses is included below.

Numerous neighbors of the park wrote comments concerned about the proposed relocation of the park entrance to Drake Street at Campbell Street, some of their concerns included removal of mature vegetation along Drake Street, increased traffic on Campbell Street and ultimately Vilas Avenue, :

*" The proposed Campbell Street entrance should not be considered part of the Master Plan because not enough data is available to justify this change. A thorough traffic study, an environmental impact study, and more public forums need to be conducted before any recommendations regarding the entrance to the park can be made."*

*"The proposed relocation of the primary 'northern' park entrance to Drake/Campbell continues to demonstrate some key advantages: A) it would eliminate the awkward street layout of the 5-point Randall/Drake intersection and the clumsy Drake/Park/Grant/Garfield mash-up; B) it would place a new stop sign in the middle of the Drake Street speedway between Grant and Randall, currently hazardous for park and neighborhood pedestrians; and C) it would open more contiguous 'meadow' area to park users. We would hope that Traffic Engineering would retain the stop signs at Grant and Drake to reduce the "drift-through stop" on Grant/Drake, and enforce neighborhood level speed limits.*

*However as we heard, the relocation of the main park entrance to a four way intersection also increases neighbors' concern about added traffic to the Campbell/Vilas Bear Mound Park area. If this main entrance relocation moves ahead, we continue to suggest that Traffic Engineering (and Parks create an engineering solution to reduce traffic north on Campbell, such as making that single block of Campbell Street one-way south, building in large street bump-outs, or creating a right-turn only exit from the park to discourage cars from driving north on Campbell and adding traffic to that residential and historical area."*

Additionally, concerns were raised over the Emergency Access Route shown connecting from the parking lot to Randall Avenue. City of Madison Fire Department (MFD) identified that

*"The MFD has approved emergency access roads that are barely distinguishable as fire lanes... Secondary emergency access roads are rarely used but when they are needed they allow responders to do their jobs as effectively and efficiently as possible. The connection to S Randall was put on the plan as an option or placeholder by the design team. As the funding for the parking lot comes available, the MFD will work with Parks to fund the optimal location and connection for a second emergency access point. Fire lanes or emergency access points can be designed to prevent regular vehicle traffic, but may be used for pedestrian and bike access points and even walking paths for the neighborhood. The MFD has approved bollards, gates, rolled or mountable curbs and paddle gates to stop unauthorized traffic and allow emergency access."*

Several messages included support for the closure of Vilas park Drive, however one respondent did note the following:

*"On another subject, I would like to encourage a deeper look at how the park can be accessed by those who no longer can walk, bike or run through the park. Yes, it is wonderful to provide for those activities. But I have a 90 year old friend who loves nature and it is her joy to have me drive her into the park to watch the lake, look for birds and relax. Is there not a way to allow vehicular traffic by creating traffic bumps and calming devices, by posting "No Through Traffic" between the hours of 5 am and 9 am? Please try to find a way for those of us who do not qualify for handicapped stickers, those of us who are not fully mobile, but love nature, those of us who simply want to be refreshed by the tranquility of the park, to be able to access the park."*

## **COMMUNITY PARTNERS ADVISORY GROUP AND RESIDENT RESOURCE GROUP**

The end of public engagement came with a combined meeting of the Community Partners Advisory Group (CPAG) and the Resident Resource Group (RRG), which was held virtually via Zoom on February 18, 2020. Participants were provided with the presentation prior to the meeting and asked to come to the meeting with specific questions or comments regarding the final master plan. A full



summary of the meeting, as well as the full statements of the Greenbush and Vilas Neighborhood Associations can be found in Appendix B.

Takeaways from the meeting included:

- A desire for a statement in the master plan report regarding further study of the Campbell Street Entrance before any further planning or development.
- Participants desired a better understanding of the analysis of cultural resources such as burial mounds conducted as part of the master plan.
- Interest in the proposed management of the lagoon and how this is presented in the master plan Report. Similar to Campbell Street entrance, desire for note regarding what types of analysis would be conducted as part of future projects.
- Understanding of the trail types and materials proposed.

The Greenbush and Vilas Neighborhood Associations as well as the Friends of Lake Wingra provided formal statements as part of their membership in the Resident Resource Group in representation of their respective memberships.

Selections from each statement are included below. The full statements can be found in Appendix B.

