Hartmeyer Natural Area Historical and Ecological Assets – In Support of Option C - Conservation

Please support Adding and Pursuing Option C – Conservation – in the Oscar Special Area Plan and other City planning so that the Alder authorized Appraisal and Assessment and City departments can fully explore this planning option including the environmental assets and potential funding and grants in collaboration with Dane County, Groundswell, and other possible funding and support partners, for purchase of the Hartmeyer Property as a City Nature Park for this and future generations to enjoy!

This Historical and Ecological Assets report was voluntarily prepared 02/09/2020 at the request of City Alder Syed Abbas by Paul Noeldner, Friends of Hartmeyer Natural Area Chair and Volunteer Parks Liaison Coordinator for Madison FUN Friends of Urban Nature, a partnership of Parks, Environmental and Friends groups to Help Connect Madison Area Communities and Kids with Urban Nature, contact info 136 Kensington Drive Maple Bluff WI 53704 608-698-0104 paul_noeldner@hotmail.com

The following information is based on personal observations and reports. Additional Historical and Ecological Review including a survey of ecological assets should be requested as part of the City Alders authorized property appraisal and assessment and other planning and procurement steps.

- **Honoring Historic Ownership** –
  - **Native Americans** reportedly had gardens in some of the upland areas of extensive wetlands on Madison's east and north side. This **First Nations history should be honored, for example some cities with Nature Parks feature Native American Gardens**.
  - The **Hartmeyer family** has owned the property and leased it to **Oscar Mayer** for the past 100 years while keeping most of the natural area intact. Oscar Mayer wells drew down the water table and for a time there were attempts to have **Little League ball diamonds** but elderly locals recall they were always wet. The water table has since rebounded and continues to rise with Climate Change increases in rainfall. This local **North Side history should be honored, for example park sculptures from old equipment and park murals**.
  - **Native Wisconsin Trees, Plants, Birds and Wildlife** have called the Hartmeyer Natural Area wetland and surrounding upland ecosystem home since the Ice Age and have evolved here over millenia to create symbiotic wetland ecosystems. This **Natural History should be honored, for example school kids could help make Nature Art Mural displays at the park entrance to educate the public about native plants and animals**.
- **Valuing Historic Wetlands** –
  - **Post Ice Age** maps show this area was a wetland waterway connecting Lake Mendota to Starkweather Creek and Lake Monona before the Tenney outlet became established.
  - **A 1906 map** ishows most of the east side was wetland. **This 30 acre remnant is the only large remaining wetland and upland ecosystem in the Oscar area not yet destroyed**
  - **An elderly neighborhood resident** recalls a wood plank walkway was required to cross the wetland where Commercial Ave runs today. The full 30 acres can be restored.
  - **Urban Wetlands are becoming rare and need extra protections!**
- **Saving Historic Oak Trees** –
  - Several large oak tree specimens with an estimated age of 200 plus years (pre-Civil War) remain standing
  - **These historic trees tell the history of this relatively untouched area from Native American to European Settlement to Today**

- **Historic Neighborhood and Business Interest and Support –**
    - **The Friends of Hartmeyer Natural** Area is a new grassroots effort with deep roots. **People living in nearby neighborhoods are passionate about saving this area.** One often hears stories about how **as a child they regretted the loss of open natural areas near their home**.
    - Interviews and conversations over the years with **Pollock Auto Body, Esquire Club** owners and staff, **Dental Clinic** owners and staff, **Chets Car Care** and other local businesses indicate a lot of enjoyment of having this large natural area near their businesses and support for saving it.
    - **The best observers and advocates of local Sandhill Cranes and other birds and wildlife are neighborhood and business people who regularly spend time nearby and grow to love 'their Cranes' and 'their Fox'.**
    - **Dane County Briarpatch** staff and residents love having the Hartmeyer Natural Area across the street and have helped over past years with cleanups and invasive plant removal facilitated by Paul Noeldner with Madison FUN, and enjoyed it so much they established regular Friday nature activities centered on Hartmeyer Natural Area. **This kind of exposure to helping nature is great for community building and their future.**
    - **People recognize the value of large natural areas in their neighborhoods**. **Realtors, homeowners and renters are certainly aware of and seek out the added value!**
- **Wooded Areas Help Create a Sanctuary** –
    - Clusters and tree lines of **Shagbark Hickory, Basswood, Black Cherry, Willow, Maples**
    - **These Upland Habitats provide food and shelter** for a variety of birds, insects, amphibians and other wildlife
    - **Wooded Areas help preserve a Large Quiet Sanctuary in the middle of urban activity**
- **Wetland Areas and Ephemeral Ponds In All 30 Acres Support Rich Biodiversity** –
    - **Native and Hybrid Cattails, Horsetail, Sedges**
    - A US Fish & Wildlife aerial map shows **large Emergent Wetland Plant areas extending from the year round wetland pond all the way over to the Oscar side rail corridor**
    - The presence of Horsetail in the wetland ditches along the Oscar side rail corridor, along with high amphibian populations in Spring in that area, point to the importance of preserving the whole 30 acres including the seasonal wetland pools and ecological habitat in the upland areas along the Oscar rail corridor not just the wetland pond area.
- **Upland Plants Provide a Pollinator Paradise**
    - **Milkweed Species** include **Whorled Milkweed** (very large stands in upland areas along the Oscar rail corridor) and observations reported of **Sullivant's (Prairie Milkweed) which is a Wisconsin Threatened species** and high value plant for Monarchs
    - While a survey of native upland plants remains to be done, most of the upland area is **relatively free of invasive woody plants** which **indicates high value for prairie plant preservation and restoration** without expensive woody invasives removal
- **Bird Species - 56 Species recorded in Cornell Lab of Ornithology eBird reports 2012 to 2019**
    - **Breeding Birds (territorial behavior/nesting/raising young)** include Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Mallard, Pied-billed Grebe, Mourning Dove, Chimney Swift, Sora, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo,

