



Middleton Hills Boardwalk Information Sheet

The Middleton Hills Boardwalk is a wooden framed structure with wood decking originally built in 2000 and is in serious need of replacement. The boardwalk has frequently been closed due to high water levels over the past several years and is often inaccessible during the winter. The Conservancy Lands Committee has been requesting capital funding for this project for many years with funding being awarded by the Common Council in the 2018 budget.

The proposed plan is to leave the wetland viewing platforms, remove the damaged boardwalk, and construct a paved path. Please see the included map.

The proposed project will meet several goals in addition to restoring native vegetation and providing wildlife habitat:

1. Provide a year-round safe and accessible route through this area.
2. Cattail presence has increased over recent years and reduces desired habitat for birds and other wildlife.
3. Restoration of appropriate native vegetation.
4. Management of the vegetation requires prescribed burns and the wooden boardwalk makes the burns difficult.
5. The boardwalk to the viewing stands will remain. This allows citizens to quietly interact with nature without interference from passersby.

Staff presented the following as reason to look at alternative approaches.

-) Just replacing the boardwalk will not resolve issues with it being closed during high water events which have happened frequently over the past several years. These high water events often times require the boardwalk to be repaired as frames can be forced off the resting locations and/or the decking is damaged.
-) The original resting pad construction consisted of square steel tubing bolted onto recycled plastic boards to distribute the weight of the boardwalk. This design does not have any further height adjustment possibilities and would need to be replaced for a new system. Staff has concerns with the difficulty of removal and replacement of these pads as they have been in place for 18 years with an unknown amount of sediment over them now.
-) The eco system has changed over time resulting in the invasion of cattails due to higher water levels. Originally this area was a dry basin that was only wet after rain fall. A major goal of the Conservancy Lands Committee is restoration of native ecosystems throughout conservancy lands as identified in the [Conservancy Lands Plan 2018-2023](#).
-) The boardwalk presents a hazard during prescribed burns. City staffs conduct prescribed burns to control invasive species present within the conservancy area.

- J The City does not clear snow from boardwalks and during the winter months usability of the boardwalk is limited.
- J Removing the boardwalk reduces wetland habitat fragmentation and provides opportunity for further restoration management of this eco-system.

The concept of replacing the boardwalk with a paved trail was presented to the Conservancy Lands Committee on May 29th and gained approval. Conservancy Lands approved a proposal with MSA Professional Services for a not to exceed fee of \$22,900 on June 27, 2018. This was approved by the Finance Committee and Common Council on July 3rd. The concept was presented to the Middleton Hills Home Owners Association in June. The HOA has taken no stance on this issue.

The trail concept presented by MSA includes replacing the existing 4 gabion structures with 2 outflow structures to allow for a continuous paved path. The path would provide a year-round accessible path connection that would be cleared of snow. The projected cost of the path is \$140,000.



White – Boardwalk to remain leading to observation areas (225' North and 75' south)

Red – Boardwalk to be removed (423')

Yellow – Proposed trail enhancement area (800' existing boardwalk length is 700 feet)