Questions from Sauk Creek Greenway Corridor Plan Kick-off Meetings
Responses posted 1/18/24

These questions were generally organized into the 4 topic areas: Engagement, Land, People and Water

Engagement Questions:

1. **How do Planning's West Area Plan and Engineering's Corridor Plan interact?**
   The West Area Plan will contain high level recommendations on future land use, transportation (including shared-use paths), and other topics throughout the West Area Plan boundary. The Area Plan will contain recommendations for the overall transportation systems including recommendations for connections needed to make safe, accessible and efficient travel by all transportation modes possible. The West Area Plan is reviewing how a potential Sauk Creek Greenway path can fit in to Area-wide improvements to pedestrian and bicycle facilities. West Area Plan staff checked in with several boards/ committees/ commissions (BCCs) in December, 2023 to provide an update and gather BCC feedback prior to producing a draft for public review. Public meetings are planned for late February or early March, but aren't yet scheduled. Information on West Area Plan BCC meetings is posted on the project website.

   The Sauk Creek Greenway Corridor Plan is a more narrow process that will focus on specifics within the corridor. The Corridor Plan will inform design recommendations for the channel and other elements from City studies and plans, like the West Area Plan. There are elements that were called out in the Corridor Plan presentation where we are specifically looking for community input to directly shape the project (channel cross sections, ecological enhancements, etc.). Potential aspects of the project, such as a bike and pedestrian path, have larger regional considerations – the Corridor Plan will look to the West Area Plan to make recommendations at the regional level. If a path is recommended in the West Area Plan it may be recommended for construction with the greenway project, or at a future date. Regardless, recommendations regarding any paths, will be documented for consideration in the future. If you want to provide input on the larger regional considerations, it is important to engage with the West Area Plan process.

   As engineering projects come up, to make improvements to public spaces, such as the Sauk Creek Greenway, the City's Comprehensive Plan and Area Plans act as a guide for developing more detailed designs. When reviewing proposed projects, policy makers, boards and commissions will consider consistency with adopted plans, and inconsistencies will need to be explained to the governing bodies. While the City aims to only include feasible projects in plans, developing design-level information that requires taking topographic survey, permitting constraints, etc., into consideration can sometimes show a project is not feasible based on the topography or other detailed design elements that may not have been available to incorporate at the higher planning level.

2. **When is the next public meeting for the West Area Plan?**
   The next public meetings are planned for late February or early March, but aren't yet scheduled. You can subscribe for updates on the West Area Plan website to be notified once the meetings are scheduled.

3. **Will the DNR be part of the Sauk Creek Corridor Plan approval process?**
   The DNR will be a part of the Corridor Plan development to weigh in on aspects of the plan that require permits, and to provide confidence to the City that the plan can be permitted. However, the planning level design concepts in the Corridor Plan will not be detailed enough to apply for DNR permits. DNR permitting would occur as the design documents are created for construction of a greenway improvement project based on the results from the Corridor Plan.

4. **Why is this called a Corridor Plan?**
   We are calling this broader approach a "Corridor Plan" because we are looking at the entire stormwater corridor. This includes the entire greenway (including the east-west section near Haen Family Park that wasn't in the original 2018 discussion), and the 2 adjacent, existing stormwater treatment ponds. In comparison to the project discussed in 2018, this is a new higher-level planning process with increased engagement and we wanted to make that clear by giving the process a new name.

Land Questions:

1. **How do you consider wildlife in design and construction?**

   The City coordinates with several experts during the design and construction of pond and greenway projects in regards to wildlife. During the permitting process, the City completes an Endangered Resources Review through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). These reviews tell the City which endangered species may be present on site, and they provide guidelines on how to mitigate impacts to, and create habitat for, these species.

   In addition to required reviews, the City seeks to minimize impacts to wildlife with the following approaches:

   - Consulting with wildlife experts: The City has worked with professors from the UW-Madison Department of Forestry and Wildlife Ecology to mitigate impacts to birds, and with the UW Urban Canid Project to monitor for fox and coyote so that appropriate mitigation actions can be taken if canids are found to be denning on site.
   - Prioritizing tree preservation: Tree preservation relates to restoration goals and varies by site, but typically prioritizes mature trees, native trees and/or slow-growing species. When possible, dead trees may be left as wildlife habitat. To help make these determinations a tree survey that includes the tree's overall condition is completed by a certified arborist.
   - Altering construction practices: Construction timelines, location of infrastructure, grading extents or limits, and other aspects of construction may be altered during the planning process or during the actual construction in order to better mitigate effects to wildlife. For example, the City may time construction to occur when it will have the least impacts to bird nesting or bat hibernation.
   - Physical relocation of wildlife: Less mobile wildlife, such as turtles, frogs and toads, if constrained to a pond or wetland on site, may be relocated to an alternate stormwater site. This has been done successfully on other projects.