American Crow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling, House Finch, American Goldfinch, Song Sparrow, Baltimore Oriole, Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Cardinal, House Sparrow

- **Resident and Migratory Birds (feeding, taking shelter, social behavior)** include Northern Shoveler, Canvasback, Bufflehead, Least Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, American Woodcock, Ring-billed Gull, Turkey Vulture, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Cedar Waxwing, Purple Finch, Chipping Sparrow, Common Grackle, Dickcissel
- **Sandhill Cranes have nested in the Hartmeyer Natural Area every year for many years** and use the surrounding Upland Ecosystem as their primary foraging area. **The quality of this historic wetland and surrounding upland ecosystem is indicated by the fact that they successfully raised 3 Colts in one year, which is fairly uncommon.**
- **Bluebird Trail –** with permission from Oscar Mayer, Paul Noeldner has maintained and done weekly monitoring of Bluebird Boxes for a number of years with a **high success rate for Bluebird nesting especially by the Oak Opening and surrounding upland area**, the boxes have also been used by other native species including **Tree Swallows, House Wrens, and Black-capped Chickadees. These are great Nature Education tools!**
- **Wood Duck Houses** – about **20 male Wood Ducks** gather each spring behind the Dental Clinic and on average about **3 pairs breed in the area each year** with one or more pairs utilizing provided Wood Duck Houses (several females may lay eggs in one box) and natural nesting cavities in surrounding wooded area trees.
- **Prothonotary Warbler Box** – this rarely seen bright yellow bird is a **Wisconsin Species of Special Concern**, with guidance from UW and DNR Experts a Prothonotary box was installed in a stand of Willows in year round open water in an area that used to dry out each summer, and nest box observations indicated nesting occurred
- **Red-tailed Hawks –** a **pair of Red-tailed Hawks has used the Hartmeyer Natural Area as the center of their near Northside nesting and hunting range for many years**. Paul Noeldner helped the **Dane County Wildlife Center radio track Oscarina the female for about 3 years**, her favorite perches for hunting were the **upland area Oak Opening and upland area tree lines and the Cell Tower adjacent to the upland** behind the Ice Arena
- **Osprey** – a pair of Osprey were observed scouting the Cell Tower and making repeated landings last fall as a potential nesting site.

- **Mammal Species –**
  - **Fox –** there is a resident breeding pair with an active den for many years behind the Dental Clinic on North Sherman plus a second fox den nearby along the Commercial Avenue crossing rail corridor which is indicative of an extended fox family in residence according to UW Wildlife Ecology Professor David Drake
  - **Groundhogs – also called Woodchucks,** upland activity and burrows observed, their **extensive 60 foot multi-chamber burrows and mounds of disturbed earth improve water permeability and offer ecologically important foraging sites and shelter** for many other mammal, bird, insect, and amphibian species

- **Muskrats -** the wetland relative of the Groundhog, wetland activity observed, **marsh reed 'push-up' muskrat shelters create habitat diversity and provide foraging and nesting sites for waterfowl species, and muskrat shoreline burrows help increase biodiversity**, improve permeability and are ecologically important for other mammal, bird, insect, and amphibian species for foraging and shelter
- **Deer –** White-tailed Deer use secluded upland tree borders and habitat as a sanctuary for resting and travel through this area.
- **The Oscar rail corridor and Sherman rail corridor provide critical ecological greenway connections between Hartmeyer Natural Area and Tenney Park on the Isthmus, Maple Bluff Golf Course, Warner Park, Starkweather Creek and Cherokee Marsh.**
- **Many Other Small Mammals –** including Voles, Mice, Skunks, Opossum, Raccoon help create a biodiverse and interconnected ecosystem and also utilize the rail corridor connections.

