



July 12, 2021

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the Friends of Starkweather Creek (FSC), I would like to thank City of Madison Urban Planner, Linda Horvath, for attending our organization's monthly board meeting on Tuesday, June 15<sup>th</sup> and for providing an overview of the proposed "Draft Land Use and Transportation Concept" in the Greater East Towne Mall Area Plan.

Our organization is dedicated to the enhancement of the Starkweather Creek watershed and its adjacent natural areas through stewardship, advocacy, and education. It is the executive board's responsibility to serve as a credible voice for our membership regarding issues that affect our watershed and we appreciate being able to provide feedback to the City of Madison's proposed concept plan. There have been many challenges over our organization's 20-year history, but these challenges have also created tremendous opportunities for empowering people to protect, restore, and experience Starkweather Creek.

The Friends of Starkweather Creek see tremendous opportunity in the Greater East Towne Mall Area Plan and we appreciate your commitment to the natural areas surrounding the East Town Mall area as a "Top Priority." The City of Madison's concept has the potential to showcase and highlight one of the most sensitive, rare, and intact wetlands in our watershed. Our organization would like to take this opportunity to provide guidance and recommendations regarding what we see as the potential for a win-win collaboration:

- Equitable access to high-quality natural areas has become increasingly important as our city expands. It is vital that people of all ages have the opportunity to connect with nature. Consider creating the "New Large Community Park" and other development on existing impervious areas such as underutilized parking lots and create opportunities for environmental education and recreation in the intact ecosystems.
- As a restoration is never a substitute for a remnant ecosystem, this area is priceless and more valuable to wildlife as a complete, contiguous unit. Any damage or fragmentation will greatly reduce its quality. Consider an alternate route for bicycle routes through the wetland complex or use elevated boardwalks and bridges to minimize impacts to the area.

- Attempt to salvage lower ecological value areas such as tree-lined green corridors along streets and walkways within developed areas. These areas add natural beauty to urban development and provide benefits such as shade, urban cooling, water infiltration and carbon sequestration.
- Continue to focus efforts on “embracing natural areas like Starkweather Creek” (guiding principle #4) with the creation of elevated boardwalks that provide access to unique areas like Starkweather Creek’s headwaters and open springs.
- To date, 119 plant species (see attached list) have been identified and photographed so far in the wetlands southeast of the East Towne Mall area. It is important to the long-term health of this southern sedge meadow and wet-mesic prairie complex that it be appropriately managed. Consider designating the “greenways” in the Greater East Towne Mall Area Plan as a conservation park.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the “Draft Land Use and Transportation Concept” in the Greater East Towne Mall Area Plan. The Friends of Starkweather Creek look forward to further iterations of this concept plan as it evolves from public feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JEFF STEELE". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first letters being larger and more prominent.

Jeff Steele  
Co-Chair  
Friends of Starkweather Creek