



Olin Park Project

**South District Community Policing Team
Madison Police Department**

February 2009 through June 2010

Olin Park Project

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Summary

Olin Park Project

Olin Park and Turville Woods Conservancy are located in the City of Madison approximately a mile from the State Capitol. They include over a mile of shoreline and a wooded point that projects into Lake Monona. The point offers fantastic views of the Madison skyline and hiking in a mature oak woods full of wildflowers and birds. A citizen survey in the adjacent Bay Creek Neighborhood revealed that 83% of those surveyed avoided the park because of its reputation. Most were unaware of the existence of the 65-acre conservancy.

Scan

As a new officer on the South District Community Policing Team in February 2009, Officer Michele Walker chose Olin Park as a Problem Oriented Policing project from a top ten list of the South District's worst problems. It was certainly the most substantial and complex of the problems on the list. The appropriation of an urban park for public anonymous sex is not a new problem¹. Surprisingly, there was no public or official outcry over the longstanding takeover of this park. Individual officers had adopted Olin as a project as early 1988. The failure of the Department's annual enforcement effort was a factor in its selection as a project. But Michele soon developed a passion for restoring this natural treasure to the citizens of Madison.

Analysis

Using citizen surveys, surveillance, GPS mapping, police data and interviews with stakeholders we learned that most of what we thought they we knew about the problem was a myth. The problem was local with a core group of several hundred regular users driving it. We learned that the scope of the problem was huge involving an average of almost 200 individuals a day. Public apathy contributed to the problem. The most important lesson was that this is not a gay issue.

We defined the problem as the exclusion of the citizens of Madison from the park. We avoided moral judgments and focused on behaviors that were inappropriate for this place. We concluded that fear of lurking, stalking-like behaviors kept people away. Our strategy was to suggest environmental design solutions that were sustainable without the continuous input of police resources. It was critical to make citizens feel safer in order to bring legitimate users into the park. The reputation of the park needed to be replaced with a new image.

Responses

Dozens of responses were considered. Some became unnecessary as the initial responses were more effective than anticipated. These six were implemented between March 2009 and November 2010:

- A presentation of photographs, video and booklets designed to help citizens and city agencies understand the problem and to ask them to join in a partnership to begin changing the park was delivered to all who would listen
- Using the media to change public perceptions of the park was a tactic we fell into but it became a key component as every step along the way attracted attention
- Bio-litter cleanup began as a chore that needed doing and became a measure of success
- The Parks Department's goal of ecological restoration and the project's goal of removing thickets and increasing natural observation coincided as we worked jointly with parks employees to clear invasive shrubs
- Police sponsored spring events, including environmental programs for kids, folk concerts, and astronomer lead star parties, plus eighteen volunteer work parties, brought families into the park and created positive images of the park in the community
- Cruiser traffic was disrupted with select road closures and parking restrictions

Assessment

Relatively small design changes have produced surprisingly significant results. The clearing of invasive shrubs and thickets has brought citizens into the woods for the first time and driven the cruisers out. The 24 sex nests mapped in April 2009 have been removed and only two new ones were discovered this spring. Bio-litter is nearly absent. Closing the unnecessary frontage road, a primary cruising route, reduced the presence of cruisers² by nearly 60%. But our greatest success has been progress in reversing a twenty-year reputation and replacing it with the image of the park as a place to watch baby owls, to hear folk music, to play with frogs. Olin Turville Park is becoming a place for families and kids.

¹ At least two projects on this subject have previously been submitted for the Goldstein Award and there are two POP guides that deal with sex in parks.

² Definitions: Cruisers – a convenient, non-judgmental, and often self-applied term for men who seek others in public places to participate in or watch sex acts; the acts of sexual gratification are complex and varied, not all involving partners, and should not be assumed to be exclusive to any one sexual orientation; approximately an equal number of participants identify as heterosexual and gay. Bio-litter – by products of sex acts including used condoms, condom wrappers, tubes of lubricant, sexual enhancement products, crude pornographic signs and biologically soiled wipes left behind in public places. Sex nest – another shorthand term for locations in the woods, usually in dense thickets of shrubs, used repeatedly for public sex; usually identified by the presence of bio-litter.

Olin Park Project Summary Condensed

Unique or noteworthy elements of this project:

- Chose to take the moral high ground and focus on behaviors inappropriate to the site
- Defined the problem as depriving the community of access to the park rather than sexual behavior
- Navigated the emotionally charged minefield of special interest groups and perceptions of bias
- Understood that it was necessary to consciously work to change community attitudes and perceptions
- Focused on behaviors that created fear in the community that were distinct from acts of sexual gratification
- Chose to focus on environmental design solutions
- Recognized the limitations of enforcement as a sustainable solution
- Used the “hierarchy of means”³ to overcome apathy and inertia in both the community and in government

Significant data:

1. Data collected in April 2009, October 2009, March 2010 and first half of May 2010 is consistent for the number of cruiser vehicles in the park per hour
2. Data for the second half of May 2010 and July 2010, after the road closure, shows a significant decrease (55%) in cruiser vehicles in the park
3. All 24 sex nests located in the Conservancy in 2009 are eliminated with no evidence of re-use in 2010; two new sex nests located this spring.
4. Bio-litter reduced from 24 condom wrappers collected in March 2009 to 9 collected in March 2010; but the change is actually greater than reflected in these numbers
5. Citizens attitudes reflected in neighborhood survey conducted in 2009 and 2010 show an increased willingness to visit the park and a nearly 100% awareness of and support for our efforts in the park
6. Ratio of illegitimate users to legitimate users of the Conservancy changed from 9:1 in 2010 to 1:13 in 2009
7. No community events were held in the park in April and May of 2009 compared to 22 in 2010
8. Concealment for cruisers decreased in Conservancy by clearing thickets from approx 40 of 65 acres; and in the Conservancy parking lot the number of parked vehicles was reduced effective July 1st from an average of more than 80 to less than 3 on average during peak cruising hours.

³ Herman Goldstein, 1997, unpublished; see “Shifting and Sharing”, Mike Scott

Scan

In 2006, Officer Mike Evan's, a south District patrol officer who adopted Olin Park because it was in his beat, argued that we really did not understand the scope or extent of the problem and that many of our enforcement strategies were based on myth. By recording license plates in the parking lots he determined that the user group were primarily local people, that there was a core group that visited almost daily and that there were three potential outcomes for persons who hooked up in the park: they would go into the conservancy presumably for sexual gratification, they would get together in one vehicle or they would drive in separate vehicles to another location. Prior to that the common wisdom on the Department was that because Olin was advertised on the internet and it was primarily people coming here from all over the country we could never hope to control the problem.

When Officer Walker adopted the problem in 2009, we believed that it was common knowledge by the citizens of Madison that Olin Park was a site of public sexual activity and was therefore avoided by most citizens. The park was still popular for weddings at the restored historic pavilion and with groups like the MPPOA, which has its union picnic there. We did not know if the public was aware of the existence of Turville Woods Conservancy.

I knew personally that many patrol officers had adopted Olin as a project and had tried many creative solutions for more than 20 years. The current strategy was to use special operations, loosely called 'stings', in which a group of a dozen or more officers would skulk through the woods at night and attempt to catch people in the act. For the five years prior to 2009 these ops were conducted once or twice a year resulting in 39 arrests. The majority of the charges were for going off trail, because the elements of criminal charges were difficult to obtain. These arrest figures were always released to the media and dutifully reported in print and on the air as 'Sex Sting in Olin Park Nets Arrests'.

There was no data to support that this enforcement activity suppressed activity for even a brief time. There is data to indicate that some of those arrested continued to use the parks continuously for years. It is unclear if the media coverage served as a better deterrent to citizens to avoid the park or as encouragement to the cruisers that, yes, this was the place to come. When I became the supervisor of the South District Community Policing Team in Jan 2009, I knew that it would fall to me to organize such operations unless I could come up with something better. Which is why I was so excited when Michele chose to adopt it as her project for the year. It seemed like we had been over selling enforcement as an effective tool in Olin and that was one impediment to coming up with real solutions. In our first meetings with the Parks Department, Kevin Briski, the Parks Superintendent, was adamant that we had to make the case that enforcement was not a viable solution to the Parks Commission and to the community.

In loco communitas

Should Olin Park be written off as just another city park taken over by the anonymous public sex crowd? In Madison for more than twenty years there has been no substantial public outcry for the police to do anything about it. The park does not have an inordinate amount of police calls. Crime is low. Our analysis revealed that drugs and prostitution were not significant components of the problem now, though they may have been in the recent past. The police have always perceived it as a problem though a low priority one. If it were not for the periodic "sting" operations, arrests for lewd behavior would be very low.

Is this project a legitimate use of police resources? Can we even call it a problem in the Problem Oriented Policing sense? If there was no interest in the community over the loss of this park, is it justified to commit police resources to solving the problem? I believe there are community problems in which the police must supply the outrage. When community values are suppressed out of fear, or the absence of citizens from an area results in their lacking information about a problem, it may be necessary for the police to temporarily serve as the conscience of the community. If "the police are the public" then at times we must stand in place of the community.

Once in a while, someone, usually from out of town, wanders into this fantastic lakefront park. If they are not scared away by stalking-like driving or men lurking behind trees, they witness an act of sexual gratification between consenting adults. Sometimes a school bus from rural Wisconsin on a visit to the State Capitol takes a load of kids to the top of the hill to eat their lunch while dodging vehicles being driven in loops around the hill by men seeking anonymous sexual partners. And once in a while a kid using the restroom is scared by an old man pounding on the stall door offering sex acts. These isolated incidents, while disturbing, are a relatively slight community harm.

In Feb 2009, Michele chose to attempt to understand the problem and offer substantive solutions. The sex acts leap out at you and obscure the real problem. Putting aside an emotional response to this behavior we redefined the problem as the exclusion of the citizens of Madison from one of its premier parks. The absence of these citizens inhibits establishing

community standards of behavior within the park. While there is real fear of witnessing or exposing a child to public sex acts, we believed there were other behaviors that were much more visible and much more prevalent that also created fear.

At the beginning of 2009, when I became the Sergeant for the South District Community Policing Team, Captain Balles and Lt Bradley-Wilson agreed to an experiment to have the team function as more of a problem-solving unit than a drug unit. As part of that change, I asked each of the six assigned officers to adopt one substantive problem in the district and apply a Problem Oriented Policing approach. I asked the officers to choose from a list of ten district problems that I compiled. The list had its origin in a top ten problem list created by Capt Balistreri in 1993 at district in-service. In 2006 I sought to recreate that top ten list based primarily on calls for service. Olin made that list in spite of lagging in calls because I was aware of its history. Olin made all the lists and to my surprise Officer Michele Walker chose it in 2009.

In March, Michele and I took our first tour of the conservancy together. We went in plain clothes and were planning on collecting sexual litter as evidence of the scope of the problem. We decided to count condom wrappers and came up with 25 in the first loop through the woods. The snow had only recently melted and the ground was covered with dry brown leaves. What stood out like white flags throughout the woods were clusters of wipes or tissues. We went from clump to clump picking up what we found. Some had condoms some did not. Many were located around the base of mature oak trees where the leaf litter had been pushed back all around by human activity. Other sites were near large down logs. But the most prolific spots were in the middle of dense thickets of shrubs in which nests had been carved out and there remained the signs of repeat sexual activity. The sexual litter included condom wrappers, tubes of Astroglide, sexual enhancement products, used condoms, some odd, pasted-together, pornographic signs and the used wipes. At the busiest locations we also found an abundance of other items such as beer bottles, candy and snack wrappers. Along the lakeside trail we saw a man lurking behind trees as he moved away from us. When we got to the point he popped up from behind a downed log several hundred feet off the trail and fled. Closer to the parking lot we were going after some litter which was along a trail marked "not a designated trail" when two guys appeared from behind a large oak tree pulling up their pants and running for the railroad tracks. We learned later this was a frequent escape route from the woods. We knew what we had interrupted but lacked the elements of Wisconsin's Lewd and Lascivious law (we did not observe genitals), so we did not pursue.

