

# Lake Monona Waterfront Design Challenge

## Master Plan Public Review

### Questions and Responses

Updated: 03/24/2023

#### 1. What is the design challenge?

The design challenge is a City-led initiative to develop a master plan for a signature waterfront park along the shore of Lake Monona. It is a competition to create a visionary, inclusive, and environmentally focused master plan for Madison's foremost public lakefront. The planning area includes 1.7 miles of lakeshore and 17 acres of public land. The intent of the challenge is to attract regional and national waterfront planning expertise to Madison and develop a new vision for Madison's connection to Lake Monona.

#### 2. What is a master plan?

A master plan is a long-term planning document that informs the direction of future capital improvement projects. Master plans are conceptual diagrams (not construction plans) that are implemented in phases, with each phase involving further design development and public engagement before construction. With the scope of the Lake Monona Waterfront planning area and the scale of the potential improvements, implementation will likely be measured in decades for the planning initiative.

#### 3. What is the planning area?

The Lake Monona Waterfront planning area includes:

- Law Park
- The City Engineering parcels adjacent to the Water Utility Well 17 building
- The public access easement between 137 E. Wilson St. and 151 E. Wilson St.
- The airspace over John Nolen Drive north of the Monona Terrace
- The bike path and shore along the John Nolen Drive causeway (does not include the roadway)
- The northern portion of Olin Park

#### 4. Why wasn't all of Olin Park included in the planning scope?

Including all of Olin Park in the planning scope adds approximately 37 acres of parkland to the project. Given the timing of the John Nolen Drive reconstruction and the goal to have a Council-adopted master plan by 2024, Parks determined increasing the planning acreage by this magnitude wasn't feasible.

#### 5. Why is the City holding a competition for the waterfront planning?

The unique opportunities and challenges of the project area require an approach beyond the standard master planning process. On February 1, 2022, the City of Madison the Common Council authorized the Parks Division to hold a design competition for master plan development for the Lake Monona Waterfront. The intent of the design

challenge is to attract regional and national planning expertise to the planning area. The challenge is a two-year process, with design team selections and master plan options completed in 2022, and refinement of a preferred master plan and submission to the Common Council in 2023.

#### **6. Why is this happening now?**

In 2019, City Engineering determined John Nolen Drive requires reconstruction from North Shore Drive to Olin Avenue. The anticipated construction timeframe for the roadway project is 2026 to 2027. The master plan initiative is an opportunity for Madison to develop a holistic vision for the Lake Monona shore and ensure the reconstruction of John Nolen Drive doesn't prohibit future waterfront goals. Creating a master plan for the area adjacent to John Nolen Drive now provides a cohesive land and transportation planning approach for this valued public lakeshore.

#### **7. What is the role of the Lake Monona Waterfront Ad-hoc Committee?**

The Ad-hoc Committee is the decision-making body for the design challenge. The committee is comprised of thirteen members appointed through the City committee process, and its tasks include:

- Selecting the participating design teams.
- Identifying a preferred master plan option to move forward in the process.
- Providing recommendations for plan revisions/refinement before Common Council introduction.

#### **8. How was the committee formed?**

The Parks Division held an open request for committee applicants in early February 2022. The City received over 40 applications for the thirteen positions. The Mayor's Office reviewed the applicants and recommended appointments to the Common Council for confirmation. The confirmed appointments focused on ensuring broad community representation with diverse perspectives to guide the plan development process.

#### **9. Who is on the committee and how do I contact them?**

The Committee is comprised of representatives for the following boards, commissions and communities:

- (7) Community representatives
- (1) Member of the Board of Park Commissioners
- (1) Professional Civil/Structural Engineer
- (1) Member of the Madison Parks Foundation Board
- (1) Member of the Monona Terrace Board
- (1) Member of the Friends of Nolen Waterfront
- (1) Member of the Board of Public Works

\*One of the above appointments shall be a professional landscape architect

Committee contact information is available on the [City Legistar site](#).

