



# REVIVING LAKE MONONA Framework Plan

The Lakes have always been essential to Madison's civic identity and character - there is much beloved about the relationship between Madison's unique culture and its vibrant natural heritage. The Lakes also serve as a mirror, reflecting the City literally on a bright day and symbolically in terms of where investments are made. Madison's future treatment of Lake Monona offers the chance to reflect City values to be equitable, welcoming, and environmentally healthy.

While there have been ambitious plans and much to applaud about the Lake's evolution, there is much unmet potential today. Climate change, community open space needs, and shifts in transportation patterns have increased the urgency to fully leverage the Lake's role in contemporary Madison.

This Framework Plan imagines a revival for Lake Monona - one that honors layers of the past while embracing a powerful long-term vision for change.

**Take a Walk with Us!**  
Let's look together at what's possible and - along the way - hear from those who contributed to the discussion in community feedback that inspired these ideas!



Feedback quotes on these boards are compiled from our Lake Guides (community members who generously shared ideas and vetted design ideas), engagement postcards, Ad Hoc Committee meetings, interviews and the Preliminary Report engagement summary.

A huge thank you to everyone who participated!

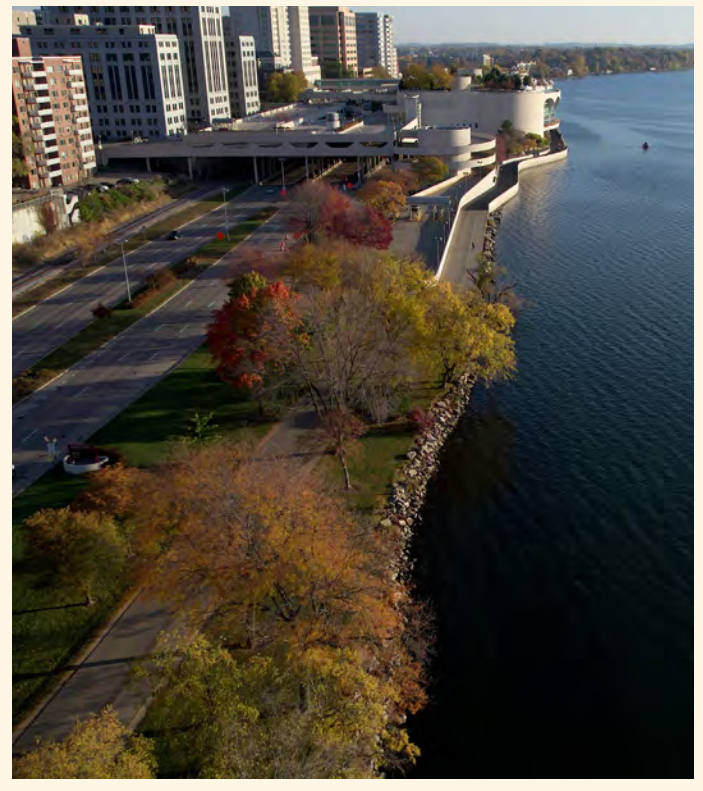
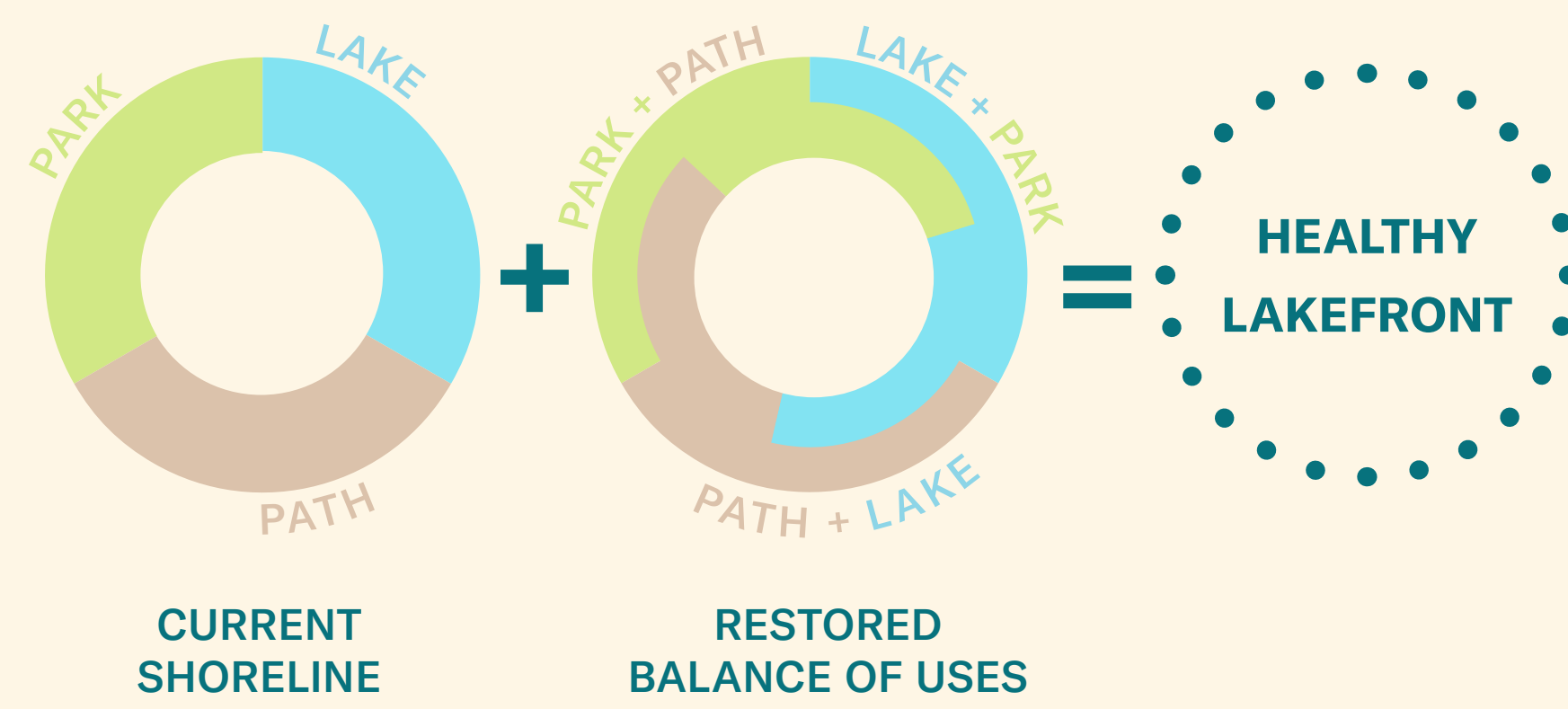






