

Sauk Creek Greenway Restoration – Webpage Archive – 10/13/23

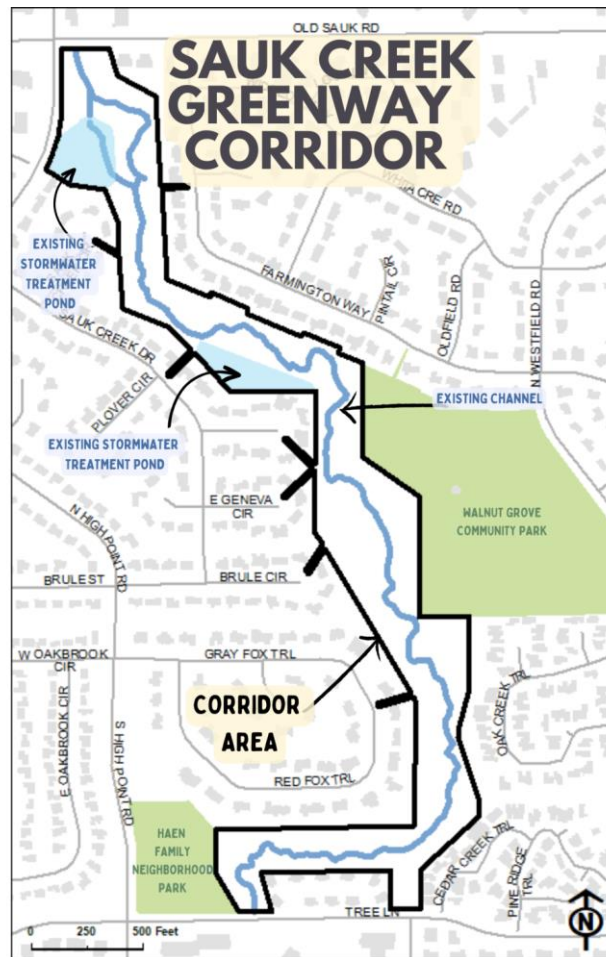
Latest Updates

8/4/23 Update:

We are working on developing an engagement process that will be used to derive the corridor plan, and assembling an advisory staff team. We are also hiring environmental experts to complete an ecological and channel assessment this fall. The kick-off meeting for the corridor plan isn't scheduled yet, but we hope to have a date to share soon.

5/26/23 Update:

Project Update - Due to the size and complexity of this greenway, and based on the feedback that we have so far, we plan to start with a broader approach and first get community feedback on the greenway corridor as a whole, instead of as individual construction projects. Through the engagement process, we want to learn more about the community values and use that to inform a plan for the corridor. There will be multiple public meetings and opportunities to provide input on the corridor plan as it develops. The corridor plan will then be a framework for future construction phases of the greenway that will each have a separate public engagement process to discuss more detailed design elements. There is not a date for the first public meeting to launch the corridor planning efforts, but we will post an update to this webpage once there's a date, and we will send postcards notifying residents of the meeting. We look forward to collaborating with you!



10/24/22 Update:

Project Schedule Update and FAQ

The Pheasant Branch Watershed Study is complete. The response to Public Comments will be posted shortly.

Engineering created a document that responds to frequently asked questions about the Sauk Creek Greenway Restoration Project. The FAQ can be accessed here: [Sauk Creek Greenway Restoration Frequently Asked Questions PDF](#).

