

From: Nicholas Davies <nbdavies@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 11, 2024 3:41 PM
To: Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Support park connections in West Area Plan

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Dear Park Commissioners,

The West Area Plan is on your next agenda; it includes a vision for future additional parks on the west side, and connections to parks in that area. I hope you'll recommend approval of the West Area Plan, particularly when it comes to these items of interest to you.

In particular, the West Area Plan proposes adding a short path connection to reach Walnut Grove Park from the west, across Sauk Creek. You may have heard of the Sauk Creek Greenway, which was going to follow the course of Sauk Creek lengthwise; that's no longer in the West Area Plan, and instead there'll be just a short connection across the creek.

This connection will be valuable for those living west of the creek to reach their nearest city park, whether on foot or bike or assistive mobility device. Particularly those with limited mobility, the current route to the park, the long way around, represents a barrier to access, requiring a trip by car, or just giving up. Unfortunately, some neighbors have taken issue with the idea of making this convenient for other neighbors.

For some, the east-west connection would form part of a safer route to school, and for others, it'd form part of a safer commute to work. And it would function as an amenity of Walnut Grove Park, drawing more visitors. This accessibility and popularity could make the park a better venue for future public events.

A useful comparison to this would be the Greentree greenway, which helps families coming from Schroeder & Struck get to Elver Park, without braving the traffic on McKenna. If you've ever been to major events at Elver Park, like July 4th fireworks, you may be aware of how many people reach those events via this path. These events simply would not work at scale otherwise.

You could also compare this to the greenway path connecting Mineral Point Park and Owen Conservancy, which also functions as a school route. Think of how valuable these existing

connections are, and how uncontroversial they are, once they're actually built. This is what's being proposed for Walnut Grove Park. Its value is not hypothetical.

Even those questioning the need for this connection to Walnut Grove Park probably take the existence of these other greenway paths for granted. They complain that a path across Sauk Creek would require the removal of trees--unmanaged invasive saplings that suppress the growth of proper tree canopy--and indeed, if you count those up, you get a large number (good job! lol). If that were truly the better option, there would be similar demands to tear up existing paths, and let unmanaged invasive saplings grow there too. But I think we all recognize how unacceptable that would be.

The question of whether it's worth the money is a real one. In our city's current financial situation, we need to be asking that of every project, and deferring it or pursuing grants when necessary. However, that shouldn't stand in the way of including this in the West Area Plan. This plan will be in effect for years to come, and during those years, maybe the city will be flush with cash again, or maybe this path connection will go unbuilt and show up in the next iteration of the plan (like the connection at Sauk Creek Park).

I hope you'll affirm your support for safe routes to parks in your approval of the West Area Plan.

Thank you,

Nick Davies

3717 Richard St