## A Healthy and Functional Ecosystem

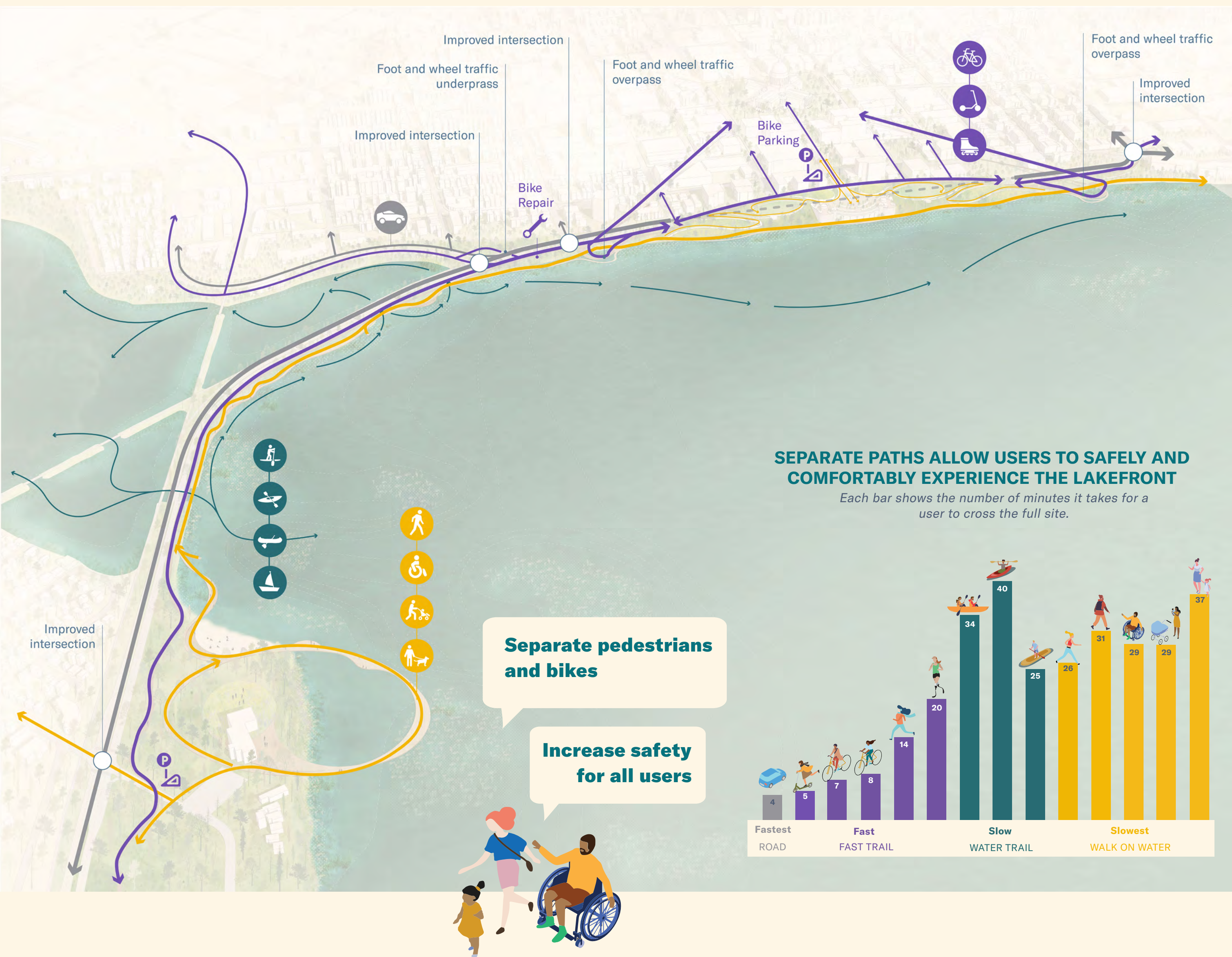
The first foundational move of this Framework Plan is to establish a living shoreline for the entire 1.7 miles of the site. A living shoreline is an ecologically restored and dynamic edge that provides multiple benefits, including water quality enhancement, improved habitat value, and more seasonal beauty. Across the country and around the world, communities are reclaiming the water's edge in this way - providing a great wealth of demonstrated success, even in dynamic and ice-prone environments.