- Pursuing ecological restoration: Ecological restoration is planned into each project. This means that existing site conditions are analyzed and a plan to restore ecological functionality and biodiversity is created as part of the design process. Where resources may have historically been lacking on a site, a project offers an opportunity to improve wildlife habitat and overall ecosystem function.

2. **How will the project implementation impact wildlife?**

   The City recognizes the importance of Sauk Creek and other stormwater land to wildlife and acknowledges that project implementation will temporarily impact the ability of wildlife to use the site. Temporary effects during construction may be primarily negative, but the long-term effects of ecological restoration on the site may net great improvements for wildlife.

   The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Natural Heritage Inventory Report specifies restoration targets to assist Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and other wildlife based on Wisconsin's unique ecology. WDNR's Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan (WWAP) further identifies threats to SGCN and other wildlife, and outlines actions to address these threats. Some of the threats they identify as applying to the most significant number of species and habitats include invasive species, habitat loss/fragmentation/degradation and modification of environmental processes. Most urban greenspaces including Sauk Creek are affected by some or all of these issues.

   Ecological restoration, the process by which humans help repair or create the conditions necessary for ecosystem recovery, seeks to identify and address these issues. As ecological conditions on site improve, wildlife habitat also improves. An example of how ecological restoration may be implemented to improve and manage wildlife resources is the Owen Conservation Park Habitat Management Plan.

   An emphasis on improving the functionality of the ecosystem at Sauk Creek, may therefore improve conditions for wildlife that already use the greenway, as well as create conditions appropriate for a wider variety of species, thereby increasing site biodiversity.

People Questions:

1. **Will a shared use path be separate from maintenance access?**
   The shared use path and maintenance path can be the same path. Both paths are typically 10' wide. Having these paths combined has the benefit of mitigating tree removal but we will want to understand if some people may prefer certain sections don't overlap if a path is built in the greenway.

2. **What does "ADA" mean?**
   The American Disabilities Act (ADA) is a law that guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. There are ADA design guidelines that are used when designing public amenities, such as paths. An example guideline require that cross slopes of paths not exceed 2% to avoid the severe difficulties that greater cross slopes can create for people in wheelchairs or using walker or canes. ADA also includes recommendations for longitudinal grades with the typical maximum

being 5% but under some circumstances this could be steeper for sections. More design guidance is provided by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation at https://wisconsindot.gov/Documents/projects/multimodal/bike/facility-4.pdf

3. **Why is a path being considered in Sauk Creek Greenway in the West Area Plan?**
   Numerous City long-range planning documents since the 1990s have included a recommendation for a path that can be used by bicyclists and pedestrians through the Sauk Greenway. Most recently it was included in the 2015 MPO Bicycle Transportation Plan and the 2018 City Comprehensive Plan/Imagine Madison and the 2023 Complete Green Streets Guide which shows the path forming part of the All Ages Ability Bike Route network for the west side of Madison.

   Providing an All Ages Ability bicycle and pedestrian network is an important strategy to improve air quality, support healthy communities, address climate change, improve traffic safety and provide improved access to jobs, shopping, libraries, schools and other key destinations. Many short trips can be done on foot or wheel when a safe, comfortable and well-connected network for walking and biking is available. However, some residents have shared that they do not feel safe walking and biking in this area of the City. People have mentioned having unsafe interactions with motorists when walking or biking.

Water Questions:

1. **I'd like to learn more about the green infrastructure assessment and how that fits into the context of stormwater management and planning.**
   The City of Madison undertook a peer reviewed green infrastructure analysis with the watershed studies to see if Green Infrastructure (GI) could be used to reach the primary flood targets (no buildings flooding in a 1% annual chance storm). The study found that an unrealistic amount of GI would need to be installed to meet the flood targets. This would be cost-prohibitive from both a capital and operating cost perspective (as GI is maintenance intensive). Therefore, the City will be using green infrastructure where feasible, but it will not be the only part of the solution for meeting flood targets.

2. **What are "construction limits" ?**
   Construction Limits are the extents of the grading and construction work needed to build whatever project is being referred to. For example, when talking about the channel stabilization and maintenance access path, this would include the footprint of the area needed to construct a stable channel and the access path.

3. **What are the size of the planned access roads to the planned channel that will be created for stormwater? Will it be as wide as a road?**
   The maintenance access for the channel needs to be 10' wide – this is about the same size as a multi-use path. This is much narrower than a standard residential street that is generally 28'-36' wide.

You can learn more at: www.cityofmadison.com/SaukCreekGwy