#### **10. Who selected the design teams?**

The City issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for interested design teams in early 2022 and received fourteen submissions. The Ad-hoc Committee scored team qualifications submissions and selected three teams to participate in the design challenge. Committee's selection criteria included the following:

- Qualifications and capacity to prepare a master for a signature waterfront park
- Previous related experience
- Technical competency and experience
- Experience and implementation of equitable and inclusive design
- Understanding of local planning and development practices

#### **11. Why didn't teams hold public meetings during the fourteen week plan development?**

The City conducted pre-planning community outreach in 2019 and 2020. Public input was gathered through various methods, including large community workshops, stakeholder listening sessions, online surveys, on-site interviews, and community events. The collected information was provided in the Lake Monona Waterfront - Preliminary Report and informed the guiding principles for master plan development. Teams were directed to work from the predesign engagement to ensure they utilized the work completed by the City. Teams also had the option to conduct their own outreach during the fourteen-week plan development phase. There were also community input opportunities at the kick-off and midpoint check-in events during the development phase. Additional community engagement will occur during the refinement of the selected plan before introduction to the Common Council.

#### **12. Who is paying for the design challenge?**

The City of Madison and Friends of Nolen Waterfront co-sponsored the design challenge. The Friends of Nolen Waterfront are a non-profit organization dedicated to developing a signature waterfront park along Lake Monona. Each design team received a stipend of \$75,000 for participating in the design challenge and their master plan submission.

#### **13. When will the master plan be approved?**

The next steps for the design challenge include the following:

- Selection of a preferred plan by the Lake Monona Waterfront Ad-hoc Committee
- Plan revisions and refinement per committee comments and direction
- Plan introduction to the Madison Common Council
- Referral to City committees for their comments (including Urban Design Commission, Plan Commission, Transportation Commission, Board of Park Commissioners, and Board of Public Works)
- Common Council review and consideration for adoption

The master plan review and adoption process is anticipated to be completed in late 2023.

**14. When will construction start and who is paying for it?**

The master plan is an overall concept to guide future improvements to the lakeshore - there isn't immediate funding for construction. Implementing the plan's recommendations will likely be phased over decades as construction projects are brought forward when funding resources become available. The scale and scope of the potential improvements will require the City to pursue Federal, State, and local private funding support.

As an initial pilot project, the Parks Division's current Capital Improvement Plan includes a \$2.5M request for causeway improvements in 2026. The request aligns with the John Nolen Drive reconstruction project managed by City Engineering.

**15. When will the proposed changes to the Monona Terrace happen?**

Although two master plan submissions propose changes the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center, the facility is not within the planning scope. Consideration of any proposed improvements to the facility are the purview of the Common Council upon recommendation of the Monona Terrace Board. There are no immediate plans for expanding the Terrace or implementing design team recommendations.

**16. Why is the Lake Monona Waterfront master plan process separate from the John Nolen Drive reconstruction?**

The projects involve differing scales of planning. The master plan initiative will create a conceptual plan to guide future waterfront development in the coming decades. The focus of the John Nolen Drive project is the reconstruction of the roadway and bridges in 2026. The two efforts are coordinated and continue to inform each other, but with two distinct outcomes: one is conceptual, and the other is construction-ready.

**17. How are people of color being given a voice in the process?**

The Parks Division is working with a consultant team focused on engaging with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color representatives in Madison. Their outreach work will continue through the public review and comment phase. The selection process for the Ad-hoc Committee focused on ensuring a wide variety of voices were involved in the project. The confirmed appointments bring broad community representation with diverse perspectives to the plan development process.

**18. Can the City fill the lake to make more parkland?**

Lake Monona is a public waterway subject to State regulations and Public Trust Doctrine statutes. In 2016, with the FEMA map update, all of Lake Monona was zoned as flood storage. With this designation, any amount of lakebed filled requires a corresponding

amount of removal (no net decrease in capacity). Any proposed lakebed fill will need to meet significant regulatory requirements.

**19. Can teams propose changes to private property?**

The planning extents for the design challenge only include City-owned properties in the waterfront corridor. However, design teams can recommend the redevelopment of adjacent parcels if it is central to implementing their planning proposals. The master plans are conceptual, and the City does not currently endorse any proposed redevelopment of private property.

End of Responses  
03/24/23