Current shoreline edge

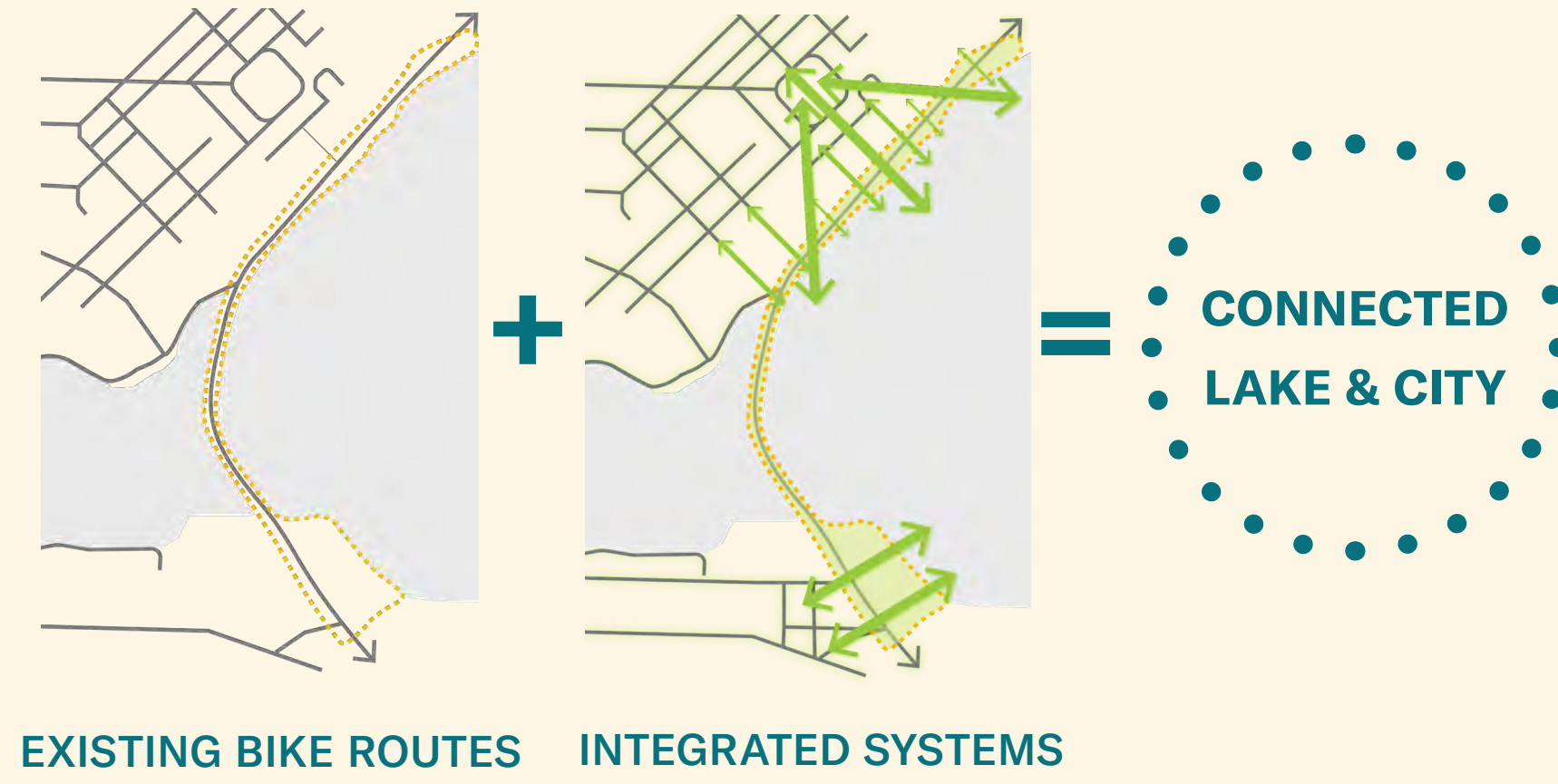


Precedent Example: The Wild Mile. Chicago, IL



## Safe and Welcoming Paths for All

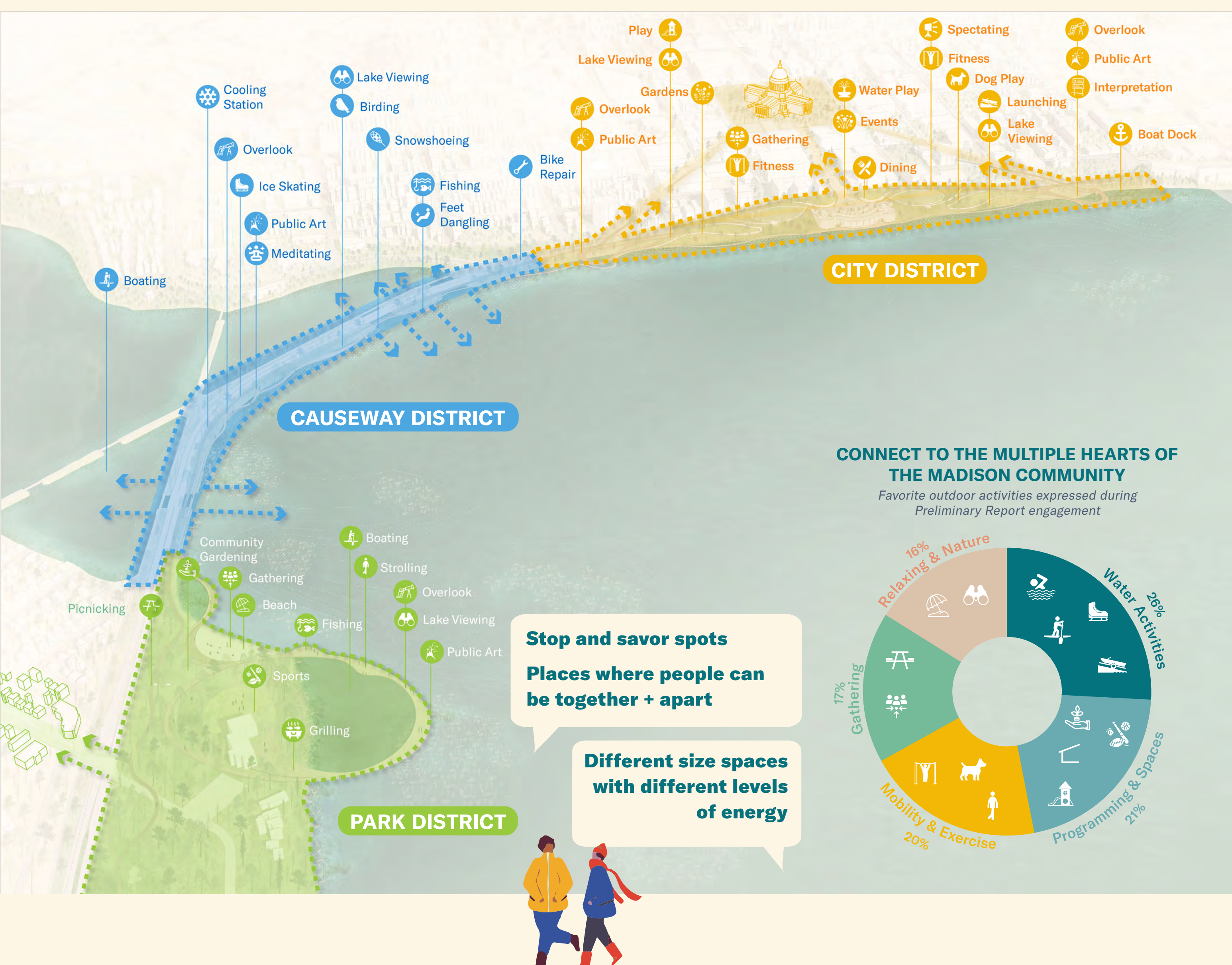
The highest need reported by the Madison community in all feedback is for safe access to, from, and along the Lake Monona waterfront. This Framework Plan delivers on the desire for multiple, separated paths that allow for different types of movement. Importantly, the paths offer equitable access to different users - from commuters on John Nolen Drive and the bicycle path to neighbors looking for a slow, nature-engaged stroll. Frequent overpasses and underpasses allow for safe passage across John Nolen Drive.