The entire team was needed to observe the activity in Olin park and were asked to avoid enforcement of ordinance violations they witnessed in order to collect good data. They were of course free to arrest subjects they observed committing crimes but whenever possible we chose to arrest away from the site so as not to burn the undercover officers.

Because of the popular belief that this problem was internet driven, we did searches on the web. We learned that the problems experienced in Olin were common throughout the country. From websites devoted to promoting this activity, we learned that preferred locations were mapped out. There was one other Madison park besides Olin that made the lists, but it was small and had not been active in recent memory. In Wisconsin there were places identified as "cruisy parks, cruisy rest areas, cruisy stalls and cruisy businesses". Craig's List had a few isolated references to Olin during the period when we were researching this aspect of the problem. Most chilling was a notice posted by a local man who warned that he had recently been diagnosed HIV positive and that he had been to Olin Park frequently in the past. It was pulled from the site a few days later.

Analysis

Our knowledge prior to February 2009 was series of assumptions:

1. Almost everyone in the city is aware of the parks reputation
2. Citizens avoid the park because of its reputation
3. Those engaged in the behavior are primarily gay men
4. The problems been around forever and there's nothing we can do about it
5. The park is listed in national magazines and on the internet and that drives the problem
6. Most of the sex in the woods happens at night
7. Most of the visitors are from out of state
8. Enforcement suppresses the problem for a while
9. If we solve the problem in Olin it will just move somewhere else

For the record the first two are true and the rest are false.

Survey

To verify the park's reputation in the community the officers did a door-to-door survey in the Bay Creek Neighborhood, the residential area of single-family homes near the park. The park has been isolated from most neighbors by John Nolan Dr, a six-lane road that is a major artery into the downtown. The physical isolation of the park is one reason the activity in the park doesn't receive more complaints. But the residents confirmed that 83% of them knew the park's reputation and avoided it. Those who said they sometimes use the park almost all added, "But I'd never take my kids there." Another lesson from talking to these residents was that several who described their experiences in the park referred to "men lurking in parking lots" or frightening them with their aggressive, erratic driving. These reports echoed the few citizen complaints reported to the police in describing behaviors that made them fearful. An incident in the park in March resulted in a Disorderly Conduct arrest when a man pulled up adjacent to a mother and daughter having lunch in their vehicle and began masturbating. This incident galvanized officers working this project and the descriptions given by the victim of the suspect's behaviors before parking alongside them were enlightening. He had followed them in his vehicle, stopped behind them blocking their exit and the woman felt "stalked". When officers began walking the woods in plain clothes they too were spooked by men hiding behind trees or following them. Officers began to compile a list of behaviors that were unique to cruisers in the woods, which was valuable when we began collecting data on the number of persons exhibiting this unsettling behavior.

Another interesting bit of information gleaned from the surveys was that most citizens living within blocks of the 65-acre natural area known as the Turville Woods Conservancy had never heard of it. The problem with people avoiding the park predated the designation of the property as a natural area. The only exception was the cross-country skiers who appreciated the site for its scenic trails and relative isolation in winter.

Driver behavior

Following the lead of Officer Evans in 2006, we began keeping track of vehicle registration plates as unique identifiers to keep track of frequent park users. Every CPT officer spent several hours in unmarked and undercover vehicles counting vehicles and recording plates. Every officer was struck with the crazy driving behavior exhibited by many drivers in the park. We soon compiled a list of driving behaviors. Many of these behaviors resembled stalking and were fear inducing even when experienced by officers. The most outrageous is to have your path blocked by another vehicle and then to have that driver slowly drive closer to ogle and assess you as a potential partner. The design of the park with lightly used looping roads connecting several oversize parking lots supports this driving behavior.

The recording of license plates of drivers who exhibited the erratic driving allowed us many insights into the scope and nature of the problem. Evans had been right about a core group of local users who used the park frequently. We now estimate that this group numbers several hundred but we continue to add new vehicles to the list. The length of visit and frequency vary greatly. There were some men we were seeing almost every time we did observations. Some stay in the park for several hours a day, others make a quick sweep through the park and may leave depending on the number of cruisers in the park at that time. It became apparent that the likelihood of finding someone in the park at any given time was a draw for vehicles from all over Wisconsin. Out of state plates are relatively rare.

In March of 2010 the team did a dawn to dusk study of the number of suspected cruisers in the park during each hour of the day. There were four at 7:00 a.m. and twenty at 6:00 p.m. The peak hour of the day is around 1:00 p.m., with another

in late afternoon. Dawn to dusk in Wisconsin in March is about 12 hours. We have less data about traffic after dark when it is considerably more difficult to discretely obtain plate numbers. Arrests and observations indicate that this is a twenty-four hour a day activity, though greatly diminished at some hours. If the twelve-hour data from March is representative, we have more than 200 individuals a day engaging in this behavior.

Environmental Design

It had always been our intent to use Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design to understand why this problem existed in this park and not any of Madison's more than two hundred other parks. After we better understood the behaviors involved it became easier to identify design features at Olin that were appealing to the cruisers. In our meeting with the Parks Department we made suggestions for design changes. They were most receptive to parking and traffic changes and the clearing of thickets in the conservancy. The latter was consistent with their long-range plan to restore the native plant community, though they have lacked the resources to make much progress in recent years. They were open to having officers assist with the shrub removal and to having officers lead citizens in volunteer work parties. The Parks Department was not as receptive to improved access control. (See appendix for complete CPTED report)

Bio-litter

If you visited the Turville Conservancy in March of 2009, you couldn't help but notice a large amount of litter related to sexual activity. It was present and obvious everywhere in the conservancy. It was not only hard evidence of sexual activity but also served as a warning to citizens that they were in an area of illicit activity. These crude signs and condoms dangling from branches marked the cruisers territory. In early March Michele asked me to accompany her as she collected this litter from the woods. We were in plainclothes. We decided to keep condom wrappers in a separate bag and maintain a count of them. That first visit the count was 24. In March 2010, the Community Policing Team duplicated the original litter collection effort. We recorded 9 fresh condom wrappers. But the task was more difficult this time around, when it seemed it should have been easier. In the interim, more than half the conservancy had been cleared of invasive shrubs. The thickets that sheltered and concentrated the activity were gone. Visibility through the woods was increased a hundred fold. It should have been easier. We had seven officers searching where the year before it had been two of us. But this year the flags were gone. White flags that had helped us readily spot signs of sexual activity from a distance, the discarded wipes were absent. Also absent were the supplementary sexual debris, which had been common the year before: tubes of Astroglide, crude signs and sexual enhancement products.

The difference was actually greater than the 24 to 9 figures indicate. The location of the litter in 2010 was concentrated near the conservancy entrances. Almost all of the nine condom wrappers collected this year were within a hundred yards of a parking lot. The previous year we had been surprised to find signs of sexual activity throughout the conservancy, even at locations that were a 30-minute walk from the parking lot. Ironically, the first signs of our missing little white flags blooming in the spring were captured in a photo by an officer observing in a parking lot; and were further evidence that the sexual activity had moved dramatically out of the conservancy as a result of the shrub clearing.

Ratio of legitimate users

While hiking the conservancy officers were asked to keep track of the number of cruisers versus legitimate users they encountered. Many times officers would report seeing only cruisers. We were not very good at keeping data of the absence of things. On our first attempt at documenting the ratio of users, Michele and I passed 9 cruisers and one legitimate user, for a ratio of 9 to one. In late April when the spring wildflowers were blooming, I decided to compare Turville Woods and Gallistel Woods in the nearby UW Arboretum. In an hour in each location I encountered 18 legitimate users in the Arboretum, all obviously enjoying the flowers and no suspicious individuals who matched the behavior of the cruisers. During an hour the same afternoon at Turville, I passed 9 cruisers and one legitimate user. This number was consistent with previous observations and we have used that 9 to one ratio as representative of the use of the conservancy in 2009.

Sex nests

While collecting litter in Turville Woods we discovered several concentrations of evidence of sexual activity. Most of these locations were in dense thickets of shrubs. Others were at the bases of large trees from which all the leaf litter had been pushed back by human activity, or near large downed logs. A few of these sites of repeat sexual activity were very open sites, often near the lakeshore. This was the first insight into the complexity of the sexual behavior in the woods. This variation was further observed when officer took video cameras into the woods to document activity. Some subjects kept disappearing from view while others turned toward the camera while masturbating.

It seemed useful to create a map of where the activity was concentrated in the conservancy. Using GPS we created a map of 24 sex nests (see appendix). Not only did it show the spread of this activity throughout the woods but also it pinpointed priority locations for future brush clearing. Knowing these locations made future litter picks in 2009 more efficient. The map was also a useful tool in teaching people about the extent of the problem. Some of the 24 locations were small sites with only one or two areas of activity. Others, especially those in the thickets, contained multiple use areas. The worst had 11 distinct areas from which debris was collected. In order to keep the map simple we chose to not plot each specific location.

At the time the map was made we saw it as possibly guiding our responses for several years. We did not anticipate the zeal with which the Parks Department would pursue shrub removal over the winter. We were pleased to discover that in the spring of 2010, the sex nest map became another measure of change in the park.

Police data

Olin Park has never generated an excessive number of police calls (see table in appendix). Many other parks in Madison have more crime and calls for service. Many of the calls in Olin are officer generated. The reason became apparent when we started walking the woods. There was no one there to make a report except the cruisers. Many citizens who witnessed incidents of sexual gratification or were propositioned did not report them. During an October presentation before the Parks Commission every commissioner had a story to tell of being propositioned while hiking at Olin. For both 2008 and 2009 citizens reported only four incidents per year to the police.

Until 2009 most of the arrests in the park for sex related offenses were the result of undercover operations in the woods at night or late night patrol of the park by beat officers. The park is officially closed from 10:00 p.m. until 4:00 a.m. Ironically we were seeing much more activity during daylight hours while gathering data in 2009. Most of the 24 arrests in 2009 were made during the day. These 24 arrests were about average for the number of arrests over the last five years though no "stings" were conducted in 2009. Though officers have spent more hours in the conservancy this spring than last there has been only one arrest in Olin Park so far this year. And it is interesting to note of the 126 arrests over the last five years only 22 of the charges have been for sex related crimes. The rest of the charges are ordinance violations, the most common charge being "Preservation of City Natural Area", meaning that the suspect was charged with going off the marked trail. Twelve out of the 98 different individuals who were arrested over the past five years were arrested multiple times. (See tables in the appendix)

Responses

As of November 2010 we have implemented several responses. We have been somewhat surprised at the degree to which some small responses have brought about unexpected amounts of change. Some planned responses were drastically modified or put on hold because they were no longer necessary. For example, when we picked up bio-litter for the first time in 2010 we had an aggressive plan in place to discourage any future sexual litter. We reasoned that if that type of litter continued it would have a chilling effect on any legitimate users we lured into the conservancy. The plan was to have officers sweep through the conservancy twice a week and treat any new litter as a crime scene. We planned to publicize this activity specifically to the cruisers and put them on notice that we intended to establish a DNA database from any biological evidence collected. It would have been a stretch to imagine any crime for which a person could be prosecuted. But we envisioned that our plan would have a chilling effect on this population and make further sweeps unnecessary. What made the plan unnecessary was the arrival of large numbers of legitimate users. Cruiser numbers dropped drastically in the conservancy and new sexual litter was very infrequent. Because the change was so dramatic, we suspected something else might have had an effect. Cruisers were seen leaving the woods and very conspicuously depositing litter in the trash barrels. It occurred to me that I had freely discussed this plan with several reporters and if it these comments made it on the air, perhaps the cruisers were listening.