- **Insect Species –**
  - **Monarchs and other Butterflies** – observed feeding on nectar and in larval stages, primarily in the upland areas where there are large stands. **The Wisconsin Monarch Collaborative, City of Madison and WI Pollinator Protection Task Force have set goals preserve and extend remaining natural areas with milkweed and other pollinator plants in urban areas as well as rural areas**
  - **Bees and Other Insects** – Bumblebees, Dragonflies, Lightning Bugs
  - Wetland larvae and adult insects attract large numbers of Swallows and amphibians that depend on them as a major food source and biotically help keep populations in check.
  - **This is Madison's largest near Northside Pollinator Garden and Rain Garden!**
- **Amphibian Species –**
  - **Chorus Frogs and other Frog Species** – Possibly the largest remaining population of Chorus frogs and other frogs on Madison's near Northside gather in wetland borders and ephemeral upland pools to sing and breed in Spring (they do not like to lay eggs in open water ponds where fish and other predators consume them). Park along Commercial and listen each Spring! This is a major 'Refugium' for these species.
  - **The entire 30 acres including the springtime ephemeral ponds and wet ditches along the Oscar rail corridor are critical for ecologically challenged amphibian populations**
  - **Snapping Turtles, Painted Turtlesand other Turtle Species** – This s a high value area for turtle species because **turtles dig their nests and lay their eggs in nearby uplands and prairie areas, not in the wetland area itself.**
  - **A contiguous urban natural area that has a wetland and safe access for turtles, frogs, salamanders and other amphibians to travel and lay eggs and forage in adjacent large upland areas without crossing any roads, is a big plus for preserving the whole 30 acre area intact as a Nature Sanctuary with low-impact human bike and walk access**

Water Quality and Infiltration Assets –

- **High Quality Wetland and Upland** – There is currently fairly limited urban area acreage runoff into this historic natural wetland and upland area.
  - City engineers have indicated they do not plan to introduce any additional storm sewer runoff into the area.

    - This is a Major Plus for saving the entire 30 acres as a conservation focused nature sanctuary and for successful preservation and restoration of high quality populations of native plants and wildlife at much lower cost than creating new ponds and wetlands to offset large areas of impervious development and redevelopment.
- **High Quality Infiltration Assets** - This area provides 30 Acres of direct rainfall infiltration at no cost to the City.
    - The upland areas can support deep rooted native plants that help increase infiltration; water stays on site without contributing to runoff and phosphorus and salt pollution into our lakes
    - **Preserving All 30 Acres helps the City offset the negative impacts on Madison's lakes from large areas of development and redevelopment in adjacent Northside areas**
    - **Preserving this 30 acre natural infiltration asset offers a large value to the City by where plans offer little or not room for on site ponds or infiltration areas.**
    - **Storm sewers and artificial retention ponds cannot offer equivalent ecological benefits to having a 30 acre intact thriving ecosystem**, not just water draining into subsoil through pervious surfaces or into a pipe that offers no ecological asset benefits to the city or to birds and wildlife
- **Building Up Not Out** – Development and redevelopment on surrounding areas is compatible with preservation of the 30 acre Hartmeyer Natural Area
- Building Up Not Out with more stories on existing residential and business properties that are already developed with impervious roofs, streets and surfaces offers the City the opportunity to have substantially more housing and businesses on existing footprints with the same or similar impervious roof and infrastructure profiles.
- **Building Up Not Out make sense because it avoids paving over and building on and reducing the infiltration benefits and ecological benefits of this existing 30 acre natural infiltration area.**

Carbon Sequestration Assets

- **30 Acres of Carbon Credits** – The 30 acre Hartmeyer Natural Area already provides the City with a large area of carbon sequestering trees and plants at very low taxpayer cost to the City.
    - **T**he Carbon Benefits for the City can be further improved by preserving and restoring populations of deep rooted native species and native trees in the Upland Areas.
    - **These Carbon Benefits to the City help offset the Carbon Costs of increased development, redevelopment, density and energy use in adjacent City plan areas.**

Thank You for considering and honoring these valuable Historical and Environmental Assets of the Hartmeyer Natural Area!

Please support including Option C – Conservation as one of the Oscar Special Area Plan options and in other City agency and Northside planning options.

Please support enabling City staff to explore opportunities in collaborations with Dane County and other partner groups to try and purchase the Hartmeyer property as a City of Madison Nature Park and Community Place Making Open Space.