Current barriers between the City and the Lakefront



Precedent Example: Hunter's Point. Brooklyn, NY

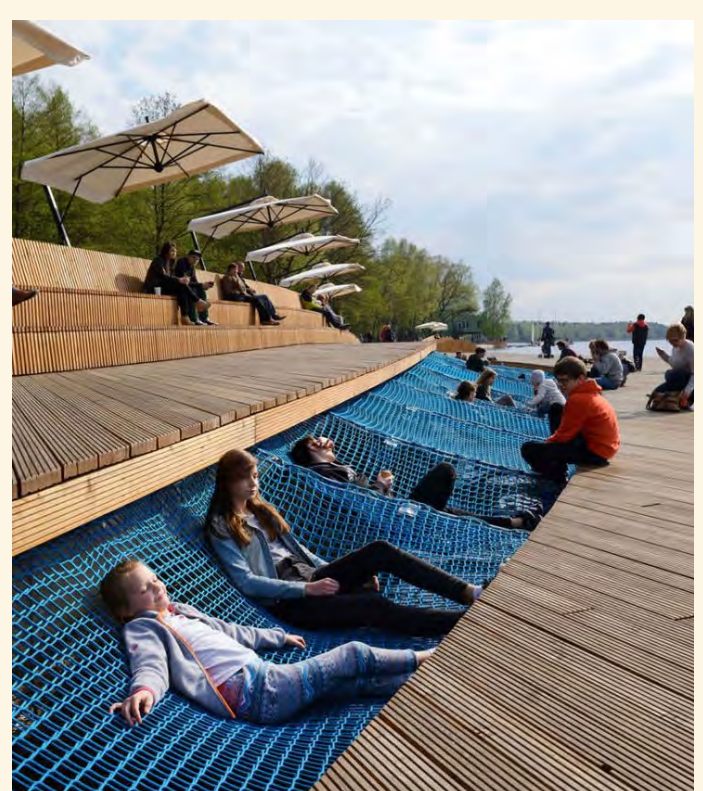


## Vital and Active through the Seasons

The Monona Lakefront comprises three districts, each offering distinct activities appropriate to the location, ecology, and community values. The City District offers a signature, urban waterfront, hilltop park with event spaces, active fitness, play, and extensive lake viewing areas. The Causeway District provides a nature-engaged journey along the Lake's restored marsh edge with fishing, bird-watching and meditation. The Park District balances new uses at the existing Olin Park with desires to respect the park's neighborhood qualities, providing the Southside a lakefront of its own.



Current View of Olin Park



Precedent Example: Lakeshore Redevelopment, Tychy, Poland

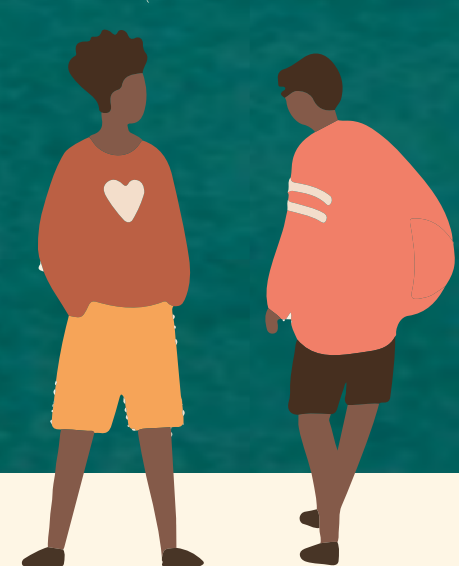


A "Green Gateway" to the City, Olin Park is a beloved gem in the Madison park system. The Framework Plan envisions enhancements that compliment the park's existing character while building on the high aspirations shared by nearby communities, adjacent planning initiatives, and active park advocates.