#### Friends of Lake Wingra

*"We strongly encourage flexibility in the interpretation of how park features get implemented. This comment is not in reference to the color of a shelter or the slope of the roof. It is in regards to the general process of how the design is influenced for different park features.*

*We acknowledge and appreciate that some components of the master plan have avoided language that puts "all the eggs in one basket." We would like to see this enhanced. For example, our understanding, from conversations with those in the community, is that further archaeological analysis is needed to inform respectful placement of certain park features. Based on the findings of these analyses, what is proposed in the final draft plan might not be possible without some major conflict. Will the plan offer guidance for if conflicts like this happen?*

*Similarly, the land surrounding Lake Wingra has a rich history. Contributions and recommendations from the HoChunk deserve public acknowledgment, consideration, and clear opportunities for the public to understand these recommendations and why they might be important. We feel this could be improved moving forward.*

*This recommendation originates from our December 2020 comments and we feel it deserves another mention. Spicing up the antiquated public engagement framework of input-output type of feedback and*

*decision making could allow for better discussions, conflict resolution, and consensus building between draft and final versions of designs."*

### Greenbush Neighborhood Association

*"Background and Rationale for GNA Statement on Wingra Overlook:*

*GNA asks that the Vilas Master Plan explicitly identify the need for flexibility in future options for the Wingra Overlook area. We are not comfortable with any implication that all decisions related to this part of the park incorporated into the plan are final, and we ask that the plan clearly stipulate that special circumstances exist which mean that these decisions are understood as tentative and specifically open to future amendment after much-needed further community engagement. In particular, GNA believes that, before implementation is considered and budgets are developed related to the Wingra Overlook part of Vilas Park, additional inclusive community engagement is needed that judiciously takes into consideration:*

- Protecting and honoring the mounds and the perspectives offered by the Ho-Chunk*
- Options for continued Greenbush Neighborhood access to a small, toddler-friendly play area*
- Decisions on the future of the Annie Stewart Memorial*

*Because we understand that this is a somewhat challenging request, we are providing relevant background and rationale here, organized in two categories:*

- 1. Special qualities of the Wingra Overlook and of Greenbush Neighborhood's relationship with it*
- 2. Limitations imposed by the park master planning process.*

*Limitations imposed by the park master planning process:*

*Greenbush residents have not been consistently provided sufficient and timely opportunity to engage collectively on key issues and to respond effectively to rapidly-changing and/or poorly communicated successive versions of plans and rationales for decisions. Such limitations are key reasons for our request that additional engagement opportunities be provided before long-term decisions on the Wingra Overlook are finalized. These process limitations are in part a result of the pandemic (which MSA and Parks acknowledge to have created special challenges in ensuring timely and effective communications) and in part due to the loss of Urban Assets (initially contracted to provide expertise in public engagement) from the project."*

### Vilas Neighborhood Association

*"The VNA continues to support the following elements included in the final draft master plan:*

- 1. Ending commuter and other vehicular through traffic on Vilas Park Drive.*
- 2. Maintaining open, flexible use of green space.*
- 3. Improvements for pedestrian and bicyclist safety.*
- 4. Retaining and expanding the Shoe playground*
- 5. Maintaining ice skating on the lagoon and dredging at least half of the lagoon, if needed to improve*



- water and ice quality and safety.*
6. *Fixing drainage problems throughout the park.*
  7. *Retaining and improving the tennis courts.*
  8. *Adding bicycle parking and a bus stop to provide alternative ways of accessing the park."*

Recommendations (descriptions have been omitted from this section of the report but can be found in the Appendix.)

*"The VNA recommends incorporating the following changes to the Vilas Park master plan:*

1. *Remove the relocated north entry to the Park and the Zoo at Drake and Campbell Streets from the plan.*
2. *Remove the proposed parking lot expansion and small picnic shelter west of the tennis courts from the plan in order to maintain flexible open space in and views of the water from this section of the park.*
3. *Create a playground near the beach, as included in the initial draft master plan.*
4. *Conduct a more thorough analysis of options for the lagoon before finalizing decisions about related park features.*
5. *Include language in the plan that provides flexibility about the location of proposed park features pending further analysis of the Park's potential archaeological and cultural value."*

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FINAL MASTER PLAN

The final master plan for Vilas park is a representation of 21 months of planning and design including: four community meetings, seven stakeholder meetings, online surveys, email comments, among others. City staff and State agencies provided input on regulatory and statutory requirements. In many cases, public comment drove the design by providing important perspectives on features that have worked well and areas that require improvement.

A planning process of this scale must seek to balance the needs and wants of neighboring residents, the larger community and outside visitors within environmental, regulatory and budgetary constraints. The ultimate goal of the master plan is creating a community park for all, regardless of age, race, gender and ability.

Recommendations for Vilas Park in response to site analysis, community engagement and regulatory agency feedback are listed in the following section. Type and scale of improvements or areas requiring further study are identified where possible.

