

* SAVE HARTMEYER NATURAL AREA

Thank you for this opportunity for city planners, elected officials and the public to discuss a Hartmeyer preservation planning vision for the city, potentially in partnership with Dane County and Groundswell.

I am Madison's Ambassador of FUN - Friends of Urban Nature, a partnership of Madison Parks and local Environmental and Friends groups. Together we offer over 100 free family friendly Bird and Nature Outings year round in our parks and natural areas as well as helping co-sponsor weekly Sherman Nature Explorer outings and many other activities. We have successfully engaged thousands of people in enjoyment of Madison's urban nature. Participation regularly includes a broad demographic with a mix of ages, abilities, sexual orientations, minorities, families and kids. I was previously on the board with Madison Audubon and am now on the board of Friends groups at Cherokee, Warner, Hartmeyer, Starkweather and UW Lakeshore Preserve.

I am asking you to seriously consider a city planning vision option and a budget reallocation option for purchase, preservation and restoration of the Hartmeyer property consisting of the 30 acre historic wetland and surrounding upland ecosystem between Roth, Oscar Mayer, Commercial and N Sherman, as a community open space natural area.

We are fortunate this large remaining open space has been left undeveloped the last 100 years (show maps). Past attempts at farming, ball fields and development have been abandoned because it was too wet.

Water levels are still slowly rebounding through 200 feet of clay following shutting down of the Oscar Mayer wells. Climate change is giving this area wetter weather in the future. We need to save this last remaining 30 acre large natural open space on the near northside to help provide water infiltration and carbon sequestration to offset the large impervious development and redevelopment surrounding this area with almost no green space.

We should not rush to judgement be only considering planning visions that would replace the majority of this historic wetland with yet more impervious streets and infrastructure that can meet city growth goals by improving and building up - not out - on existing streets and nearby areas in need of redevelopment.

Major benefits are the ecological importance of saving this large vibrant living nature sanctuary and nature corridors along railroads and bike paths connecting with other east and northside open areas, for pollinators, amphibians, birds and other wildlife, to help keep the beauty and ecological benefits of nature in our neighborhoods and avoid creating an urban desert devoid of all but a few hardy species.

Social justice, community placemaking and neighborhood value benefits by providing community access to nearby nature recreation opportunities for walking, biking, relaxation and contemplation, nature education opportunities for nearby schoolkids, and well documented physical and mental health benefits of access to nature. Preserving this 30 acre natural area will add to the community place making, property values, and quality of life for north side and east side neighborhoods and workers at nearby industry and business developments and for the greater Madison community.

And perhaps most importantly, preserving Hartmeyer Natural Area as an intact living ecosystem supports Madison's mission to connect neighborhoods and kids with nearby nature. Regular access to nature and the awe of seeing nature doing its thing is well documented to help create a sense of well being and build empathy for other people as well as for nature.

This a very real once in a lifetime opportunity for Madison and the north side that offers many potential benefits.

PAUL NOELDNER