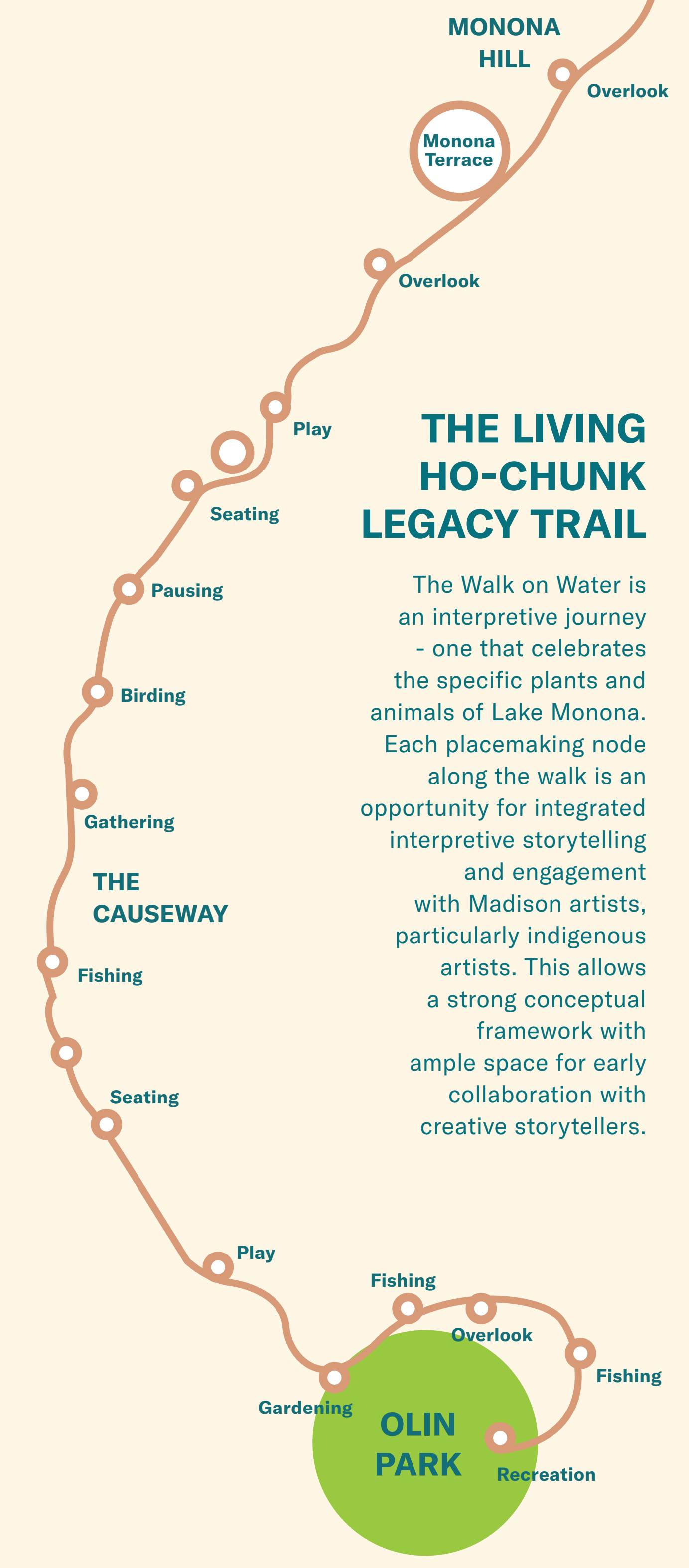
## The Southside's Lakefront OLIN PARK

A chance to deepen connection South Madison and beyond...

A network of enriching recreational activities, experiences and cultural spaces.



"It can be a place where the next generation of Ho-Chunk can learn about those that came before them, can appreciate vistas that we were once enjoyed by others and connect to something essential about this special place"  
- Samantha Skenandore



### THE LIVING HO-CHUNK LEGACY TRAIL

The Walk on Water is an interpretive journey - one that celebrates the specific plants and animals of Lake Monona. Each placemaking node along the walk is an opportunity for integrated interpretive storytelling and engagement with Madison artists, particularly indigenous artists. This allows a strong conceptual framework with ample space for early collaboration with creative storytellers.

**Cultural Practices**

A Marker Tree

Hand-Dug Canoe

Mounds

**Engaging Experiences**

Interpretive Graphics  
Work by Agency + Studio Umno

Landscape Art  
Work by Present Practice

Play Earthwork  
Chicago Botanic Garden

### IT ALL STARTS AT OLIN PARK!

Offering both intimate views of the Lake and long views to Downtown, Olin Park - the former site of a Ho-Chunk wigwam village - is the perfect launching point for this 2-mile long trail. Olin Park's identity as a natural and cultural hub on the Lakefront is reinforced by the trail. Interpretive pause places include fishing and lingering overlooks, a Community Green adjacent to the recreational facility, enhanced planting and stormwater management, and a protected shoreline gathering space for families to play, relax and cook.

**CHANGE IS IN THE AIR**  
Change is afoot at Olin Park. The relocated Madison Parks' downtown offices, moved here in 2022, present an opportunity to provide a new community hub at the park to increase user-comfort, experience, and program. The Southside's Master Plan outlines clear aspirations to support a thriving neighborhood that builds community and enables people to stay. Longer term, the Destination District offers opportunities to catalyze change including more equitable access to park space and wealth-creation for the Southside neighborhoods. Among these three distinct efforts, we see a way to create a landmark lakefront experience at Olin Park that realizes and balances their shared goals.



