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Town Centre Park Master Plan Proposed Woodland Restoration

On October 26th, 2023, staff from The Conservation Foundation met with Woodridge Park District staff to learn of the upcoming, planned woodland restoration work associated with Phase Two of the Town Centre Master Plan. Park District staff provided a tour of the woodland areas, along with a tree survey and the concept plans.

The majority of the woodland areas were dominated by invasive, non-native trees and shrubs. Common Buckthorn, *Rhamnus cathartica* and 'Bush' Honeysuckle species, *Lonicera spp.* were most prominent. The larger trees present were also primarily non-native. There was little evidence of a healthy, diverse plant and habitat community present.

Buckthorn and honeysuckle are extremely aggressive and outcompete native species, including the herbaceous plants growing beneath them. This unbalanced system does not support healthy and diverse wildlife habitat. In addition, the dense stands impede vision and create an uninviting environment for park patrons.

We agree with the planned work to remove the invasive understory brush, along with hazardous and non-native tree species. Ideally, work would combine both tasks in unison and the entire woodland area within Phase Two is completed as one effort. If non-native species remain in adjacent sections, they likely will continue to drop seeds and spread into the areas recently cleared, diminishing the effort to improve the habitat system. We encourage the Park District to keep several dead or declining native trees to serve as wildlife habitat, as long as they pose no hazardous risk to park visitors. These trees will eventually decompose to add much needed nutrients to the soil.

After the non-native shrubs and trees are removed, the Park District's intent is to seed the areas with native vegetation, and plant a variety of native trees and shrubs to improve the habitat. We support and applaud these efforts.

While the initial non-native tree and shrub removal may result in a very dramatic visual change, the plan to reintroduce native plants and trees will support a more diverse, dynamic, healthy and balanced natural area. The wildlife that use these areas now will have the adjacent Hathorne Hill Woods to serve as habitat while the restoration work takes place. As the woodlands recover and native plants grow and dominate, more and diverse wildlife will benefit from the improvements than if these areas were to remain in present condition. Opening these areas will also improve aesthetics of the park and create a safer, more inviting environment.

Before the project commences, we encourage the Park District to continue open communications with the Woodridge community and adjacent neighbors through letters, social media, meetings and site signage.

Brook McDonald, President/C.E.O.
The Conservation Foundation

Great Lakes Urban Forestry Management

1485 Louis Bork Dr #113
Batavia, IL 60510
630-762-2400 Fax 630/578-1304
www.glurbanforestry.com



January 10th, 2024
Attn: Chris Pollock / Jennifer Knitter
Woodridge Park District
2600 Center Dr
Woodridge, IL 60517
Re: Jubilee Point Park – Letter of Support

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Steve Lane, and I am the Lead Urban Forestry Consultant with Great Lakes Urban Forestry, and have been familiar with Woodridge Park District's staff and projects for the better part of 10 years now. Additionally, I am an Ecologist, and my work and study focuses very heavily on the important interactions between trees, and the ecological communities which support them. It is primarily for these reasons that staff at Woodridge Park District asked for my assistance in reviewing the plan set for Jubilee Point park and to provide this letter of support.

The existing plant community at Jubilee Point Park is extremely low quality. The dominant woody plant species are European Buckthorn, which is highly invasive and keeps other more desirable trees such as Oaks from establishing, as well as Cottonwoods and other weak wooded successional species which outcompete more desirable native trees. The herbaceous species are all of low quality as well. The plan set which I reviewed will actually provide enhancement to this area by planting more native trees, wildflowers, and grasses, which in turn will attract wildlife, birds, and beneficial insects, and begin to build an actual ecological community for all forms of life to enjoy. And that doesn't even include the enhancement which are planned for humans, which will attract more people to this site so they can learn about these fascinating ecosystems and plant communities.

In short, I fully support this project as it is currently planned and believe it will provide ecological enhancement to the area, which will attract beneficial wildlife and birds, and also be a sanctuary for people to learn about and enjoy nature. While I understand there have been some arguments against this development which are based on the "loss of greenspace", this is a misinterpretation of the plans. These are clearly plans for removal of invasive and aggressive species, and replanting with native species. This is not a reduction in greenspace, its an enhancement of greenspace.

Best regards,

Stephen Lane

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Lane".

Lead Urban Forestry Consultant
Great Lakes Urban Forestry Management
ISA Certified Arborist #IL 4565A-AM





University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Sciences
Extension Forestry Program
354 State Highway 145N
Simpson, IL 62985

January 24, 2024

Christopher Pollack
Natural Resources Manager
Woodridge Park District
Woodridge, IL

Dear Christopher,

Thank you for the opportunity to read through and review your draft Natural Area Improvement Plan for Jubilee Point Park. I support efforts to implement management activities that restore natural ecosystems, promote native species, and reduce the abundance of invasive species on the landscape.

Natural Resource Management is most successful when it is guided by a thorough plan that is based upon solid data. I was very pleased to see the inclusion of a tree and plant inventory in your plan. I would recommend to continue to conduct periodic inventories and use them to both evaluate success of management activities and adapt management approaches as needed.

Research, such as that conducted by Doug Tallamy, is showing the critical ecological role of native species and natural spaces within urban and residential areas. These sites serve as valuable habitat, stop-over locales, and corridors for countless species as well as providing important social benefits to the human residents of the area. I look forward to seeing how this work progresses into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher Evans".

Christopher Evans
Extension Forestry and Research Specialist
University of Illinois, Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Sciences



THE
CHAMPION
of TREES

4100 Illinois Route 53 • Lisle, IL 60532
630-968-0074 • mortonarb.org

February 6, 2024

Woodridge Park District
Attn: Chris Pollock
2600 Center Drive
Woodridge, IL 60517

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Stephanie Adams, I am an arborist, plant pathologist, and plant health care leader at The Morton Arboretum. I have been working with the Woodridge Park District staff for about seven years on projects related to the health, longevity, and well-being of the trees in the Woodridge Park District.

I'm writing this letter in support of the woodland restoration project associate with the Jubilee Point Park Natural Area development. While the initial stages of the project will appear startling, the future the area will be a highly valuable and a regularly utilized natural area enjoyed by the community. Developing greenspaces contributes to the health and well-being of community members and it supports native flora and fauna, and biodiversity.

The Park District has previously successfully demonstrated its ability and dedication toward developing greenspaces for the community. Managed greenspaces allow for a wide range of residents and visitors to escape into nature in ways that are easily accessible and comfortable. These beautiful greenspaces make spending time in nature relaxing and fun for the whole family.

I'm looking forward to visiting Jubilee Point Park with my family in the future.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephanie Adams".

Stephanie Adams, Ph.D.
ISA Board Certified Master Arborist