The first planned response was the first litter collection in March of 2009. It was more of a desperation measure because the litter was so disgusting. Then it became an indicator of how frequently certain spots were used. Some spots had new litter the next day. Some appeared hours later. It continued unabated until the first removal of the thickets around the worst sex nests by a joint crew of officers and Park's employees in October of 2009.

The second response was our presentation of photos, video, data and graphic depictions of the behavior in the park to any audience we could find. First we described the project to the Bay Creek Neighborhood Association at their bi-monthly meeting. We talked for two hours to the Park's Department Staff and then repeated the performance for Traffic Engineering. We plied our captain and chief with memos illustrated with photos from the park. Michele and I perfected our presentation for an October meeting of the Parks Commission. Though we had been sought out by several reporters before that, it was the first event reported by several members of the local media.

Using the media to change the reputation of the park became one of our strategies. Michele arranged for an article to appear in Madison Magazine, though that was delayed until June of this year. During the winter we met with parks again, the local alder, the Fire Marshall, the public safety review board and appeared at a landscape architects conference at Monona Terrace. We had made people aware of the problem. In February we consciously changed gears and began promoting positive changes. We were fortunate to have the Park's Department find extra funding and make amazing progress in clearing the invasive shrubs from the conservancy. The impact was visible to drivers on John Nolan Dr. The media sent camera crews to interview the contractors doing the work and Russ Hefty, the Natural Area Supervisor, who had orchestrated this effort. From that point on we planned events and highlighted changes as they occurred in the park. Even non-events like the placing of barricades for the experimental road closure drew reporters from two TV stations.

Last fall, our first joint work party cleared a larger area of invasive shrubs than the Parks Department had been able to do in the two previous years. Officers continued without Parks for several more days in November but heavy snows ended our chainsawing for the winter. Russ somehow found extra money in his budget to hire contractors to mechanically clear shrubs in the less environmentally sensitive areas of the Conservancy. Shortly after the first work started a agent from the US Fish and Wildlife Service came up with a \$10,000 grant to continue the work. He had heard about our plans in the media and happened to live near Olin Park. As mentioned earlier the impact of this clearing of 35 acres in just a few months so dramatically changed the woods that it was impossible to not notice if you drove by the park. When the snow melted we were all elated and needed to find ways to continue the momentum.

Michele left the CPT in January 2010 for a new assignment. I took over the lead on the project. After updating the Bay Creek Neighborhood on our progress, I came up with a plan to schedule as many positive events as possible for the park in April and May. Bay Creek and the Parks Department agreed to be co-sponsors of the events. In a meeting with Parks Event Coordinator, Laura Whitmore, we agreed to schedule two volunteer work parties a week until the Memorial Day weekend. These events were to be lead by officers and Laura would publicize them and direct volunteers our way. We also planned to schedule as many family events as possible including guided nature walks and environmental presentations. The restored historic pavilion was made available to us by the Parks Department at any time it was not reserved for weddings. This was a big concession because local organizations complained they could not afford the high rental fee and the pavilion sat empty 90% of the time. It is also the only shelter in the park.

The local alder, Tim Bruer, sponsored an ordinance to restrict parking in the park to three hours. This had been done at several other parks close to downtown when the parking lots were taken over by downtown workers seeking free parking.

Every weekday the parking lot in Olin closest to the conservancy hosted sixty or more vehicles of drivers who did not use the park. We felt that these empty vehicles provided cover to the cruisers in the lot just like the shrubs did in the woods. The restriction went into effect June 1st.

On May 13th, City Engineering placed the jersey barriers that anchored our experimental road closure at each end of Olin-Turville Ct. This frontage road was a shortcut between the two main entrances to the park and from our observation was heavily used by cruisers going repeatedly from one end of the park to the other. It was hoped that this small change would make it less convenient for the cruisers to engage in the driver behavior which seemed to be such a critical element of the sexual activity in the park. I had been collecting data every weekday in May in anticipation of this day. Two hours after the road was closed I was back in the park in a undercover vehicle counting the cars of drivers who met our long established criteria. this data collection was becoming easier because since March the percentage of repeat vehicles (vehicles counted on previous days) was now averaging about 80%. I now knew many of the regular drivers and vehicles on sight.

In the coming month we hope to initiate several more strategies. First is a plan to engage the cruisers and solicit their cooperation in what we are trying to accomplish. A long planned support organization, tentatively called Friends of Olin Turville, met for the first time in August. We hope to deploy wildlife cameras to begin collecting data about night use of the conservancy. Pending approval by other City agencies we have plans to demonstrate the effectiveness of using Segways to patrol the Conservancy. And we are producing pamphlets for both boater and hikers to solicit their assistance in monitoring the Conservancy.

We will continue to urge the Parks Department to employ other environmental design strategies to build on our successes. Especially needed is improved access control for the Conservancy to send the message that the area is special and cared for. We are hoping that the pavilion can be made more accessible to users interested in scheduling regular events, like the UW astronomers who would be willing to schedule monthly star parties in the park.

Assessment

Our dog and pony show, a graphic presentation of data, photos and video from the park, mobilized the Parks Department, made resources available, and dramatically increased citizen awareness. We realized when we started that we had to make a case for solving this problem. We assembled our graphic evidence as well as wildflower photos to demonstrate what was being lost to Madison through neglect. Until we met with the Parks Department in the park, and the Park's Superintendent witnessed the dizzying display of cruisers driving loops around him, I was not sure we were making any progress. Especially within our Department there seemed to be a profound lack of interest in stirring up this hornets nest. But Kevin Briski, the Superintendent, was so upset by what he witnessed that he went back to his office and began looking at actions he could take immediately. He contacted the public library to see how they banned persons from their building. But eventually he took one of our suggestions that appealed to him and decided to implement it on his own. Michele was caught off guard when she received a message that Kevin had opened Olin Park and Turville Conservancy to dogs. It was not going to be publicized but would be a one month experiment during October. Though the experiment had a small impact in the Conservancy, where a few more women did appear, but the move was a political disaster. Being new to Madison, Briski was unaware of how controversial this was. Michele sent an email to the Bay Creek Neighborhood Association where the idea had originated and promptly started receiving hate email from the faction that opposed dogs. We were amazed. People were apathetic about public sex but livid about dogs. The experiment died a quiet death at the end of the month, but people still ask if the dog experiment is still going.

The rationale behind dogs in the park was that the illegitimate users of Olin were a highly motivated and persistent group. They were out there in any weather practically every day of the year. If we really hoped to have sustainable change and we hoped to bring about this change by bringing in legitimate users. We needed an equally motivated group to adopt Olin. Only Dog walkers and bicyclist fit the bill in Madison. We obtained bike path use data that indicated that a couple of hundred avid cyclists used the John Nolan Bike path daily in February. The dog people are almost equally devoted to using dog parks. But after the negative response to the October experiment, we gave up on dogs and learned a really valuable lesson about navigating the special interest groups in Madison. On the contrary we were receiving strong public support for having the paved bike path that goes past the park loop through the Conservancy. It would be an appealing ride and would bring observers through the most remote areas of the woods. They would traverse the entire distance in less than ten minutes. But there are strong feelings about how natural areas are used. Though Turville Woods is less-than-pristine it still must be protected from the public. I still believe that if we ultimately want to make our successes self-sustaining, then we need to make a choice between losing the whole Conservancy to the cruisers or allowing a bike path. The only alternative is totally controlling access and locking it up tight. When we made the bike path suggestion at the Parks Commission meeting all of the commissioners said they either supported it or were keeping an open mind. Until it came time for the Chair to speak. He growled, "Over my dead body."

The **April and May events** were very successful at bringing citizens into the park, enlisting their support and creating positive images of the park for the rest of the community. The high point of the effort was a folk concert in the pavilion featuring Peter and Lou Berryman, a popular folk duo in Madison for many years. The turnout was gratifying considering we had only four days to promote it. The event became a celebration of the success we had and an impromptu rally for taking back the Park. To our surprise the concert also attracted the media. The concert is one more positive memory of the park for those able to attend, and images of people laughing and singing with the Madison skyline in the background were broadcast into living rooms throughout the city.

Bio-litter cleanup greatly reduced the possibility of finding any evidence in the woods of the park's tawdry past. As explained earlier, with very little effort that aspect of the problem appears to have been solved for the time being.

Ratio of users in the Conservancy

In 2010 large numbers of legitimate users had returned to the woods. We realized rather quickly how flawed our data collection had been last year. We never anticipated what the new Olin Park would look like. We failed to keep track of how many days we found nothing but cruisers in the woods. In much the same way we never counted the number of vehicles driven by women or couples or with multiple occupants. Their increasing numbers are another indicator of change.

During one volunteer work party on a Wednesday evening I observed the highest number of cruisers hiking the woods since the previous fall. But they were now clearly visible from the parking lot. That night I saw 4 legitimate users during the 90 minute work party. The next Wednesday during the same 90 minutes I observed 11 legitimate users and no cruisers. The next morning I set up a spotting scope in the middle of the trail after learning of a great horned owl nest with three baby owls just off the main trail in the woods. I invited all passersby to have a look. In the hour that I was there 14 people stopped to see the baby owls, only one was a cruiser. These are representative of our overall observations of Conservancy use this year. The visitors have been mostly couples and many more women are hiking, many of them alone. For the majority of the time the cruisers seem totally absent from the woods.

Sex nests

Of the 24 sex nest plotted in 2009, the thickets of concealing shrubs have been removed from all of them. There is no evidence of continuing sexual activity at these sites. During a volunteer work party on a Saturday in April, the CPT was clearing remnants of thickets that were closest to the parking lots. In an area the mechanical clearing had missed because of a tangle of downed oak logs, we located two sex nests where there were signs of recent sexual activity. No other sites have been located this spring.

Ironically, the wire metal barriers blocking unofficial trails made by the cruisers now stand as reminders of where these locations had been. With the open park-like woods behind them there is no longer any incentive to use these locations. But the effect of opening up vistas through the woods has been such a dramatic change that it can be very disorienting. Without the trail barriers as a reminder, it would be difficult to find where the activity had occurred in the past.

Thickets remain but they are all some distance from the parking lots. You must walk through twenty minutes of open woods to find them. Possibly the cruisers haven't yet realized they are there. We need to be vigilant for signs of their return and continue our efforts to remove the shrubs.

Volunteer work parties

Though turnouts for the work parties were sometimes disappointing, especially the lack of people from Bay Creek, it gave us a regular presence in the woods twice a week and allowed the officers to continue to clean up shrubby areas in the more sensitive areas of the Conservancy. Of special note were the signs we made to announce our presence to the cruisers. Michele had noticed in 2009 that a woman who organized garlic mustard work parties showed up with two huge handmade signs and propped them up when she arrived in the Olin parking lot. It appeared that the signs and the presence of her small crew of eight volunteers kept the cruisers at bay for four hours on a Saturday morning. We attributed this to our characterization of the public sex user group as being essentially law biding and being influenced by only a slight pressure. We made up two four-foot square signs on plywood that announced to everyone that the Community Policing Team was in the park. They seemed remarkably successful at keeping cruisers a bay especially when backed up by a police vehicle or two. But I was disillusioned one night when I was alone in the park for a Wednesday evening work party sitting on the back of my van when three different cruisers walked past me and my signs without batting an eye.