**Dedicated Partners**  
Friends of Olin Park, Centro Hispano, Literacy Network, Catholic Multicultural Center, Urban League, Freedom Inc., and more

**Growing Audience**  
400 events  
800,000 attendees



## Morning at the Park ...

Red Shouldered Hawk  
*Buteo lineatus*

Great Egret  
*Ardea alba*



## ... and Later That Evening

Northern Long-Eared Bat  
*Myotis septentrionalis*

American Bittern  
*Botaurus lentiginosus*

Fireflies  
*Lampyridae sp.*

Eastern American Toad  
*Anaxyrus americanus*



**Landscape that encourages people to spend time by the water**

**Pedestrian-only spaces better separated from roadway and bike lanes**

Aligned with repeated, consistent community feedback, the Causeway – a man-made series of transportation-related structures – is transformed into a nature-engaged journey. The Walk on Water allows for pausing, lingering, fishing, and strolling. Faster moving traffic on both the roadway and the bicycle path now has dedicated and buffered space. All speeds enjoy the long view to the Madison skyline and Capital.

## A Nature-Engaged Journey THE CAUSEWAY

### Historic Condition



**REVIVING THE MARSH**  
Historically, the shoreline of Lake Monona would have been a dynamic and ever-changing marsh. Ho-Chunk mounds and villages co-existed with the natural fluctuations of the Lake.

