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To: Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Comments on the Southwest Area Plan

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Hello Commissioners,

For many years, I've enjoyed visiting the valley in Elver Park that extends south to include the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. Preserving its scenic qualities should be a priority for Madison Parks and other agencies.

The steep topography with woods and prairie hillsides make it unique and one of Madison's most scenic landscapes, first proposed for park preservation in 1957. It is also Madison's gateway to a wealth of natural and scenic resources (Ice Age Trail; Driftless Area; Military Ridge and West Madison Bike Paths).

The Southwest Area Plan should recognize this as a regionally significant open space that continues beyond the Plan Area. Previously planned as the Ice Age Trail Junction Area and the Prairie Ridge Parkway, this valley was recognized as a regional asset in the 1991 Park and Open Space Plan and in subsequent Plans. Many of the proposed connections have been completed, but careful design and development is necessary to preserve and expand public user access and landscape views.

Changes and opportunities will occur with the Marty farm development: expansion of park and stormwater lands, and a new valley crossing by Raymond / Midtown Roads. Providing new access and viewing opportunities from public parks, trails, and street frontage should be a priority. Views should not be obstructed by typical park and street tree plantings.

Parks will lead the Elver Master Plan review. Other City agencies will lead the design of other improvements: Engineering on streets, bike paths and stormwater management. Streets/Forestry on street trees. Trails and views will cross ownerships and should be jointly planned. Take a broader perspective of the whole landscape/viewshed rather than treating all the different projects as typical urban development.

I encourage and expect a collaborative approach by all City agencies, similar to what is working well for LakeWay-John Nolen Drive. But in particular, the Park Commission and Staff should be watchdogs for this open space.

The SW Area Plan should recognize this valley as a significant City and regional open space. This will prove true in future decades as it becomes surrounded by higher density development in Madison and Verona. This landscape is unique.

I encourage you to visit this area, but here are some photos:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/i7dR2iLszNWWX2oe6>

Simon Widstrand, Madison