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SPECIAL REPORT: CONVENTION CENTER

7A

Can anything else hurt Lake Monona?

By Susan Lempert Smith
Special to the Journal

Bernard Saloy knows Lake Monona. He grew up on Rutledge Street and remembers, as a boy, finding treasure in the city dump that is now Lake Park.

He remembers the fence that kept the bottles and cans from floating out into the lake. And, during his 14-year career working for the city health and engineering departments, he recalls all the things that have been done to Monona in the interests of improving it.

"Things like the tons of sodium arsenite — now known to be concentrating, as well as pesticides — that were dumped into Monona to kill lake weeds."

Saloy also knows about Madison's worries about its lakes. He's spent time photographing the planes of ending dirt that floated

out from the newly constructed conveyor. And he remembers shivering as a boat during the winter of 1983 as he peered down into the lake to investigate the mayor's assertion that the conveyor was impairing circulation between Monona Bay and the main lake. (It was.)

So it's not surprising that Saloy checks a little when asked whether he thinks the proposed lake-edge convention center will harm the lake.

"Considering all the other things we've done to the lake, how could this harm it?" Saloy asked.

"I'd call it a little bit to be Warden Pond, but it's not."

During his retirement, Saloy has kept up his interest in civic affairs by serving as co-chairman of the Central and Union Avenues, streets run by the Capital Community Citizens for projects that enhance or detract from the city's

beauty. And while Saloy doesn't think the convention center would harm Lake Monona, he does think it would do a lot for Madison.

It's a structure that would give the park back to the general public, Saloy said. "I have a sense now, when I drive by, that it's been given over to the waterfowl."

Saloy's historical view aside, Madison is a city where concern over a turtle held up the South Ball Lake project for a decade. And it's likely that a host of environmental questions will be raised during the convention center debate. Among them:

Considering all the other things we've done to the lake, how could this harm it?

Bernard Saloy
retired city employee, commenting about proposed convention center

more gently sloping and serves as a spawning ground for panfish such as bluegill and bass.

The toxins. The arsenic and copper compounds that Saloy and other would-be watchdogs have dumped on the lake since the days after mercury compounds, PCBs, lead and cadmium from the days after Starbuck Creek and the lake itself served as dumping yards for Madison industries.

A 1989 DNR survey of Lake Monona sediments found "heavy pollution" levels of copper, mercury and arsenic in the lake bottom. Another 1987 study found that the deeper sediments were more heavily contaminated but have, over the years, been covered by less polluted sediments.

There is concern that construction along the lakeshore will stir up these polluted sediments and broadcast them again through the lake.

But the DNR's Hains said that based on his study of the engineering methods proposed for the aquatic park, the potentially contaminated sediment is a major problem.

"I think that the state of the art is that most of it can be contained during construction," he said.

Runoff. A host of environmental issues will be whether adding more concrete to the lakeshore will increase runoff into the lake. Environmentalists worry that bringing more cars and parking lots closer to the lake shore, and parking them in the two new parking garages, will increase the amount of oil and other pollutants that will be washed into the lake.

Additionally, paving the garage of Lake Park, which can filter rainwater and runoff before it seeps into lake, may also increase the amount of pollution.

Hotel would be boon to center

Continued from Page 1A

son, according to the Greater Madison Convention and Visitors Bureau.

When indirect spending is figured in — money spent by business and industry, money spent by workers coming from the convention center — the economic impact is even greater. The bureau estimates that indirect spending would total \$64 million, Laventhal and Horwath said.

Other hotels at least twice, Farrell said. On these occasions, the hotel day has could not accommodate all the people attending events in the trade center.

"Making the trade center have been extremely successful," Farrell said. He did not give details, but a sales manager said April that events were booked into the year 2008.

The expo center would complement the Downtown center's business by continuing to draw national and international conventions and events, he said.

"If it builds a convention center, Madison will be competing with Chicago, New York, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dallas and other cities."

The number of convention centers nationwide grew 27 percent from 1980 to 1988, resulting in a 48 percent increase in space, according to industry data.

Improved marketing and a dedication of public funding are essential to a successful convention center, he said, according to the report. The latter involves setting up a special tax district, such as a room tax, to pay for the center. Industry experts say concentrate on a few.

Farrell said his 20-room Holiday Inn and trade center is estimated to be a \$100-million project. The 30,000-square-foot building called a "trade center," would benefit from a Downtown convention center, he said.