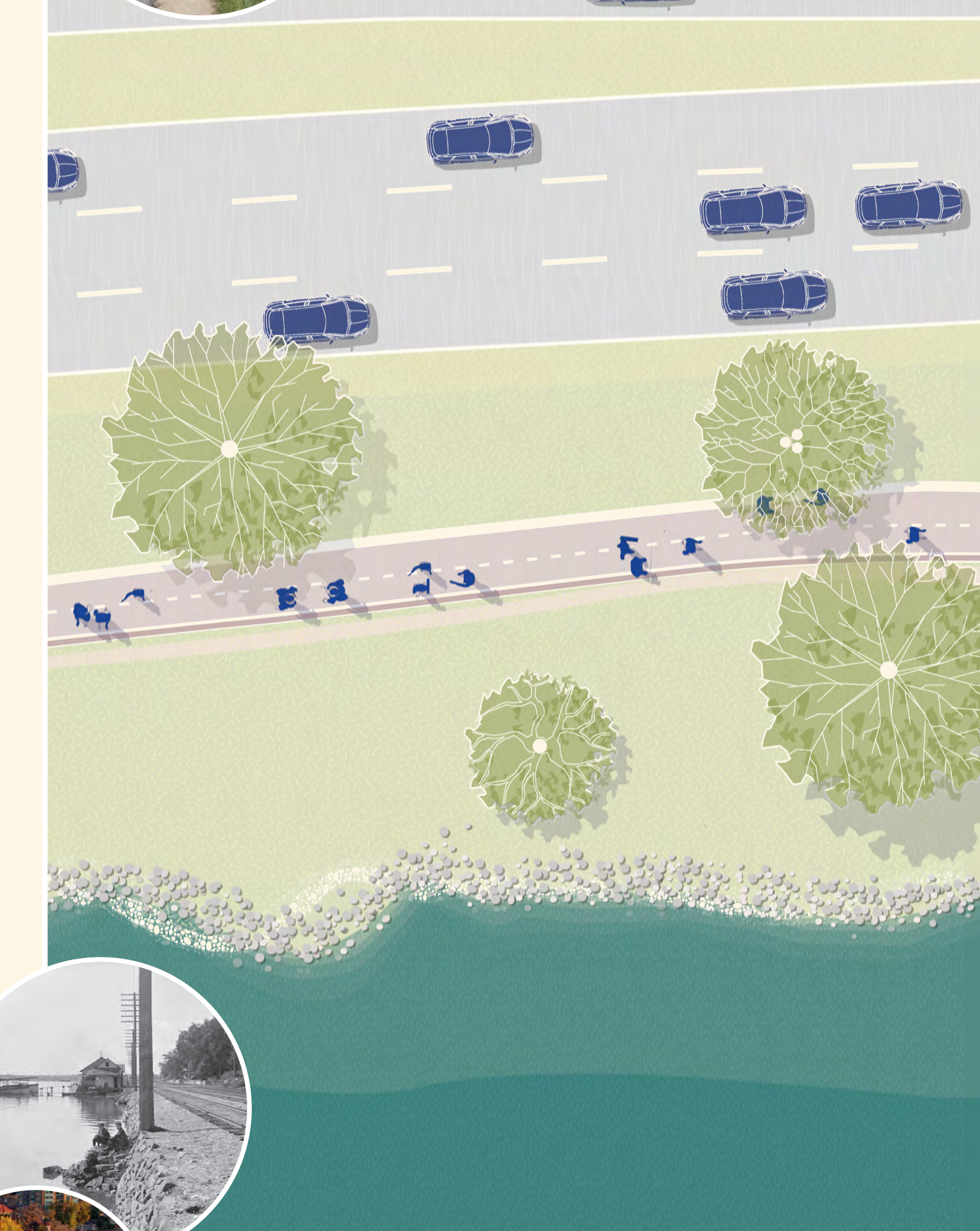


**WATER HAS MEMORY**  
Madison is one of the richest American cities when it comes to archaeology. Recent excavations include hand-dug canoes used by members of the Ho-Chunk Nation from over 12,000 years ago (and continues today).

### Existing Condition

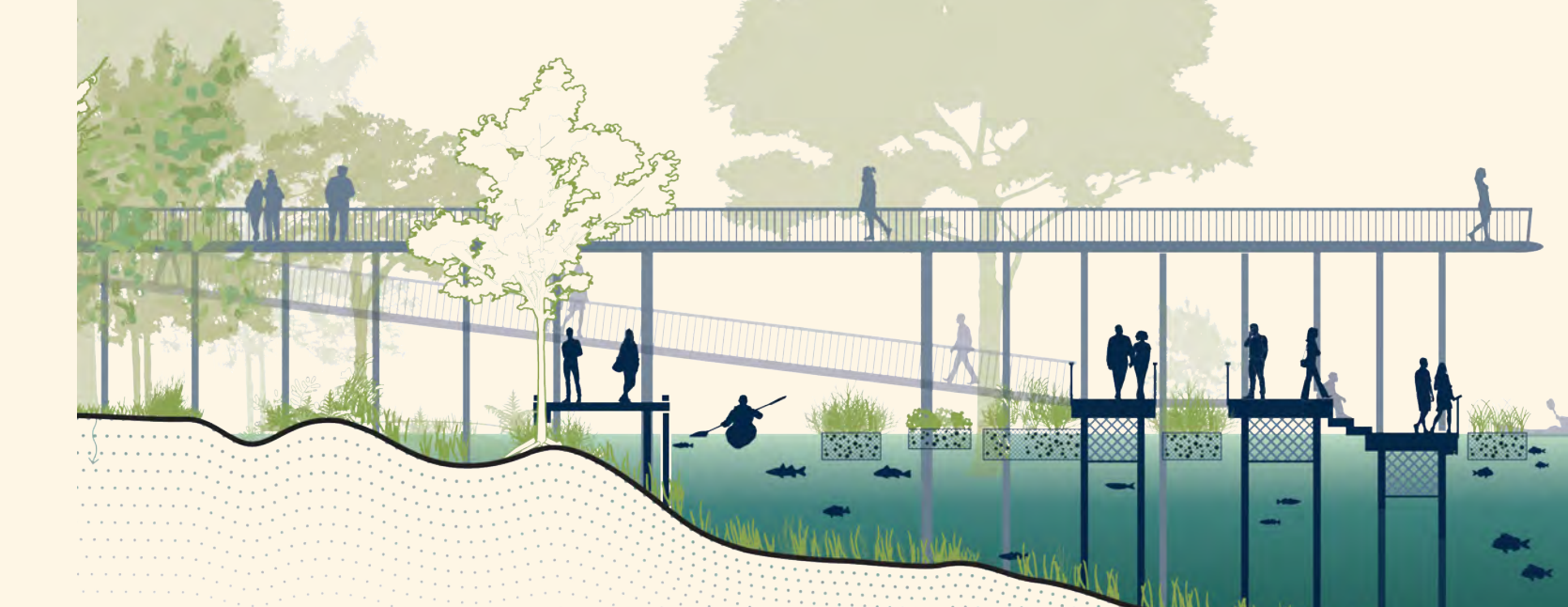


**THE BIG SQUEEZE**  
Today, the noise and risk of fast-moving traffic dominates the experience of the Causeway. An imminent reconstruction project is a catalyst for a new and more inclusive way forward!



**A FLAT LANDSCAPE**  
In the 20th Century, practices such as filling and armoring the lake edge allowed for railroad and roadway development but severely compromised the rich and dynamic ecological function.

### Proposed Condition



**MULTIPLE PATHS OF DISCOVERY**  
An ecologically-restored edge offers a dynamic setting for various paths of different speeds. The Walk on Water allows for slower moving users, offering places to pause, stroll and dangle feet.



**AN INNOVATIVE, LIVING SHORELINE**  
The Walk on Water is supported by a structural system that mimics a breakwater or an artificial reef, minimizing wave and ice flow impacts to the shoreline.

## Multiple Paths of Discovery ...



## ... All Year Round