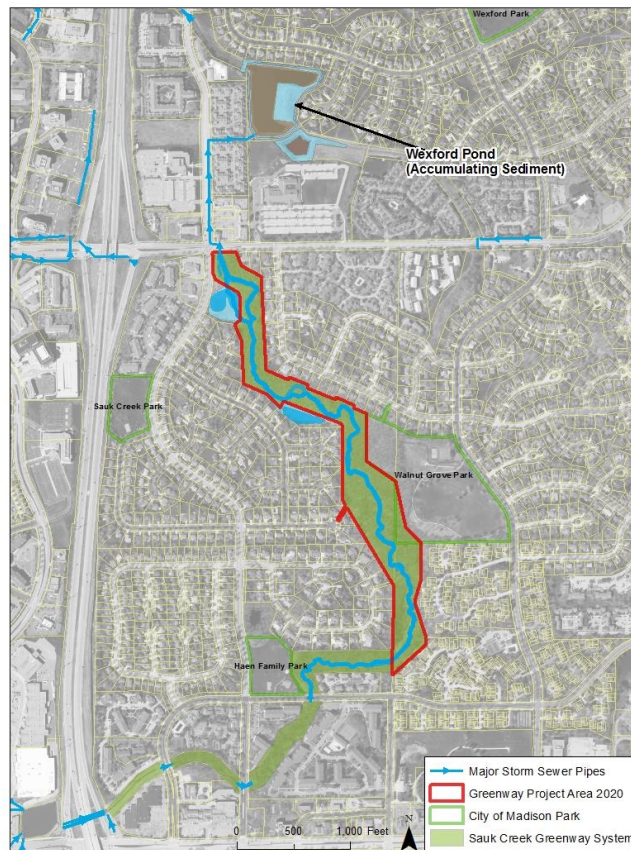
Project Overview

The watershed draining through this channel is approximately 1,318 acres. At the time of development of the Sauk Creek area, the existing farm ditch was not required to be improved. As development has continued upstream, flows have continued to increase causing active and aggressive erosion in the channel.

In the mid-1990's, City Engineering approached the neighborhood with a project to stabilize the channel and the neighborhood rejected it. The channel has now degraded so badly that the project will need to be more aggressive to fix sections of channel that have 5'-6' tall eroded banks.

Further, as a result of the continued erosion, there are many trees adjacent to the channel that have fallen across it forcing runoff water to create new channels in the greenway causing further erosion in a self-reinforcing cycle.

Additionally, the downstream Wexford pond is filling with sediment from the channel and now requires dredging. City Engineering has delayed dredging of that pond until the Pheasant Branch Watershed Study is completed.



Overview Map of Greenway System and Project Area

The stabilized channel dimensions will not be known until final design is completed.

Aug. 3, 2019: Work on Creek Crossing at Tree Lane

During the August 2018 floods, the concrete block that provided a ford for our sanitary sewer maintenance equipment to access the sewer was washed out. Our crews need to complete routine maintenance on the sanitary sewer to prevent sanitary backups from occurring; therefore our operations staff has been working to restore the ford crossing. The City decided that it is better to wait to improve the ford crossing with the greenway project (delayed until 2021), and complete a temporary fix in the interim. The cables between some of the concrete blocks broke while resetting the blocks, so the operations crews laid down breaker rock in the cracks to provide the stability needed for the large tractor truck to access the sanitary sewer.

Existing Tree Removal Requests

There are many residents that live along the greenway that have requested that trees be removed to avoid trees and limbs falling into their property. In cases where the City is easily able to access the trees via the sanitary access path without removing many additional trees, and agree that the trees are at risk of damaging private property, the City has removed some trees. However, there are many outstanding request for tree removals where the City isn't able to easily access the trees without removing or damaging other quality trees to access it—the equipment to fell a tree is very large.

Part of the greenway project will be considering where and how we can access the channel for maintenance, as well as areas along the property line.

Tree Removal Impacts with People

Statements have been made regarding the number of trees to be removed. These statements are inaccurate and are not an estimation that the City supports. As a design has not been proposed, there is not an estimated number of tree removals to provide at this time. A consultant completed a tree survey of the entire greenway for the channel project. The results of the survey highlighted habitat opportunities and documented the ecological degradation that has occurred in these woods due to a lack of invasive management. The youngest oaks in the forest are 80-100 years old. On the current trajectory, the mature oaks will slowly die off without being replaced. The City plans to create a sustainable, long-term restoration plan with help from experts and input from the community that will promote new oak growth and maintain this quality resource for future generations.

For more detailed information about the tree survey, and the ability to view quality tree locations and ratings, please view the [Sauk Creek Greenway Restoration Tree Survey Story Map](#). Please note that the tree data is represented as dots on the map, you can zoom in to adjust the map scale by clicking "explore map" in the lower right corner.

Dedication of these Lands

These lands were dedicated to the City with several plats including a portion dedicated in 1976 near Tamarack Trails that was "Dedicated to the Public for Parkway Purposes." The term "parkway" was used in the 1970's for greenway dedications. The rest of the greenway was "Dedicated to the Public for Greenway and Park Purposes and Storm Water Detention" in the Sauk Creek Plat in 1985, and in the First Addition to Sauk Creek Plat in 1987.

Per the **Definitions in the Official Map Ordinance 16.25 (3)**: the term "*Parkway*" for the purpose of this section shall include any right-of-way for vehicular or pedestrian traffic, or both, with full or partial control of access and usually located within a park or a ribbon of parklike development. Said parkway may include land area which is required for storm water drainage purposes where the drainage improvement is to include parklike treatment and where pedestrian or vehicular travel may be permitted. Per Ordinance Chapter 16.25(3) (above) and Chapter 16.23(2), both lands dedicated as

Greenways and Parkways “may serve multiple purposes including, in addition to their principal use for storm drainage, vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic, sanitary sewers, water mains, storm sewers, storm water retention basins, park development and other related uses.”