### Vilas Park Drive Summary and Recommendations

One of the most popular suggested changes to Vilas Park was the closure of Vilas Park Drive through the vacation of the right-of-way from the historic park bridge near Edgewood Avenue to the east side of the lagoon. Removal of vehicular circulation and associated pavement from the core of the peninsula provides opportunity for reclaiming valuable lake frontage for park users. Pedestrian and bicycle circulation is maintained by the addition of a multi-use path with additional sidewalk to emphasize pedestrian safety.

- Close Vilas Park Drive to through traffic and vacate right-of-way, replacing roadway with a multi-use path.
- Public media campaign should precede closure to notify and educate the community about the intent and identify alternate routes.
- Permanent signage ("G") should direct park and zoo users to the appropriate entrances and parking areas.
- Maintain access to shelter for two-way traffic from the east.
- 12-ft wide multi-use path ("N") and 6-ft sidewalk should be paved for maximum versatility, accessibility and function as an emergency access route. Asphalt is the most cost effective solution but other materials, including permeable pavements could be considered.
- Accessible features such as piers ("J"), benches should be distributed to provided equal access from both the west (Edgewood Avenue) entrance and east (main park shelter/south zoo entrance).



Figure 7.56. Final Master Plan Vilas Park Drive and multi-use path

### North Park Entrance and Parking Summary and Recommendations

The Campbell Street Entrance Exit was a topic of much discussion and concern. The master plan includes this feature as the existing entry and exit do not meet current traffic design standards. However, prior to the proceeding with the design development for the new Vilas Park driveway, Parks and Traffic Engineering will complete an analysis regarding Drake Street/Randall Avenue and zoo and park traffic.

Preliminary assessment by City of Madison traffic engineering and MSA Professional Services suggested the existing right-of-way on Drake Street in both size and vehicle carrying capacity could accommodate the relocated entrance at Campbell Street. The purpose of the suggested realignment is to reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians by combining two atypical intersections (Drake Street at Randall Avenue and Drake Street at Grant Street) into a single controlled intersection at Campbell Street and Drake Street. The Greenbush and Vilas Neighborhood Associations requested further study effects of modified entrance on surrounding streets including Drake Street, Randall Avenue, Campbell Street, and Vilas Avenue. As this change would require modification to right-of-way outside of the park boundary, City of Madison Traffic Engineering would be involved in design and approval of any modifications.



- City of Madison Parks and Traffic Engineering to study the feasibility of the proposed entrance realignment, including traffic and environmental impacts. Surrounding neighborhoods to be provided results of any such study.
- Develop a public engagement plan to provide updates and community input as design is developed.
- Remove the park road and parking along the Drake Street boundary of the park, combine parking areas in a central location to maximize use and minimize pavement.
- Maintain an open green space along Randall Avenue.
- Incorporate integrated stormwater management with bioswales or other best management practices in the parking lot design.
- Improve the existing small wetland by expanding its size to accept pretreated stormwater from hardscapes and by landscaping it with native plant materials.
- Update park signs and improve wayfinding.
- Improve pedestrian crossings at Drake Street and Randall Avenue. If appropriate consider features such as Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) or Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB).
- Coordinate with Madison Arts Commission for a focal feature at the start of the pedestrian promenade.
- Suggest METRO provide bus service at Drake Street and Randall Avenue.



Figure 7.57. Existing North Parking Lot



Figure 7.58. Proposed North Parking Lot

## South Parking Lot and Beach Summary and Recommendations

The existing south lot serves both park users as well as those visiting the zoo. The design provides safe routes for pedestrians and bicycles, characteristics lacking from the existing park, particularly along the narrow portion of Vilas Park Drive south of the zoo.

- Suggest METRO provide bus service at Orchard Street and Wingra Drive.
- Redesign parking lot to include a school and tour bus drop off. Bus parking should continue to be off-site.
- Incorporate integrated stormwater management with bioswales or other best management practices in the parking lot design.
- Pedestrian safety through proper signage, crosswalks and traffic calming features.
- Improve accessibility at the beach.
- Renovate the existing bathhouse.



Figure 7.59. Character of existing meadow.

## Open Space and Active Recreation Summary and Recommendations

Maintaining the overall character of Vilas Park was broadly heard from all participants in the planning process. The park's variety of natural spaces and maintained open space provide a unique character and sense of place (Figure 7.59). The "Meadow" has been a core of the park since it's original design by O.C. Simonds and the multitude of recreation options it affords, both active and passive should be preserved.

- Consider adding drain tiles to the meadow to lessen standing water and wet areas in the maintained lawn area.
- Remove invasive species and maintain the understory of the woodland canopy with native plants.
- Lessen high maintenance lawn areas with a bordering prairie (Figure 7.60, also see Existing Conditions section for existing land cover).
- Establish native perennial planting in the lower and wetter areas between the courts and lagoon.











Figure 7.60. Map of landcover types, legend shown at right.