Police incidents

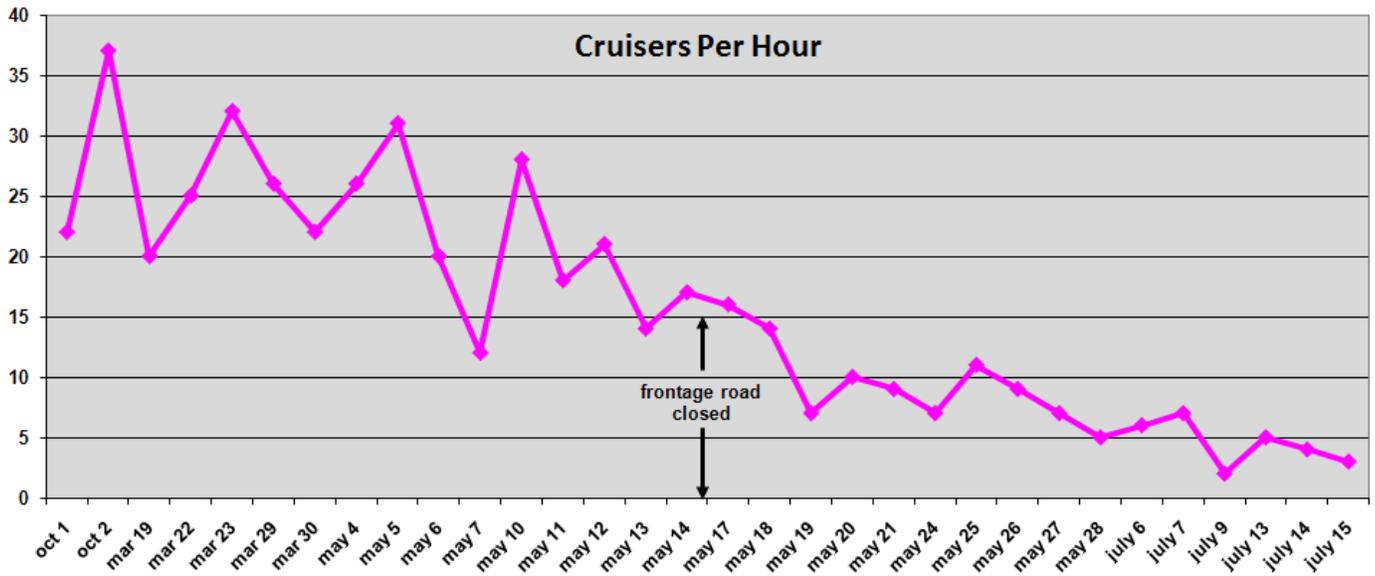
All police incidents for the park are down but arrests for sex related offenses are down dramatically (24 total for 2009 v 1 year to date). There have been no officer witnessed incidents in the woods.

Shrub clearing had a huge impact on visibility and safety, the number of legitimate visitors skyrocketed, the visitor ratio flip flopped with less than 5% of the visitors this spring being cruisers.

Road closure has resulted in a nearly 60% reduction in the number of cruisers present in the park. After seeing the large numbers of cruisers in the park through March and April, I was beginning to doubt that the closure would have much impact. Due to the abandoning of the Conservancy, more of the loopy driving was happening around the hill and the boat landing. But the difference was dramatic. Something about the concrete barriers seemed to disrupt long entrenched patterns of behavior and sent a message that we really cared about the use of the park. When the number of cruisers routinely dropped to below ten per hour, there were many times only one cruiser at a time was prowling the hilltop. It appeared the absence of other cruisers was even more discouraging and many visits appeared to be a lot shorter. There appears to be a tipping point at which most cruisers will find the trip to Olin not worth the effort. Parking restrictions not only increased natural observation in the park but also continued the message that we care about what goes on there.

With the continued help of the media, the Community Policing Team is slowly reshaping people's perception of Olin Park. In the process we are reshaping our own. All of the officers on the team have brought their children to events in the park and to hike in the Conservancy. We will continue to exercise stewardship of the park until we can hand that role over to the community.

Sgt Jim Dexheimer
Madison Police Department
837 Hughes Pl
Madison, Wisconsin 53713
jdexheimer@cityofmadison.com
608 222-4399



The number of cruisers in Olin Park during a one hour data collection period, weekdays, October 2009 thru July 2010. The hour just after noon has consistently been the busiest hour of the day. What the graph does not show is the even more dramatic reduction in cruisers at other hours of the day. Officers conducted observations for 48 hours during the second week of July and found there were significant periods of time when no cruisers were in the park. We chose to display peak hour data because it was the time for which we had the most observations over the longest period of time.

Some have noted a slight downward trend in the data prior to the frontage road closure. We attribute that to the increasing media coverage of our activities and the beginning of the CPT sponsored events in April and May. Data from the spring of 2009 was collected using a different methodology and was not included but was consistent with the above data in that hourly traffic ranged from 20 to 51 cruisers.

Police Data for Olin Park

Calls for service for Olin park by year

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
73	80	84	86	110	120	80	137	202	60 (ytd)

(Note that changes in recording police incidents in 2008 resulted in all police initiated activity being included)

Arrests in Olin Park by year

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
29	46	9	18	24	1 (ytd)

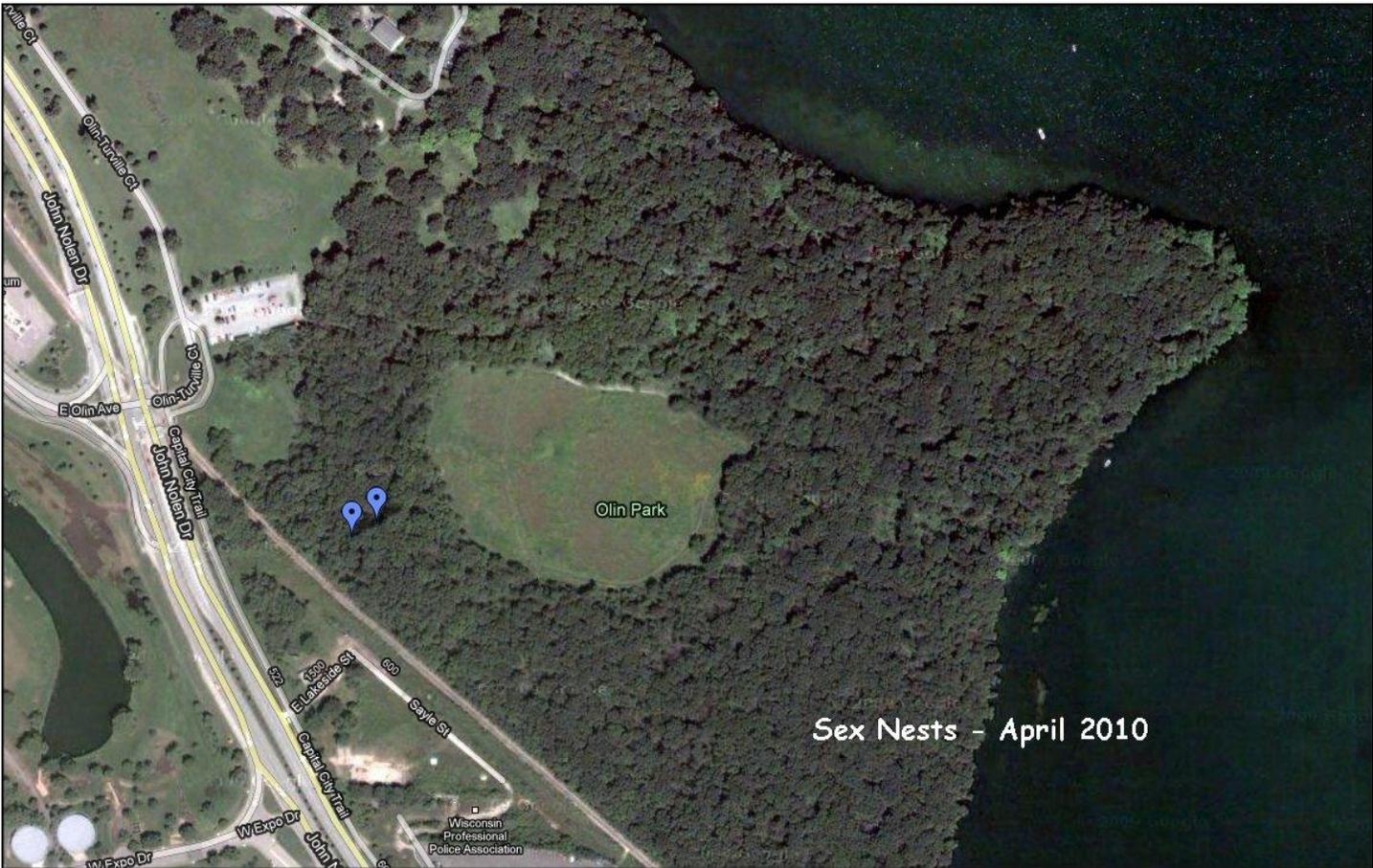


Three baby Great Horned Owls in Olin Park
April 22, 2010

Twenty-Four Sex Nests

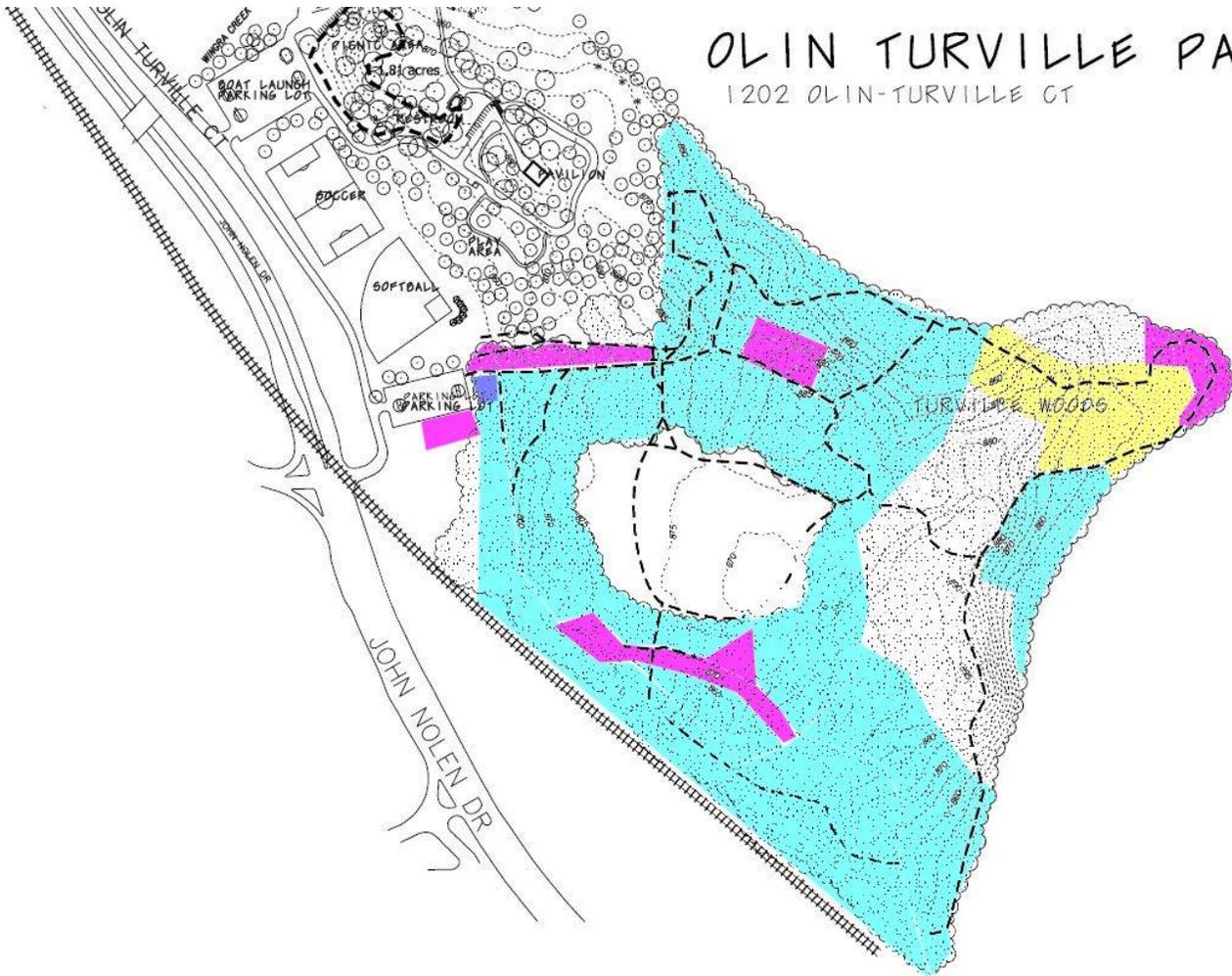
Turville Conservancy – Spring 2009





OLIN TURVILLE PARK

1202 OLIN-TURVILLE CT



This map of the Turville Woods Conservancy shows the areas from which invasive shrubs, principally Honeysuckle and Buckthorn, have been removed. The small purple area near the parking lot was the extent of shrub removal done by the Parks Department crew during all of 2008-2009. The yellow area was cleared sometime in the past. The pink areas are those cleared by the South Community Policing Team from October 2009 thru May 2010. The blue area was clear by contractors using mechanical equipment that can only be used when the ground is frozen. This clearing took place during January and February 2010 and was funded in part by a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.



