

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DRAFT

The Conservancy Lands Plan 2018-2023 is a guiding document for City of Middleton's land stewardship activities on its conservancy lands.

DRAFT



PLAN OBJECTIVES

The Plan intends to:

- incorporate changes to conservancy lands that have occurred since 2011
- document past land stewardship activities in conservancies and summarize current conditions
- update system-wide map of Middleton's conservancies
- provide recommendations for management, policy, funding, development and staffing
- help City staff focus management priorities
- highlight opportunities for enhancement
- seek and incorporate public input about conservancy lands

The Plan does not intend to:

- Replace individual conservancy area Master Plans
- Provide recommendations related to Middleton's parks and recreation facilities (e.g. sports fields, playgrounds).

STATEMENT OF NEED

The prior Conservancy Lands Plan expired in 2016, therefore, a five-year update is overdue. An up to date plan is a standard component for grant eligibility.

MIDDLETON'S CONSERVANCY LANDS AT A LOCAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SCALE

The Plan seeks to incorporate past changes to Middleton and its surrounding community as well as projected future changes. Trends include population growth in Middleton and its surrounding communities, increasing infrastructure and reduction of undeveloped land, and increasing demands for outdoor recreation. Such trends are occurring while the need for preserving ecosystem services, such as clean water, is increasingly imperative. Expected stagnant funding and staffing levels put additionally pressure on managing conservancy lands. Ecological and economic sustainability are therefore key components of preserving conservancy lands into the future.

Since 2010 Middleton's population has grown 15%, with continued expected population growth through 2040¹. At the same time that Middleton grows, it also ages. At the County scale the population of residents over 65 is expected to increase at three times the rate of youths under 19. Middleton seeks to improve user experience for aging seniors through its ongoing accessibility initiatives later discussed in the Plan.

Population growth in Middleton and adjacent municipalities is correlated with increased urbanization and new building development. Development of previously agricultural or open space areas creates new demands for storm water management and reduces wildlife and bird habitat. Anticipating landscape changes in Middleton and the surrounding region is necessary for envisioning the future of Middleton's conservancy lands system, its connectivity to other regional public lands, and its ability to serve ecosystem functions.

At a regional and national scale, interest in outdoor recreation and fitness is experiencing an upward trend². The positive health effects of exercise are well documented and more recently, the positive health effects of spending time in nature are being investigated. Providing opportunities for exercising concurrently with experiencing nature is an essential element of Middleton's conservancy lands system.

Future funding

Current staffing and funding levels are a constraint on conservancy lands management and enhancement. Future funding, staffing levels, and staff expertise will need to adjust to demands of the conservancy lands system. Future funding of conservancy lands will require contributions through grants and donations, including the Middleton Area Public Lands Endowment (MAPLE).

Land management strategies

Land management strategies guiding recommendations in this Plan include maximizing return on investment of past management efforts, developing and maintaining connections between conservancy lands, protecting vulnerable and ecologically significant areas and incorporating stakeholder investment in restoration and management.

1 Wisconsin Demographic Services Center. 2013. Population and Household Projections, produced in 2013, based from 2010 Census. Wisconsin Department of Administration. Accessed January 1, 2018. <https://doa.wi.gov>

2 Outdoor Industry Association. 2017. Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Economy Report. Accessed February 2, 2018 <https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/wisconsin-outdoor-recreation-economy-report/>

PLANNING PROCESS

November 7, 2017	Award of Service approved by Common Council
November 15, 2017	Kick-off meeting with project team including Adaptive Restoration, LLC (AR), Resolution Studio, LLC (RS), the Director of Public Lands, Recreation and Forestry, and the Assistant Director of Public Lands and Forestry/Forester. Timeline of project and project scope was discussed.
December 12, 2017	Stakeholder Meeting: AR and RS presented to the Friends of Pheasant Branch Board. Discussed project goals and timeline, and solicited input from the Friends.
December 16, 2017	Stakeholder Meeting: AR and the Director of Public Lands, Recreation and Forestry hosted a walk and talk with the Friends of Kettle Ponds and other interested residents at Tiedeman Pond. The walk and talk provided an open forum for public comment and discussion.
January 1, 2018 - January 31, 2018	The Conservancy Lands Plan Update Survey was open for response through Polco's online platform or printed surveys available at the Middleton Senior Center. Public written comments were solicited and received.
January 20, 2018	Public Input Meeting: AR and the Assistant Director of Public Lands and Forestry/Forester hosted a 2-hour public meeting at the Middleton Public Library, Central Library.
January 24, 2018	AR and RS provided a project update to the Conservancy Lands Committee (CLC). The CLC provided input regarding Conservancy Lands goals and objectives and system facilities maps.
February 28, 2018	AR and RS provided a project update to the CLC. The CLC provided input regarding prioritization of conservancy land areas.
April 11, 2018	A draft Plan was made available to the CLC and the public for review.
April 25, 2018	AR presented a draft Plan to the CLC for approval.
May 5, 2018	AR presented Plan to the Common Council for approval.

The planning process guided by the Public Lands, Recreation and Forestry Department and the Conservancy Lands Committee.

The process involved stakeholder engagement, solicitation of public input through a formal public meeting and a dedicated Conservancy Lands survey. The survey reached 419 respondents.

SUPPORTING PLANS

City of Middleton Conservancy Lands Plan (2011-2016)

City of Middleton Comprehensive Park and Open Space Plan (2014-2019)

City of Middleton Comprehensive Plan (2006)

City of Middleton Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2009)

Middleton Urban Greenway Area Study, TID#3 (2016)

Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan (2018-2023)

Wisconsin State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2011-2016)

Middleton's Comprehensive ADA Review (2012)