- Relocate the basketball court to the current tennis court location, reduce the number of tennis courts to four. Add pickle ball and four square in the remaining footprint of the existing tennis courts.
- Replace the basketball and tennis courts with appropriate subbase materials and adequate depth and cover with new pavement and colored top coating.
- Enlarge the parking lot to account for court use, the proposed open-air shelter and canoe/kayak launch.
- Add a path (crushed stone) that connects to the main paths and trails along the north side of the lagoon.
- Add picnicking opportunities.

#### LEGEND

25.83 Ac.	Maintained Open Space
13.43 Ac.	Natural Areas/Woodlands
6.63 Ac.	Wetlands Landscape
4.88 Ac.	Open Water
	Existing Trees
	Potential Trees
	Boardwalk
	Roadway or Parking
	Paved Path or Trail
	Gravel Trail



## Playground Summary and Recommendations

Playgrounds are ubiquitous to public parks and the need for engaging play spaces for children within the park is essential. Locations of playgrounds should provide for equitable access for all park users.

- Maintain the "Old Woman in the Shoe" play structure in its current location.
- Develop a combined, multi-faced play area adjacent to the "Shoe" in the location of the current eastern playground.
- Play equipment should be designed and located to develop age appropriate play spaces, equipment should be accessible to users of all physical and intellectual abilities.
- Provide shade, benches and other amenities near the playground.
- Remove the Dinosaur Playground in the "Wingra Overlook" area in compliance with the City's Mound management Plan as well as recommendation of the Ho-Chunk.



Figure 7.61. Old Lady in the Shoe



Figure 7.62. Nature-themed play area



Figure 7.63. Age appropriate play options

## Lagoon, Lake and Shoreline Summary and Recommendations

The Vilas lagoon, in its current format, was dug in the 1950s as part of an earlier master plan. Park's records indicate that it has not been dredged since the original installation. One goal of the 2021 master plan is to improve the water quality of the lagoon and maintain our ability to use some of the lagoon for ice skating. To achieve these goals, the plan provides recommendation for forebays, native planting treatment on the shoreline, and the dredging of the west pond and the naturalization of the east pond. These recommendations are based on the best available information. Parks will contract with a consultant specializing in water quality improvements for water bodies similar to the Vilas lagoon to further study options to improve water quality, and to determine the best management practices to preserve the lagoon for the future.

As the scope of a master plan is to provide a framework for improvements and maintenance, several questions remain regarding the future of the lagoon in Vilas Park. Analysis by UW-Madison Civil Engineering students<sup>4</sup> identified several scenarios including a similar blend of open water and marsh as shown in the master plan as well fully open water throughout the lagoon. The cost of maintaining open water in the full lagoon is likely outside of the available budget of the Parks Division, however future management techniques or community

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desire may alter the management plan. The proposed blend of open water and marsh provides recreation opportunity for canoeing and kayaking (Figure 7.64), fishing and winter skating or hockey. The proposed marsh would offer a variety of habitat for aquatic and species.

- Study ecological and water quality impacts of proposed lagoon management, including maintenance costs.
- Add wetland sedimentation forebays to collect runoff in the park and add an off-site stormwater discharge prior to the runoff entering the lagoon (Figure 7.65).
- Dredge lagoon to increase depth of open water, reducing the habitat for some invasive aquatic species.
- Continue active management of aquatic invasive species within the lagoon.
- Add access points such as stone steps or wood piers along the north side of the lagoon. Distribute locations for accessibility.
- Reduce the total area maintained as open water, east side of lagoon suggested to transition to marsh.
- Minimize turf grass at shoreline.



Figure 7.64. Example of kayak/canoe launch and native plantings along shoreline.



Figure 7.65. Example of a lagoon with forebays and native shoreline.



## Park Shelters Summary and Recommendations

Park shelters are often iconic representations of the overall character of a park. The future shelter in Vilas Park should provide this character while respecting the communities desire for a feature that blends into the landscape. Sustainable design and multi-purpose space are key to successful and lasting park facilities.

- Fully accessible facility (universal design).
- Facility must act as a warming shelter for skating and hockey in the winter.
- Provide a community meeting room.
- Consider views from shelter onto lagoon and lake and views from park to shelter
- Existing (main) shelter to remain in place while changes to Vilas Park Drive and multi-use path are developed. Allowing time for budgeting and community involvement.
- Add open-sided park shelters for picnicking and small gatherings, shelters should be placed to align with accessible routes.



Image Source: <https://www.mlaengineering.com/lewis-creek-visitor-center>

Figure 7.66. Possible shelter with large windows, indoor and outdoor spaces.



Image Source: <https://www.mlaengineering.com/lewis-creek-visitor-center>

Figure 7.67. Community room with large windows

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