



Green Lake Conservancy Foundation

By Erin Abler

The Green Lake area is known for its vibrant community, natural beauty, and outstanding recreational opportunities. For those who work with the Green Lake Conservancy Foundation, each of these qualities also goes hand-in-hand with preservation of Green Lake's natural areas. Bob Burke, who sits on the Conservancy's Board of Directors, recently shared his knowledge about the organization with me.

Founded in 1995, the Green Lake Conservancy Foundation brought together "interested citizens, both local and seasonal, who wanted to preserve the integrity of the Green Lake area." As Bob recalls, "There was a need that was recognized on the board of the Green Lake Association [...] to have a local organization that could receive land for conservation purposes and hold the land or transfer it to another nonprofit for perpetual conservation." Today the Conservancy has graduated to the stringent guidelines of the Land Trust Alliance, a national organization of land trusts. Working in cooperation with Green Lake County's long-term conservation plan, the Conservancy also collaborates with state organizations that assist with land purchases.

Most projects are initiated by landowners, who contact the Conservancy to learn how their land can be preserved. "There are three ways this can be done," Bob says. "One is through the donation of land, another is the donation of a conservation easement, and the third is

a sale—sale of land or of conservation easement rights—either at a market value or at what's called a 'bargain sale.' What we have found is that the primary motivation of a landowner is to protect the integrity of their land. Basically, the landowner loves the land and wants to see it preserved from future development." Tax incentives are also available for landowners who designate land for conservation.

Bob explains how one such option works. "The conservation easement is a contract between a landowner and a qualified land trust or government agency, whereby the landowner commits the land for limited development and with a primary conservation objective," he says. "The Conservancy acknowledges that there is a fundamentally significant objective in preserving this land in perpetuity. The easement contract itself is recorded with the register of deeds and 'runs with the land'—that's a legal expression meaning that it becomes a permanent condition of use of that land."

The resulting successes stand out. Bob cites the Sugar Island project, located east of the Silver Creek Causeway on County Road A. "The Conservancy contributed funds to the purchase of that land and also negotiated the purchase and facilitated its acquisition by the state agency," he says. "Another significant property is the Norwegian Bay walk area. It's a 500-ft. wooden walkway that goes out through wooded wetlands

and into the center of Norwegian Bay, with absolutely beautiful views of the lake."

Not content to enjoy these views alone, the Green Lake Conservancy Foundation conserves and protects Green Lake's natural treasures so that future generations may benefit.

For more information, write to Green Lake Conservancy Foundation, Inc., P. O. Box 52, Green Lake, WI 54941, visit greenlakeconservancyfoundation.org, or call (920) 294-3592.

Erin Abler is a freelance writer. Photographs provided by Green Lake Conservancy Foundation.

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13 sites
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so far...



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