Signs used by the CPT for volunteer work parties and special events in April and May 2010



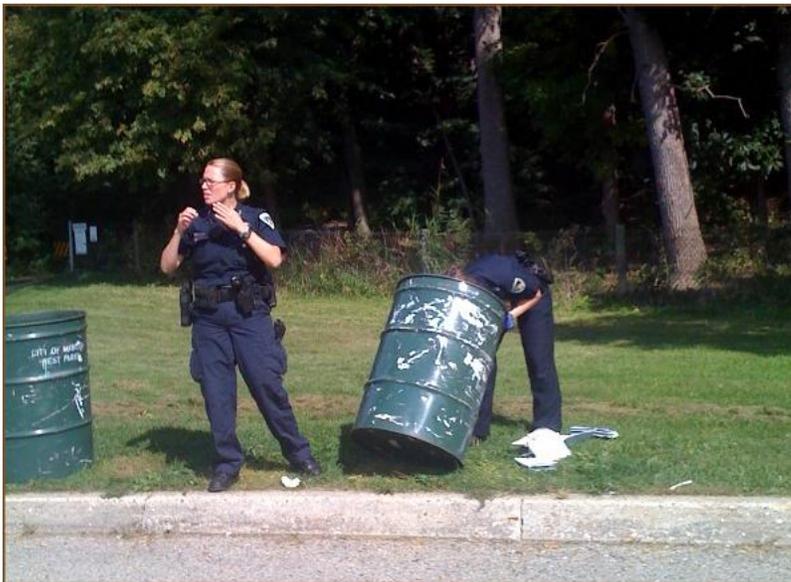
The largest and hardest working group of volunteers, all sorority sisters



The Community Policing Team after collecting bio-litter in March 2010



Using any opportunity to be in the park, we scheduled "CPT Mule Training" for Olin.



Officers Amy Bramlett and Michele Walker recovered discarded porn from the parks trash barrels.



Officers Chee Lee and Andre Lewis collect litter. Note that the lake is still frozen.



Two legitimate users hiking in the conservancy after the frogs presentation, Royx and Sam Kellogg.



Officer Walker collecting litter during the first bio-litter sweep in March 2009.



Russ Hefty, the Parks Dept Natural Area Supervisor, was responsible for the amazing winter shrub clearing.



A "Green Team" volunteer with Officers Pedro Ortega-Mendoza and Thai Xiong.



Officers Nick Ryan and Dave Dexheimer collecting litter with frozen Lake Monona in the background.



The Conservancy has an amazing display of spring ephemerals including these Trout Lilies.



The Community Policing Team after collecting bio-litter in March 2010



Dawn at Olin Park at the beginning of the twelve hour data collection.



One end of the closed frontage road with access for bikes and pedestrians.



City Engineering moving in the Jersey barriers in mid-May.

Frogs in the Park

Live frog presentation in Olin Park

Saturday May 15th

11:00 a.m.

**Turville Conservancy Parking Lot
(Enter at the end of Olin Av.)**



Randy Korb will bring his frogs to Olin Park for a “hands-on” frog and toad presentation. This presentation is free and open to kids of all ages.

This event is co-sponsored by the South District Community Policing Team, The Bay Creek Neighborhood Association and the Madison Parks Dept.

Berrymans in the Park

Olin Park Pavilion

Friday, May 21st

6:00 to 8:00 pm

**Celebrate the restoration of the park and conservancy
to the citizens of Madison**

Peter and Lou Berryman, Madison's favorite folk duo, will perform Friday evening in a free folk music concert to celebrate the restoration of Olin Park and Turville Woods Conservancy to the citizens of Madison. Could there be a better venue for the Berryman's music than the historic hilltop and its stunning view of the Madison skyline?

This concert is part of the Olin Park Project of the Community Policing Team, bringing family oriented activities into the park in an environment that feels safe and inspires participants to reclaim their park. The event is co-sponsored by the South District CPT of the Madison Police Dept, the Bay Creek Neighborhood Association and the Madison Parks Dept.

Peter & Lou



Free Concert

MEMO

To: Chief Wray
From: PO Michele Walker
Date: 5/03/2009

Regarding: Olin-Turville Park

My 2009 South CPT project:
To stop the illicit sexual activity at Olin-Turville Park while increasing legitimate park usage

Case # 09-96536

Recently a South CPT officer was in plainclothes in a detective car at Olin Park. This officer was propositioned by a male who wanted to give the officer a “blow job.” When asked by the officer “Why?” the individual responded, **“that’s what this park is for.”**

Olin-Turville Park has a rich history in Madison that is 160 years old, however for the better part of the last two decades it has been a haven for lewd & lascivious behavior. Two key points in understanding the problem:

- (1) This is actually two parks with two different missions – Olin Park is a city park consisting of 46 acres where as Turville Point is a city conservation park consisting of 65 acres of woods & prairie.
- (2) Traditional law enforcement efforts have not been successful in eliminating the illicit behavior at the park. The very same individuals who have been arrested or warned continue to frequent these parks to participate in L&L acts.

My goal is to spend 2009 working with South CPT, the Madison Parks Department, and local citizens to Reclaim Ownership of Olin-Turville (R.O.O.T.)



2009 Observations:

- South CPT spent 7 days observing vehicles in Olin-Turville Park. Approximately 240 different vehicles had been identified during this period as “cruisers.” The drivers of these vehicles (single males) will drive all over the parking lots for hours at a time. Often they are driving too fast for a parking lot. They will follow each other up and down the hill and between the parking lots. Sometimes cars will park and the drivers will follow each other into the woods or the men’s bathroom.
- Approximately 65 of the above-mentioned vehicles frequent the park on a near daily basis. This core group of cruisers come from: Belleville, Black Earth, Deforest, Fitchburg, Fort Atkinson, Germantown, Highland, Janesville,

Madison, Monona, Mount Horeb, New Glarus, Oregon, Portage, Prairie du Sac, Stoughton, and Verona, to name a few.

- The majority of the people seen inside the conservation park (Turville) are single males who follow each other around the trails in search of sexual partners.
- There is a large amount of litter in the woods associated with sexual gratification – used condoms, condom wrappers, tubes of lubricant, and wet tissues. The litter is left along undesignated trails and around the base of trees. I have personally hauled out several garbage bags of litter associated with sexual activity as well as alcohol and food consumption.
- There are areas of the park that are infested with honeysuckle and buckthorn, which creates areas of concealment.
- The reputation of Olin-Turville Park is far reaching and many of Madison's citizens are leery to use this park due to the high volume of men sitting in cars, wandering along the trails, and hiding behind trees.
- Brand new problem of someone placing vulgar signs throughout the park (see photo below)



Turville Point Conservation Park is an amazing resource that ought to be available for our citizens to enjoy. Unfortunately it is currently overrun with people who are choosing an inappropriate venue for their own gratification and creating a barrier for people to legitimately enjoy all that the park has to offer.

2009

Where we go from here:

- Attend May 11 Bay Creek Neighborhood Association meeting
- Work in cooperation with the Parks department
- Parks Dept – cut back vegetation
- Disperse the core group of users (letter to registered owners?)
- Interrupt the flow of traffic (consider making Olin Turville Ct one-way)
- Arrest on State charges (L&L, DC) – utilize plain clothes officers
- Request ban conditions on those arrested
- High visibility CPT patrol
- Support a citizens group in reclaiming the park. Legitimate park users will ultimately be the best way to reclaim this park.

Future

- Paved bike/jogging path to go along the shoreline of Turville Point which would be connected to the Lake Monona bike path that runs from Waunona Way and along John Nolen Dr toward Monona Terrace

Turville Point was in the Turvill family from 1851 until the 1960s. I imagine that Henry & Mary Turvill would be greatly disturbed by what is occurring on the land that was their homestead and where two of their children are buried in unmarked graves. The family had to give up their land for the Frank Lloyd Wright Monona Basin Project. It is my hope that the Madison Police Department, City Parks Department, and citizens of Madison will come together in 2009 to try an unconventional approach to make the woods at Turville Point once again family friendly.





Turville Woods Conservancy

Olin Turville Park

A Problem Oriented Policing Project of the Madison Police Department

Project Leader: Officer Michelle Walker

Assisted by:

Captain Joe Balles

Lt Stephanie Bradley Wilson

The South District Community Policing Team

Olin Turville by the numbers:

- Turville Point is a **65-acre** conservancy, the third largest in the City of Madison.
- It is probably the least visited City conservancy if counting legitimate users.
- For comparison Gallistel Woods had more than ten times the number of legitimate users than Turville Woods on select days this spring.
- And Turville Woods spring ephemeral show was far more impressive than the Arboretum's
- **Nine out of ten visitors** to Turville Point Conservancy were identified as **illegitimate users** cruising the woods for a public sex encounters.
- Bay Creek survey results: **83% of citizens avoid the park**
(More would not take their children there)

- Number of police Incidents in Olin Park – **194** for 2009 ytd ⁴
- Number of these incidents that were witnessed sexual activity – **11**
- Number of citizens reporting seeing sexual activity – **4**
- Number of citizens reporting disturbing behavior such as stalking or being solicited - **5**
- Impact of police operations on sexual activity in Olin Park – **Nil**⁵

⁴ 137 – 2008, 80 – 2007, 110 – 2006

⁵ There is virtually no long-term impact on sexual activity. However news reports confirm the community's fear, enhance the park's reputation for sordid behavior, and illustrate of the limits of police ability to control the problem through enforcement.

- Number of distinct locations in Turville Woods that show evidence of repeated use by persons engaging in public sex – **24**
- Places in Turville Woods showing evidence of other sexual activity – **hundreds**
- Estimated number of persons in Olin Park each day seeking a sexual experience – **172⁶**
- Maximum number of vehicles observed cruising the park during a one hour observation period – **39**
- Number of times these vehicles entered the park in one hour – **51**

⁶ Based on March 2010 data for daylight hours only (approx 6:30 am to 6:30 pm).

Things we learned while researching, observing and collecting data:

- The problem of sexual activity in Olin-Turville is much larger and more complex than we ever imagined.
- The cruisers have been doing this so long they have developed a sense of ownership and entitlement for the park.
- The problem is not the unpleasant, offensive behavior of a small group, but the exclusion of the citizens of Madison from one of its most beautiful and historic parks.
- For whatever reason Madison has chosen to not confront this appropriation of public space for private and illegal activities.
- This is not a gay issue. It is public sexual behavior by men who identify themselves as both gay and hetero.
- There are many design factors that make the park appealing for cruising.
- There is a core group of several hundred local residents who frequent the park daily or several times a week.
- The presence of this core group creates an almost constant source of partners for less frequent visitors who come from all over Wisconsin.
- It is a myth that out-of-state visitors drive the activity.
- Police stings have not been a successful response to the problem and the publicizing of arrests has had the effect of re-enforcing the fears of citizens and the reputation of the park.
- The police do not have the resources to make enforcement an effective or sustainable deterrent.

