

Friends of Sauk Creek: Hundreds on West Side say City ignores environmental concerns

Posted on Monday, Nov 14, 2022

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MADISON, Wi. (Nov. 14, 2022) -As the Madison City Council gets closer to Tuesday's budget vote, residents of three West Side neighborhoods say the city engineering department, the city council, and mayor's office refuse to give out information about a \$4 million budget proposal that could remove 5,000 trees on the West Side, one of the last largely wooded areas in Madison.

Neighbors delivered petitions with 380 names recently to city hall and display about 40 lawn signs in their yards asking for input and expressing concerns about the city engineering department's project called the Sauk Creek Restoration Project.

The Friends say the Sauk Creek woods, once described by city engineering as one of the city's "gems," absorbs water, cleans the air, and protects against climate change.

Removing a great number of the trees, adding a service road, and paving a bike path inside the 26-acre Sauk Creek area counters state, county and city policies that support the needed tree canopy, neighbors say.

"At every level, we are being asked to protect these urban green spaces," said Michael Notaro, a director at UW-Madison's Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and neighbor.

Randy Bruegman, a retired fire chief and spokesperson for Friends of Sauk Creek, said neighbors have opposed the project since meetings with city engineers in 2018 but they cannot get details about how many of the Sauk Creek 5,000 trees will be

removed when the project is scheduled to start in 2024.

“For four years, neighbors with a deep commitment to the environment have asked for details but we can’t get any,” said Bruegman. “The city engineers put a \$4 million price tag on the project so they must have plans that we could see.”

George Meyer, a neighbor and former Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, said the first design of the project in 2018 was overengineered.

“We all agree that the woods and creek need cleanup. Getting feedback from residents can help right-size the project,” Meyer said.

The city says it needs the massive project for flood control due to runoff from the nearby Target and Menards. There has been no flooding in the neighborhoods.

Gwen Long, a founder of Friends of Sauk Creek, said residents plan to attend the city budget hearing in person Nov. 15 and register to speak in a last attempt to get the city council to delay the project and stop the bike path that require significant tree removal.

ABOUT FRIENDS OF SAUK CREEK:

Friends of Sauk Creek started in 2022 as an advocacy group for the environment and citizen engagement focused on a proposed reconstruction of the 5,595-tree Sauk Creek area on Madison’s West Side. The group favors environmentally friendly stormwater improvements to the unique 26.4-acre park-like area that is home to one of Madison’s few remaining large woods, habitats for birds, water absorbing vegetation and the 1-mile-long Sauk Creek. Friends of Sauk Creek oppose city projects that are not consistent with the city’s sustainability objectives or those developed without full public disclosure and input. Working with residents from three neighborhoods, Friends of Sauk Creek collected petitions with 380 signatures and provided lawn signs for area residents. The group meets bi-weekly. For more information, visit [Friends of Sauk Creek website](#) or email Gwen Long at gwenlong6@gmail.com.