

## DUNN'S MARSH

# A Wonderful Place to Visit Or Call Home

*Madison, like many other cities, is a collection of neighborhoods all lending a hand in creating the wonderful place as we know it today. One of these areas is the Dunn's Marsh Neighborhood. Dunn's Marsh has a rich history and many environmental features which make the neighborhood a great place to live and visit. It's also very accessible by car, bus, and bike.*

by **DEBORA BORTOLETTI, HAILEY MEIER & RILEY RUEGSEGGER**

**D**unn's Marsh Neighborhood is located in southwest Madison, south of the Beltline and also bordered by Verona Road, Seminole Highway, and Dunn's Marsh.

A look back at the neighborhood would show a place dotted with cornfields and pasture. Dunn's Marsh has changed tremendously since then. Much of the preservation of its rural character can be traced to the Dunn's Marsh Neighborhood Association (DMNA).

Founded in 1973, this organization of community members set out to make the area a jewel in the city, and they did just that. DMNA has maintained many of the original environmental features which made the area appealing for early residents. Intense lobbying over the years has resulted in ample public parkland, a bike-friendly atmosphere, better water quality decisions, and preservation of natural areas.

One of the biggest victories for the neighborhood association occurred in 1979 when residents fought to acquire a buffer area around the marsh. A buffer area is a piece of land immediately adjacent to a wetland that is set aside as a transition zone.

They wanted to make sure that great features such as wetlands were not destroyed. Together, they fought housing developers who wanted to build closer to the marsh.

DMNA successfully saved the vacant land near the wetland, pre-



*Part of why they call it Dunn's Marsh.*

venting increased runoff rainwater from apartments and the chemicals and other contaminants that would have entered the marsh from their parking lots. DMNA -- in conjunction with the city of Madison, Fitchburg, Dane County, and state and federal governments -- purchased the land which still serves to protect the marsh.

Even prior to the struggle for the marsh buffer area, neighbors in the DMNA knew they desperately needed a permanent park for the area. The result of their lobbying was the creation of 19-acre Marlborough Park. The park can be accessed from many streets that intersect with Seminole Highway - Milford Road, the flower-named streets and Sentinel Pass - as well

as from Apache Drive on the west.

Marlborough Park has its unique characteristics. Within the park are community vegetable gardens, a paved bike path, woods, and unmowed grassy acreage that retain the rural atmosphere. The community gardens allow area residents to grow their own vegetables throughout summer. These are unique components that you rarely find in a city park.

What do residents love about Dunn's Marsh?

"In the past couple of years I've been watching as the beavers fell trees near the new detention pond that was built between Dunn's Marsh and Seminole Highway and just south of what will be the Cannonball Trail," points out

Mary Mullen of the Dunn's Marsh Neighborhood. "It's great to see the migrating water birds on Dunn's Marsh in the spring and fall and to hear the different frogs in the spring."

Although the active people, convenient location, and Dunn's Marsh are reasons enough to choose this neighborhood, there are many other aspects which make this place enticing. Today, besides enjoying walks in the Dunn's Marsh conservancy, residents can roam the University of Wisconsin-Arboretum or bike on the Southwest Bike path which runs through the neighborhood.

The Arboretum is located directly across Seminole Highway from the neighborhood. It offers lots of opportunities for exercise, research,

and educational programs. The numerous walking trails wind through different kinds of flora. Free guided walks are available each Sunday, as well as an evening walk once a month. The walks offer a basic introduction to the Arboretum, as well as some identification of plants and animals. On the second Saturday of most months, there is a two-hour, kid-friendly program.

The program entails nature hikes, stories, crafts and activities to explore animals, plants, and natural phenomena. The visitor center, located on the premises, allows people to educate themselves about the Arboretum and history of the land.

“I gathered asparagus and picked raspberries in the Arboretum and also learned to identify birds by both sight and song,” Mary Mullen explains. “It feels like an extension of my back yard. How many people in the city have 1,200 acres of rural land with prairies, forests, marshes, and springs all in walking distance? I feel that it’s mine – and for only the cost of my state taxes. Quite the bargain!”



*Quality of life: Dorothy's garden.*

Another fascinating feature of the neighborhood is access to bike paths which run for miles beyond the area. The Capital City Bike Trail travels through the city of Madison for approximately 17 miles.

A link along Verona Road in Fitchburg connects the Capital City

Trail to the Military Ridge State Trail. The Military Ridge Trail connection offers availability to Governor Dodge State Park as well as Blue Mounds State Park.

The Capital City Trail also connects to Madison's Southwest Path and the Badger State Trail that runs

to the Illinois border. All of these trails are accessible via Dunn's Marsh. The trails run through the neighborhood and offer entry to many of the parks.

The Dunn's Marsh Neighborhood is a jewel hidden among many other areas in Madison. The easy access of travel is reason enough to move. However, with environmental features such as the bike trail, community parks, and UW-Madison Arboretum, the area is almost too good to pass up. The lively community and DMNA are continually working to sustain the current natural habitat and improve existing ones.

If you are looking to visit a place rich in history, neighborhood pride, and proven sense of self, then hop on the bike trail and make your way to Dunn's Marsh. It's a great neighborhood to visit or call home.

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