The Beauty





The Tawdry





Sex Nests

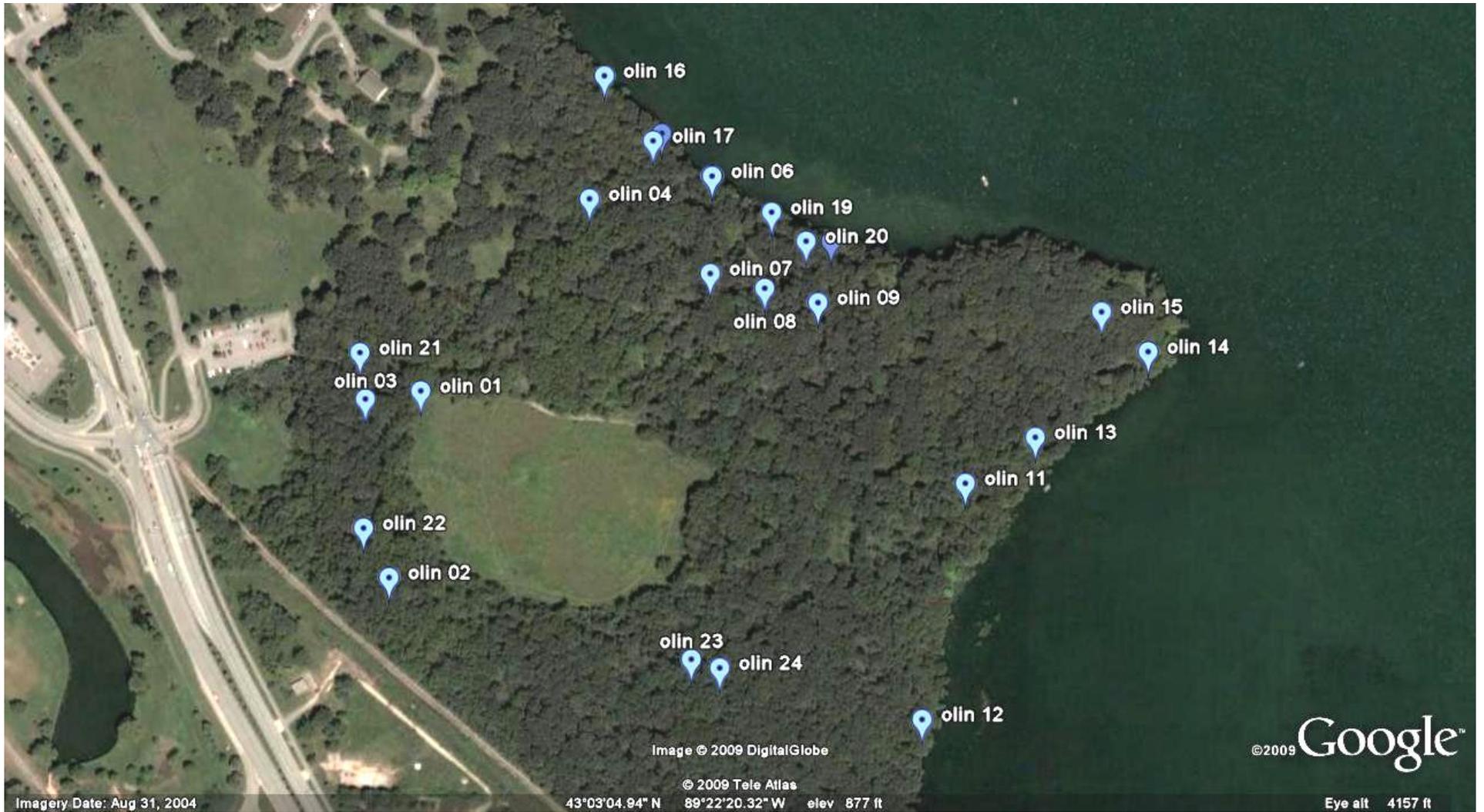
The litter is the first thing that strikes you as being unique about the Turville Point Conservancy. The UW Arboretum and most other City conservancy parks have very little litter. Users of natural areas tend to be more environmentally conscious. Close examination of the litter is both disgusting and frightening. First the litter is concentrated in discrete locations. These locations are usually around large trees or in the middle of dense thickets of invasive shrubs (Buckthorn and Honeysuckle). If located near a large tree, one notices that there is a path worn around the base of the tree the soil is compacted and the leaf litter is pushed away from the tree, all signs of human activity.

The litter is comprised of candy and snack wrappers, and beer cans and bottles. The concentration of these items seems to indicate a persistent human presence, which is inconsistent with the usual pattern of activity for persons visiting a natural area. In addition to the ordinary but concentrated litter listed above, many small piles of discarded tissues, paper towels or wipes dominate these sites. These are often pulpy masses at the bases of trees due to the rain and dew. If they are fresher, they appear to be contaminated with biological material. This is disgusting enough. But the critical evidence that confirms what these sites are used for are condoms, condom wrappers, packets or tubes of sexual lubricant or other products used for sexual encounters.

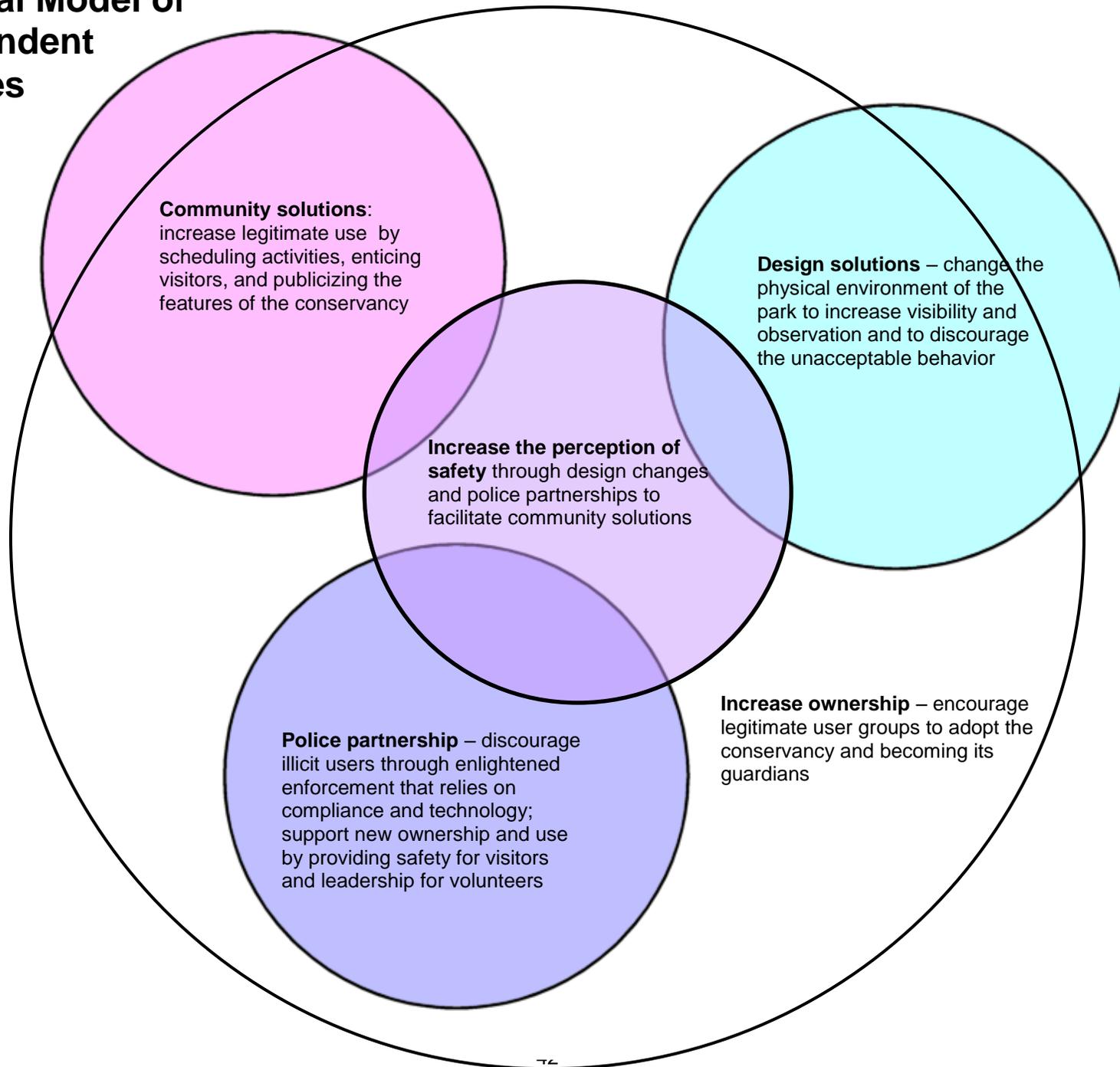
While collecting data and studying problems in the conservancy, the South District Community Policing Team located 25 distinct sites of sexual activity in the park.⁷ These sites were plotted with GPS to visualize the pattern of illicit use of the park. Half of the sites were single specific locations. The others were larger complexes of multiple sites in one specific thicket. At the worst location eleven individual dens were counted.⁸

⁷ This is less than the actual number of locations used by men for public sex. Only sites with specific items confirming the locations as sex nest were included. Many other sites with litter and paper towels and tissues were not counted. Early in April some of our first forays into the park included litter collection and specifically collecting and counting condom wrappers. This activity may have skewed our later effort to locate and count sex sites.

⁸ Each specific sex nest location was not plotted in order to simplify the map.



Theoretical Model of Interdependent Responses



Proposed Strategies

1. Eliminate invasive shrubs
2. Traffic experiments and alteration of parking
3. Friends of Olin Turville
4. Volunteer work parties
5. Schedule events, activities and classes
6. Prohibit access to offenders for a specified time
7. Acquire a technology based monitoring system
8. DNA and major case response to biohazard littering
9. Enhance enforcement and citizen reporting
10. Access control to both the park and the conservancy

What is the likelihood of Success?

Just as a sustainable plant community is a management goal for the Conservancy, a sustainable problem solving solution is the goal of the Community Policing Team.

To be sustainable the plan for Olin-Turville needs to continue to pressure illegitimate users even when the infusion of resources wanes. We in the Police Department are very aware that our efforts at intense enforcement are capable of suppressing a problem but that the problem will return when we move our attention to other demands.

The comparison of the effort to reclaim Olin Park for the citizen of Madison has some very valid comparisons to the successful effort to redeem the Broadway Simpson Neighborhood. Through a combination of police efforts that enhanced the perception of safety in the neighborhood, attitudes changed, design changes made the area less comfortable for the criminals and redevelopment had a chance to succeed. That solution continues to sustain itself today with virtually no infusion of police resources.

In any problem of this magnitude there is always a concentration of factors that overwhelm an area creating a downward spiral that resists the efforts of those who fight for change. The key is focusing enough resources and design changes on the problem to reach the tipping point where the downward spiral can be reversed.

Will implementation of the strategies outlined on the previous page produce a standoff or a victory? Will any progress be self-sustaining? If the infusion of legitimate user groups into the park is not in sufficient numbers, or does not bring observers in to the park that match the cruisers in persistence and around the clock dedication, then our efforts may well fall short. Dramatic change and compromise may be needed to reach the tipping point against this entrenched and persistent threat. We should begin a discussion of more dramatic and potentially controversial actions rather than continue to cede the park to the public sex crowd and accept the status quo.