Bike Paths

The following outlines why a bike path is being considered with the greenway restoration project:

- The 1984 Park and Open Space Plan noted that Walnut Grove Park had a bikeway through it, and that “Park Master Plans should continue to plan for bicycle/pedestrian circulation adjacent to and within the park” but the Sauk Creek greenway was not yet shown on the map as City property.
- The 1991 and 1997 Park and Open Space Plans list Sauk Creek/Walnut Grove as an area for “potential new bike paths on parkland” and calls to “construct a bike path from Old Sauk Road to Tree Lane.”
- The 2000 adopted Bicycle Transportation Plan for the Madison Metropolitan Area and Dane County identifies Sauk Creek Greenway/Walnut Grove Park as a 3rd Priority project with a comment that “suitable on-road routes exist”
- The 2015 adopted [Bicycle Transportation Plan for the Madison Metropolitan Area and Dane County PDF](#) includes a bike path in the Sauk Creek greenway system to provide North/South and East/West connections through the greenway.

The City is assessing community need in regards to the bike path. As the channel analysis progresses, the City will look at bike path need from a transportation perspective, as well as how the bike path would fit within the greenway design.

The City Parks Division is proposing an additional off-road trail network for mountain biking, snow shoeing, and skiing. In fall of 2020, Parks underwent a citywide planning project to construct a network of natural surface, bike optimized trails throughout the city. This would serve as a “master plan” document only and doesn’t mean any of the individual segments would be constructed without a separate public engagement opportunity. Any natural surface trail would be separate from the greenway restoration work and potential paved path project.

Greenways have the potential to play a major role in connecting green spaces throughout the city. As part of this project, the Sauk Creek Greenway was identified as a potential site for such a trail. You can learn more about the Parks Division’s planning project at their [MadBAT project website](#), or [StoryMap](#).

Restoration

Volunteers can make a big difference in the ecological health of the Sauk Creek Greenway. Additionally, preemptively removing invasive species can greatly curb the spread during reconstruction work. A few volunteer efforts that have made a big difference in the health of the greenway include garlic mustard pulling and buckthorn cutting.

Garlic mustard is an aggressive, herbaceous species that can take over entire woodlands and displace native wildflowers. In the spring of 2018, volunteers hand-pulled invasive garlic mustard in targeted locations allowing for a carpet of native wildflowers to emerge. Native species that benefited from garlic mustard removal include wild geranium, Solomon’s seal, Virginia bluebells, wood violets and wild ginger.

Winter brush cutting in 2018 and 2019 targeted berry-producing buckthorn. Buckthorn can shade out native tree and woodland wildflower species, compact the soil and exacerbate erosion issues. The berries produced by buckthorn are attractive to wildlife, though they are indigestible to most birds and

mammals and are soon dispelled in a new location. Cutting the berry-producing individuals removes potential seeds from the environment and opens up the canopy for diverse native species.

If you are interested in volunteering to help with restoration work in the Sauk Creek Greenway please contact Si Widstrand at si.widstrand@gmail.com

Project Schedule

At this point we are not far enough into the design to have a specific project schedule, but due to the size of the project it would not be constructed any sooner than 2024.

Public Involvement

There are a number of points of contact during this project where the public is encouraged to give feedback as part of public information meetings and public hearings. Dates and times are indicated below:

Public Information Meetings

A public information meeting was held March 13, 2018.

[March 13, 2018 Public Information Meeting PowerPoint Presentation PDF](#)

[Public Comments Received Through March 30, 2018 PDF](#)

Separate, yet related public information meetings were held for the watershed this project is in. Three public information meetings for the [Madison Pheasant Branch Watershed Study](#) were held May 4, 2019, June 18, 2020 and February 10, 2022. The February 10, 2022 meeting was followed by a break-out group per proposed solution. In the Sauk Creek breakout group, we collected everyone's comments and discussed the next steps for the Sauk Creek Greenway design process.

If you were unable to attend these meetings, you can watch the presentation on the project website.

Once scheduled, the next Public Information Meeting for this project will be posted on this project webpage.

City Meetings, Process

Board of Public Works: *New information will be posted when available.*

Common Council: *New information will be posted when available.*

Additional Information

The Ecological Summary, authored by Tree Health Management after completing the tree survey, can be found here: [Sauk Creek Ecological Summary PDF](#) Each tree greater than 3" in diameter was surveyed and given a condition rating. This occurred from November-December of 2017. The collected Tree Data in Excel spreadsheet format can be found here: [Tree Data XLSX](#)

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