

# **San Damiano Property Vision and Statement of Purpose February 2023**

## **A. Background and Project Formation**

The property known as San Damiano, located on the north end of the City of Monona, is about 10 acres with 1450 linear feet of shoreline on Lake Monona. In 2020, the Norbertines, a denomination of the Catholic Church, notified the City of Monona of its intention to sell the property. At that time, the City asked for a period of 4 months to consider the feasibility of the city purchasing the property. Due to the COVID pandemic, consideration was extended to 6 months. During this time, the City hired a consultant to conduct a Fundraising Feasibility Study, largely within the limits of Monona, for the property's purchase. A key finding from Feasibility Study respondents was that San Damiano was not viewed as a City of Monona asset but a *Lake Monona destination*.

In July of 2020, the Friends of San Damiano (Friends) was formed as a nonprofit organization with a mission to "advance the use of the property known as San Damiano as a place for public recreation, interpretive programming, and peaceful reflection." In short, to conserve the property for future generations. In September 2020, the Monona City Council voted unanimously to purchase the property for \$8.6 million, below its appraised value. The City closed on the sale of the property in June 2021. In August of 2021, the City of Monona and the Friends formalized cooperative activities with a Memorandum of Understanding stating that while the City owns the property and will maintain the property, the Friends will be responsible for fundraising.

Finally, on 8/16/2021, a San Damiano Steering Committee was formed of 10 representatives including city residents, the school district, a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation, and others with backgrounds and expertise to guide a master planning process for the property. The Steering Committee built consensus around and approved its mission: to preserve the property known as San Damiano as a financially feasible public asset.

Since purchasing the property, the City has hired consultants and engineers to complete a structural survey of the house (results stated that it was in good to fair condition), and an archeologist to do a field and literature study to review historical documents of the property and identify any effigy mounds (report stated none were found).

In the summer of 2022, MSA Professional Services was hired as a consultant to conduct a community engagement and master planning process with an agreed upon completion date of December 2023. Once completed and approved by the Steering Committee at that time, the master plan will be sent to the Monona City Council for final approval.

To date, community engagement has been the focus of the master planning. An initial public survey was completed (with 1600 respondents) and a summary of the results was shared at the first public input session on October 16, 2022. Five focus groups were also conducted by MSA - one of the Ho-Chunk Nation, one with nonprofit organizations and community groups, one with

local businesses, one with the schools, one with the Parks & Recreation staff, as well as one with the Friends of San Damiano. The input from the public through the survey, initial public input session, focus groups and Steering Committee meetings has been extrapolated to produce three concept plans from MSA. Once finalized by the Steering Committee, those will be made available for another round of public feedback in the spring of 2023.

## **B. Summary of Public Input/Focus Groups**

- a. Elements (Topics of consensus) concept plans **should** include
  - i. Honoring the historical importance of the property, especially the Ho-Chunk's ancestral connection.
  - ii. Four-season experience
  - iii. Keep the peaceful serenity of the property.
  - iv. Four-season restrooms
  - v. Natural paths
  - vi. New property name
  - vii. Accessible by multi-modal transportation (i.e. bikes, pedestrian, vehicles, boats, etc.)
  - viii. Revenue generating
  - ix. Improvements need to be inclusive and accessible for all abilities.
  - x. Community garden
  - xi. Outdoor performance/gathering space
  - xii. Storage for maintenance equipment
  - xiii. Any facility needs - kitchen, classroom, restrooms
  
- b. Elements (topics of general consensus) concept plans **should not** include
  - i. Anything restricted by the Dane County Conservation Grant and Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant
  - ii. Active recreation (i.e. athletic fields, typical playground equipment, etc.)
  - iii. Not be over-developed - keep natural setting
  - iv. Cement pathways
  - v. Private commercial facility (ex. Privately owned restaurant, hotel, etc.)
  - vi. Traditional playground
  - vii. Large spaces for private events
  - viii. Large parking lots
  
- c. Elements and considerations that did not achieve general consensus:
  - i. Plans for the Frank Allis House and/or other facility needs

## **C. Other Major Planning Inputs**

- a. Archaeological Survey
- b. Graef Structural Assessment Report - Frank Allis House
- c. 2019 Pre-demolition Hazardous Materials Study of the Allis House

#### **D. Vision Statement**

**To create a sustainable and serene, natural lakeside destination offering recreational, cultural, and educational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.**

#### **E. Goals**

- a. Create opportunities for recreation, education, and community gathering throughout the year for people of all ages.
- b. Preserve the natural environment and tranquility that currently exists at San Damiano
- c. Increase public access to the property and to Lake Monona, both from land and water
- d. Honor and share the full history of the place currently called San Damiano
- e. Sustain and support property improvements and ongoing operating costs by leveraging philanthropy and revenue generating opportunities.

#### **F. Priority Audiences, Visitors, and Partners**

- a. Audiences
  - i. Monona Residents
  - ii. Dane County Residents
  - iii. Area businesses
  - iv. Boaters, Bikers
  - v. Partner organization constituencies
  - vi. Potential property or facility renters
- b. Partners (not an exhaustive list)
  - i. Ho-Chunk Nation
  - ii. City of Monona Departments
  - iii. Friends of San Damiano
  - iv. Monona Grove School District
  - v. Clean Lakes Alliance
  - vi. Aldo Leopold Nature Center

#### **G. Desired Outcomes**

- a. Public and private funds are raised to support desired improvements, purchase, and operating costs.
- b. Property improvements allow for education, programming, low impact recreation during all four seasons.
- c. Property improvements and the planning process fosters authentic engagement with, use and participation by the Ho-Chunk Nation, resulting in educational and programming partnerships and opportunities.
- d. Property accessibility improves and usage increases.

- e. Retains its environmental value as wildlife habitat, a birding “hot spot,” and a haven for migrating birds, as well as contributing to the water quality of Lake Monona (through the reduction of stormwater runoff) and to the climate (through the absorption of carbon dioxide through its tree canopy and landscape).
- f. Successfully branded/positioned as Lake Monona *public* destination, approachable/accessible for all individuals in the metro area and beyond
- g. Financial feasibility
  - i. Project Budget
    - 1. Purchase
      - a. Balance of \$6,350,001 (purchase price minus grants)
      - b. City’s goal: no more than \$4 million paid by the city
    - 2. Improvements
      - a. Landscape
      - b. Facility
      - c. Waterfront
      - d. Park amenities (ex. pathways, equipment, etc.)
    - 3. Operational
      - a. Maintenance
      - b. Programming and events
  - ii. Public - Sources
    - 1. Tax revenue
      - a. City of Monona capital budget - \$4M
    - 2. Public Grants
      - a. \$249,999 from WI DNR
      - b. \$2,000,000 from Dane County
  - iii. Private - Sources
    - 1. Capital Campaign
      - a. Purchase
      - b. Improvements
      - c. Operating Endowment corpus
    - 2. Operations
      - a. Earned revenues
      - b. Annual fundraising
      - c. Sponsorship
      - d. Operating endowment distribution