Environmental Design Report on Olin-Turville Park

Problems and Potential Solutions

Natural Observation

- ❖ The size, topography and intended function of the Conservancy limit the opportunity for natural observation to discourage illicit behavior
- ❖ The hill in Olin Park provides seclusion. Persons and vehicles at the top cannot be observed from below or other areas of the park
- ❖ Large areas of invasive shrubs in the conservancy provide cover and concealment for illicit activity
- ❖ The logical observers inside the conservancy, legitimate users of the natural area, are virtually non-existent due to the fear and revulsion created by the behaviors of illegitimate users

Access Control

- ❖ The conservancy has three official access points, two secluded from view, and one adjacent to the lower parking lot
- ❖ Lack of fencing along the railroad tracks creates unlimited access and egress along that boundary
- ❖ There is a heavily used access point behind the Holiday Inn Express
- ❖ There is evidence that the fence separating Olin from the Conservancy is crossed at will
- ❖ Though the park is closed at 10 p.m., Officers routinely find vehicles in the upper lots and along the upper drive throughout the night

Movement Predictors

- ❖ Attempts to keep people on the trails with ordinances, signs and barriers has been futile
- ❖ The illegitimate users routinely go off trail to hide in the brush
- ❖ Heavily used trails open at one end and restricted at the other make a mockery of the rule
- ❖ Pressure to follow the rule by the presence environmentally conscious users is lacking due to the already mentioned limited use by legitimate users
- ❖ Signage at the entrance and within the conservancy that clearly designates trails and intersections is lacking
- ❖ There are no posted trail maps

Traffic Control

- ❖ The layout of the roads and parking lots within the park are conducive to “cruisy” behavior
- ❖ The drive-by shopping for sexual partners is facilitated by the ability to drive in loops past numerous liaison sites
- ❖ Excessively large⁹ and open layout parking lots permit the vehicular pas de deux by which cruisers observe each other and signal to each other
- ❖ The volume, speed and erratic driving of this traffic, as well as the continuous and repeated looping of the same vehicles, amazed officers this spring
- ❖ Along the frontage road, this segment of the most heavily used running and biking path in Madison has pedestrians and bikers sharing the road with this “cruisy” traffic
- ❖ Citizens visiting the park have complained about this behavior as “sleazy” and have felt “stalked” if they should happen to drive the loop with the pack of cruisers

⁹ Outside of peak boating season or when special events are not occurring the non-hilltop parking lots are largely empty except for cruisers and park-and-ride vehicles.

CPTED for Olin Made Simple

- Configuration of roads and parking lots conducive to cruising
- Easy access from beltline for out-of-towners
- Hilltop loop concealed from view with access to toilets and conservancy
- Long established reputation results in substantial numbers of prospective partners

- Conflicting user groups
- Sleazy cruising behavior enhances fear in legitimate users beyond offensive sexual behavior
- The prevalence of illegitimate users has effectively driven out a large portion of legitimate users, especially during prime time to use the conservancy
- The absence of legitimate users has emboldened the other users and given them a sense of entitlement
- The absence of legitimate users decreases the possibility that sex acts will be observed by those inclined to report them

- Nature areas are preferred locations for public sex
- The conservancy is easily accessible from several access points a short distance from vehicles
- This conservancy is sufficiently large and complex to support a variety of sexual behavior
- Access is by three official entry points and several other points
- Egress is possible at virtually any point along the railroad tracks and the border with the park
- Invasive shrubs (principally honeysuckle and buckthorn) provide many locations for concealed sexual activity
- The open areas along the lake provide multiple spots for exhibitionists

- The outdoor sexual activity is somewhat seasonal and weather dependent, but the variety of options give year-round opportunities

- Police response for more than 20 years has failed to do more than suppress the problem for a short time
- Sting operations in which officers slink thru the dark woods attempting are ineffective
- Publicity which accompanied each sting probably had the opposite effect than intended
- Publicity enhanced the rep of the park as an unsafe place for legitimate users and a good place for illicit liaisons
- The use of stings peaked in 2006 when three were executed in the spring and there is no indication that activity subsided for the rest of the year
- Persons arrested for sex related offenses and those cited for ordinance violations continued to use the park unabated
- Citing person in the park for non-sex related violations have no stigma attached and are less effective than criminal charges
- The stings are perceived by portions of the population as being discriminatory or anti-gay, though this is not a gay issue
- MPD is perceived as ineffective and incompetent as a result of spotty, unproductive enforcement
- Some officers attack this problem with a coarse attitude and personal agenda that reflects poorly on the Department and antagonizes a segment of the population
- The easy and economical solutions to Olin's design problems can be summarized as three strategies:
 - Displace illegitimate users with active and persistent legitimate activities
 - Disrupt the current flow of traffic and design of the parking lots
 - Clear invasive vegetation (and some other shrubby growth) that provides cover for sexual activity
 - Control access to the conservancy, especially at night

Control Access

Olin Problems

- Currently there are three official entrances, an unofficial but heavily used entrance behind the Holiday Inn Express and many lesser used points egress along the railroad tracks used by person engaged in public sexual activities when fleeing police or other legitimate users
- There are several points along the low wire fence that separates the conservancy from Olin Park at which persons frequently enter and leave.
- Two of the official entry points are at secluded location, one barely visible from the park road and the other totally out of view from the road
- The fence between the park and the conservancy is not an effective deterrent to illegal access
- The other land boundary of the conservancy is not controlled by any barrier except for a brief stretch of wetland
- The entry point from the lower parking lot, while visible to outside observation, is adjacent to the heavily used parking lot and shrub thickets limit visibility into the conservancy from that point.
- The most visible manifestation of the unwanted behavior in the park is the maniacally complex racing and cruising in vehicles that seems to serve as some sort of courtship ritual.
- It is clear that while controlling this vehicular behavior would not totally solve the problem, inhibiting it would severely alter the ability of the cruisers to make illicit liaisons and enhance the ability of the police and legitimate users to exercise control over the space
- There are five distinct areas of roadway and parking lots that facilitate the sexual practices of Olin Park
 1. The hilltop loop provides a circular racetrack from which cruisers scope each other out. The lots at the top though small are secluded from outside view and provide discrete access to the restroom and the conservancy
 2. The lower lot with approximately 80 parking stalls is excessive in size for daily park use, especially since this lot seems primarily designed for use of the conservancy, and to a lesser degree the users of the soccer fields. It is worth noting that soccer field users often chose to use the parking along the frontage road, either because the lot is nearly full or because they are avoiding the creepy behavior of the many men sitting in their parked vehicles
 3. The boat launch area is less frequently used by the cruisers. Possibly they are discouraged by the presence of City vehicles during the week. But it is used as an alternate meeting place, especially by vehicles coming down from the hill
 4. The large lot, designated primarily for boat trailers, is used for some of the most erratic behavior as drivers swoop around in strange patterns trying to position themselves to see inside of parked vehicles. This lot is also used by cruisers who seem to have pre-arranged assignations who positions themselves so they can view all vehicles entering, and then swoop in to closely follow the vehicles to other locations in the park
 5. And finally the Edgewater Ct parking lot, is a destination for cruisers who have made a connection elsewhere in the park or who are displaced by legitimate activity in some of the other lots
- The number of options for driving around aimlessly while scoping out the occupants of other vehicles seems to be one of the principle assets Olin park has for cruisers. Many of them put on considerable miles inside the park, entering and leaving the park many times over a short period of time in search of a partner and romance
- Their driving behavior is characterized as being erratic, excessively fast for a park, repeated parking maneuvers and near collisions. They often drive and park inside the park for lengthy periods of time without ever getting out of their vehicles
- When they do get out of their vehicles, it is either to enter the restroom, walk suspiciously in the conservancy exhibiting odd non-verbal cues, or to get in to the vehicle of another person who has exhibited the same driving and parking behaviors
- The availability of the excessive amount of free parking within a mile of downtown encourages the use of the park as a park-and-ride lot. Approximately 50 to 60 citizens use the lots and streets daily. Some use is by city employees and much is by construction workers. Some users bike or walk uptown and such green behavior is commendable. A majority of park-and-ride users are shuttles to the park in other vehicles. These unattended vehicles, while seemingly harmless, provide cover for the cruisers whose activities would be much more apparent in empty parking lots.

Olin Solutions

- The ultimate access control solution that would ensure the elimination of illicit sexual activity, without an unsustainable infusion of police resources, would be to fence and gate the entire conservancy. Allowing access by appointment only with keys available to only legitimate user groups.
- While this solution is undesirable, it would almost certainly stifle the most disturbing activity in the park. This solution should be considered if the magnitude of the problem is deemed worthy of urgent intervention but resources are lacking for any of the alternatives
- More modest ways of bringing access to both the park and the conservancy under control are available
- The conservancy needs to have fewer points of entry, at least temporarily
- Fencing the conservancy with a substantial but transparent fence is essential to controlling access and making users feel safe.
- One access point at the current lower parking lot is desirable because it is the only place open to observation
- Clear invasive shrubs and weedy trees from the under story for some distance to increase visibility and a sense of safety
- Large informational signs, which clearly state hours, rules and prohibited behaviors, are needed.
- Stationary and distributable maps should be available; along with instructions for reporting illicit behavior
- The example of the UW Arboretum Grady Tract, a similarly sized and unmonitored natural area adjacent to the Beltline should be noted. The Grady Tract is enclosed by a five-foot high chain-link fence, with one entry point. The only parking lot adjacent to this entrance is small enough (approximate room for eight vehicles) to meet the needs of the users and not allow untended space for illegitimate users
- Additionally, if access were limited to one point off the lower lot, reducing the size of the lot (except for special events) would allow an open space between the lot and the conservancy, reducing covert and anonymous use
- Reducing the size of the lower lot would also eliminate the elaborate vehicular courtship rituals that officers witness in the park as a prelude to illicit public sexual activity
- The optimal solution to controlling access to Turville Point, that still ensures and promotes use by the citizens of Madison, would be to construct a nature/visitor center through which all visitors would enter.
- Dramatically changing traffic and parking in the park would disrupt the driving rituals of the cruisers and eliminate several of the behaviors that legitimate users describe as creepy and which inhibit their use of the park
- Eliminate access by vehicles to the top of the hill. of course, allow groups that reserve the shelter access to this road. And open it for all special events.
- Reduce the size of the lower lot to a maximum of twelve vehicles, with the rest gated except for special events or reserved users who would be responsible for monitoring access. This would make it impossible to have several occupied vehicles checking each other out and moving from spot to spot in an attempt to make a connection,
- Close the frontage road between the two park lots to through Traffic. Allow bike and pedestrians safer use of the roadway. One shoulder of this road is currently available for parking. Consider angle parking to allow more stalls for the soccer field users.
- Prevent displacement to less used areas of the park by closing Edgewater Dr to vehicles, at least until the problem is under control. The trailer lot should be physically separated from the other stalls for general park use, with the eventual goal of having a separate entrance from the street for the boat landing and boat parking.
- Park-and-ride use of the park should be discouraged by limiting parking to three hours.
- These parking and traffic solutions have relatively low initial cost and virtually no additional costs to sustain any benefits. Compliance could be monitored by PEOs and park user groups. Projected impact of the measures should be tested in an experiment.

Natural Observation Solutions

- Increase the number of legitimate park users by increasing their perception of safety
- Increase safety by cutting back invasive shrubs that decrease visibility
- Promote activities such as volunteer projects, classes and nature walks and programs
- Eliminate secluded sex nests by removing invasive shrubs and weed trees such as box elder
- Increase visitors and lead visitors into the whole park by constructing self-guided nature trail loops
- Increase legitimate users deep in the conservancy by adding a canoe/kayak landing
- Eliminating secluded spots in the woods may displace illegal activity to the tall grass prairie
- To increase observation of the prairie and encourage visitation to the park in general add an observation tower with views of Lake Monona and The Capital
- Increase the perception of safety by marking trail intersections and having maps at the entrance
- Have signs and use other educational resources to encourage reporting of suspicious, illegal and disturbing behavior
- Temporarily increase the priority level of citizen calls to ensure a police response
- Educate citizens and officers about the layout of the park and future trail markers to facilitate police and EMS response
- Educate the public on the profile of illegitimate park users and police efforts to ban the core users
- Without substantive changes to the park traffic and parking measures to increase legitimate users are likely to fall short
- Promote formation of a local group to take ownership of the conservancy, such as Friends of the Arboretum
- Promote Turville Point as a destination for school bus trips (after some measure of control has been established)
- All of the above will likely fall short of the dawn to dusk infusion of legitimate users needed to offset the activities of the current users
- The ultimate solution would be to route the Lake Monona Bike and Pedestrian Path along the lakeshore, through the conservancy.
- Though sacrificing some remoteness and wilderness character of the conservancy, those features are luxuries an urban park cannot afford considering the alternative is ceding the park to deviant behavior
- The example of the Arboretum and the UW Lakeshore Path are examples of paved running and biking routes that have little adverse impact the natural environment and yet bring in a constant stream of observers to make those areas safer.

Stakeholders – the men engaged in sexual activity and cruising

This group appears to be generally law-biding citizens whose behavior can be modified greatly by seemingly low levels of pressure. And they are exceedingly resilient once the stimulus has been removed. This at least partially explains the persistence of the problem and the failure of any unsustainable efforts at suppressing the problem.

- *Persistence of problem in part due to the fact that sexual gratification is the driving force*
- *Persistence at his location due in part to the presence in Dane county of a sizeable population/pool of subjects who comprise the core group of repeat users who guarantee around the clock coverage*
- *Uniquely high level of social compliance of this grouped is evidenced in the near perfect driving records and lack of criminal histories for the individual cruisers*
- *Plus there is no evidence of drug use in the park (though that evidence was present several years ago)*
- *This group which outside the park does nothing illegal or antisocial is inclined to violate ordinances and park rules, plus engage in criminal acts, specifically lewd and lascivious conduct.*
- *This aberration may be explained by that fact that traditionally even persons of high moral convictions are willing to compromise those values in pursuit of sexual gratification.*
- *The perception is, that in this place, public anonymous sex is permissible or tolerated*

Officers have observed several factors that appear to drastically alter the behavior patterns of the cruisers for either short or extended periods of time. First, would be the presence of special events in the park that drastically increase the number of legitimate users in the park. This usually includes staging at set up time for these events. During our data collection period, Officer Walker noted that even a small event involving as few as 15 people volunteering to pull garlic mustard in the conservancy shifted the cruising activity to other parts of the park. While in the conservancy to collect data, officers attempted to minimize our impact on the subjects by wearing plainclothes, refraining from enforcement activity and posing as other user groups (i.e. litter collectors, wildflower photographers and birders). And yet even the presence of two persons collecting litter, were imbued with sufficient authority to cause couples engaged in apparent sex acts to flee the park. The mere presence of a couple of users who were obviously not cruisers seemed to somewhat disrupt the ability of the illegitimate users to hook up.

- *In 2006, an officer noted that the beer festival abruptly curtailed cruiser traffic even in the days before the event.*
- *Other special events in the park have been the blues festivals and the Madison Marathon finish line.*
- *A key feature of the volunteer garlic mustard event seems to be the use of large signs used by the event organizer (further evidence of the target groups susceptibility to low level social controls)*
- *Officers concealed and camouflaged witnessed the skittish behavior of couples of cruisers who seemed on the verge of settling into one of the numerous sex nests in the conservancy but were frightened into fleeing by the proximity or sound of other users who did not fit the cruiser demographic*
- *However, one or two male officers, who were not obviously police officers and who did fit the cruiser demographic, were not as likely to disrupt the flow of activity in the conservancy (even when armed with video cameras)*

The frenetic vehicle traffic, the driving behavior and the vehicular pas de deux are the most visible outward signs and the milieu for the public sexual behavior that is prevalent in the park. This is comparable to the boisterous social gatherings that provide cover for the drug sales in open-air drug markets. It is also reasonable to assume that impeding the legal but creepy behavior, would inhibit the use of the conservancy for lewd and illegal acts.

These acts, while not illegal, are the observable façade, the disorderly and creepy behavior, that facilitates the illegal behavior and also frightens away legitimate park users. This spring, the mother and daughter who attempted to eat their lunch in the park reported being stalked and frightened to move several time before being subjected to the suspect masturbating in their presence.

The Park-and-Ride Stakeholders

While being sympathetic to people who work uptown and solve their parking issue by using Olin Park as a park-and-ride lot, if their use facilitates the use of the park by cruisers, then the displacement of these parkers must be considered. Preliminary data suggests that 50 to 60 vehicles parked at Olin for more than eight or more hours a day. these vehicles are present primarily Monday through Friday. Observations of persons returning to these vehicles make it apparent that they are not using the park, but park there while they are working elsewhere. Some of these vehicles belong to cops and many are believed to be construction workers. Some of these parkers continue the journey uptown by bike, an activity that should be encouraged. Some walk or run the causeway, which are also commendable and green activities. Many of the parkers are shuttled to the lot by other vehicles. Officers have observed loads of construction workers being dropped off at the end of the day.

These parked vehicles give the impression that the park is heavily used when it is not. The 30 unattended vehicles in the south lot provide cover for the cruiser vehicles, many of which are occupied. The cruising by illegitimate park users would stand out like a sore thumb if the park-and-ride vehicles were not there. There are hours during the day when 50 to 60 cruiser vehicles are moving in and out of the various park lots and drives, but they avoid close scrutiny because there are an equal number of vehicles using the park for long term parking.

Sex Nests

The litter is the first thing that strikes you as being unique about the Turville Point Conservancy. The UW Arboretum and most other City conservancy parks have very little litter by comparison. Users of natural areas tend to be more environmentally conscious. Close examination of the litter is both disgusting and frightening. First the litter is concentrated in discrete locations. These locations are usually around large trees or in the middle of dense thickets of invasive shrubs (Buckthorn and Honeysuckle). If located near a large tree, one notices that there is a path worn around the base of the tree and disturbance of the leaf litter being pushed away from the tree are signs of human activity.

Though the litter includes candy and snack wrappers, and beer cans and bottles. The concentration of these items seems to indicate a persistent human presence at one location, which is inconsistent with the usual pattern of activity for persons visiting a natural area. In addition to the ordinary but concentrated litter listed above, many small piles of discarded tissues, paper towels or wipes dominate these sites. These are often pulpy masses at the bases of trees due to the rain and dew. If they are fresher, they appear to be contaminated with biological material. This is disgusting enough. But the critical evidence that confirms what these sites are used for are condoms, condom wrappers, packets or tubes of sexual lubricant or other products used for sexual encounters.

As of May 1st 2009, while collecting data and studying problems in the conservancy, the South District Community Policing Team have located 25 distinct sites of sexual activity in the park.¹⁰ These sites were plotted with GPS to visualize the pattern of illicit use of the park. Most of the sites were single specific locations but many had multiple smaller locations at which sexual litter was found. The largest sex nest, in a buckthorn and honeysuckle thicket, had eleven discreet areas of activity.

¹⁰ This is less than the actual number of locations used by men for public sex. Only sites with specific items confirming the locations as sex nest were included. Many other sites with litter and paper towels and tissues were not counted. Early in April some of our first forays into the park included litter collection and specifically collecting and counting condom wrappers. This activity skewed our later project of locating and counting sex sites. We have not yet traversed the entire park and expect to eventually locate more sites.

Olin Experiment:

We propose that MPD, Madison Parks and Traffic Engineering conduct a series of experiments in September 2009 to drastically alter the environment of Olin Park. Over a period of several weeks alter traffic patterns and aggressively pursue legitimate user groups as an experiment to disrupt the burgeoning public-sex traffic and to test officers theories about potential long-term solutions.

Why this experiment needs to be done in September.

- There is a sense that the City is increasingly losing control of the park and that the volume of sexual activity is increasing.
- Data indicates that while park use by legitimate users is weather dependent and seasonal, the cruisers are more likely to use the park consistently throughout the year (with the exception of the time when snow blocks access to the hill and the conservancy).
- Peak use of the conservancy, based on other natural areas in the vicinity, should be in the spring when the wildflowers are blooming and again in the fall when the leaves are changing. These periods are separated by mosquito season in Wisconsin.
- One strategy to reclaim the park is to encourage and entice users to see the natural beauty of Turville Point, and get them involved in solving the parks problems.
- The Spring wildflower displays in Turville Point woods are more spectacular than even the UW Arboretum.
- By June, the wildflowers will be fading and the mosquitoes will be discouraging new legitimate users
- The experiment could be attempted in the Spring or Fall but if not attempted this September, we would lose the opportunity to do a real test of our theories for approximately five months.
- We anticipate another peak period of use as mosquitoes decrease and cooler temperatures arrive
- School is in session and there are fewer legitimate users available, and there are fewer scheduled events for the park.
- Fall colors should be spectacular and the Conservancy could be promoted as a family destination to enjoy the lake and the leaves

The experiment would have three components:

1. Drastically alter the parking and traffic patterns in the park with temporary signs and barriers to disrupt the courtship rituals that precede public sexual activity
2. Though ultimately not a police function, fill the conservancy with legitimate users through tours, classes and planned events with the enticement of wildflowers and scenic views, while assuring safe visits with police resources and, hopefully, eliminating the disconcerting cruising behavior on the roads and parking lots of the park. Officers can support these activities to make users feel safer.
3. Prepare for the new visitors by cleaning up biological litter and clearing invasive shrubs that provide cover for the "sex nests".

None of these ideas will affect the substantive change needed to alter park use permanently.

The problem of public sex in Olin Park seems so intractable that we seriously doubt whether encouraging legitimate use and altering traffic patterns can succeed without more extreme interventions.

We propose that there is a need to entice already highly motivated user groups to visit the Conservancy. For that reason we propose that it will be necessary to sacrifice some restrictions on natural area use and alter our perceptions of what are acceptable uses of Turville conservancy. We anticipate there will be vocal objections from some segments of the population.

We suggest that portions of the Conservancy be opened to dog use and that the bike/pedestrian path that circles lake Monona be routed through the Park. We cannot think of two more highly motivated groups that use Madison's outdoor facilities, that dog walkers and bikers/runner. Either of these groups would tap into a pool of park users that are dedicated to being out year round and regardless of the weather.



**Proposed paved bike path for the Turville Conservancy
Shaded areas would be open to natural surveillance by
bikers and pedestrians**

Recent Cruiser Postings on the Internet

wheres the new olin park?

Date: 2010-06-08, 4:36PM CDT
Reply To This Post

i need to get some im 6 ft 200 lbs top DD free 7in tool weres the new spot pic for pic

olin park - m4m (mad town)

Date: 2010-06-06, 4:38PM CDT
Reply To This Post

i keep reading about this place in the news, is it a dead zone now? where have we moved to? i just moved to the area

Olin Park encounter - m4m - 47 (Madison)

Date: 2010-06-23, 10:03PM CDT
Reply To This Post

To the guy I met at Olin Park today around 3:30 PM. Sorry for running off like that. The blue car that pulled up behind me made me nervous. Hopefully you check on Craig's list and see this ad. I have a shaved head, salt and pepper beard, glasses, white shorts and light blue shirt. You had black short cut hair, glasses, nice slender body, tank top and tan baggy pants. Hope we can meet again.

Cruising? - m4m - 44 (Madison)

Date: 2010-09-07, 1:49PM CDT
Reply To This Post

Now that Olin park has been exorcised of gay men.... any other place in town to hook up?