"There's a ripple effect that goes on to town any time you have a major event," he said. The result is increased demand for hotel rooms throughout the metropolitan area. Some visitors, for example, might ordinarily stay in Downtown hotels when in Madison on business, Farrell said. But they would have to find lodging elsewhere if a large convention fills Downtown hotels.

Laventhal and Horwath concluded that to respond to these County Exposition Center on John Nolen Drive would draw away two events annually because of parking and seating advantages.

James Curley, a private developer and consultant, also analyzed an expo center expansion. He said the business case is strong, but that city and county centers because they would serve different markets.

Critics said he was unaware of any cities where convention centers have replaced downtown hotels. The current financial picture is bleak, he said. It is inadequate to allow the development of a competitive marketing campaign, Laventhal and Horwath said.

At the time, the proposal was to build the center on the shore of Lake Monona just east of the current proposed site, which is at the foot of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

So far, there has been no public disclosure of a plan to build a hotel to serve the proposed convention center. City officials have expressed hope that the convention center would induce a private developer to build a hotel after the center begins operating.

John Curley, the principal city planner working on the project, said he does not think the convention center would induce a private developer to build a hotel after the center begins operating.

Laventhal and Horwath went on to say, "If the hotel development is to be built at this location, it should not be built at this location."

Convention lingo explained

When does a meeting become a convention? And what's the difference between a convention and a trade show? The two main types of events held in convention centers are trade shows and conventions.

Trade shows are used interchangeably with trade shows, but they are distinct. A trade show is a gathering of people in the room, it usually lasts for a few days. A convention is a gathering of people in the room, it usually lasts for a few days. A convention is a gathering of people in the room, it usually lasts for a few days.

Trade shows — Similar to a convention, except some products or services are displayed. A trade show is a forum where buyers come to a central location to see the products and services of many vendors.

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Darlington battles flooding

Continued from Page 1A

efforts and the damage on video tapes that Anderson hopes to show federal and state officials.

Each business had its own tragedy.

Federal Emergency Management Agency officials, in the state to assess flood damage to downtown Darlington.

Anderson expected them early this week.

The Coast to Coast Store had just two new wooden floors, an old sub-floored store, Anderson said. Now, it is ruined.

Nearby, Jan's Fashion store is fare any better.

"It was a beautiful dress shop. It was really classy," Anderson said. But the new carpeting had to be ripped out, and dresses were piled up on top of wooden racks.

High school principal David Chevrolet was helping at the store, emptying water from a wet dry vacuum.

"They're good friends of mine," he explained. "We're all helping out."

At Mac's Cafe, owner Thorene Green couldn't stop crying and muddy floor. She was waiting for firefighters to wash out the truck with their hoses.

"Where do you start?" she asked Anderson. Wallpaper was peeling and the floor had started to warp.

"I'm just kind of blown away today," he said.

Throughout the day, customers stopped by to find a hand, Green said.

This town will survive. You bet it will," Green said. "We're not quitting. We're not giving up."

Just a couple of blocks away at the Freeman's Hardware store, workers in the store were setting up new wooden floors and old drains to about 150 people and planned to stay open through September, said assistant president July 30.

At the edge of town, people were gathering to see the damage at the

Lafayette County Fairgrounds, scheduled to host the county fair July 11-14.

Floodwaters covered much of the grounds, which had recently been removed, said Wayne Wilson, chairman of the county board, and "I'd looked better than it has in years."

Floodwaters swept away a fairgrounds truck and a 4-foot steel pipe. In addition, Floral Hall, used for 4-H exhibitions, was "a total wreck," he said. Water had covered all the appliances.

"I have never known water to get that high before," Wilson said, adding that a special fair board meeting would likely be called Monday to determine whether the fair can go on as scheduled.

The county board also will probably hold a special meeting to assess damage in the county, he said. Two bridges are out, and there were two major washouts" of roads.

"We don't have the funds for this," he said.

Farmstead along the Potomac River valley was flooded "from here to South Wayne," Wilson said.

Just east of town, on Highway 21, Bill Curry pointed out submerged crops across the highway from his farmstead. During the flooding, water on the road was 2 to 4 feet deep and it left a pond where his lower pasture had been. He said.

Several yards down, the highway was closed because a bridge warfare had been torn away by the rush of floodwaters.

Highway 21 into Darlington also had been closed, but was opened Saturday afternoon.

Saturday afternoon will be especially hard for farmers in Lake because it came in time to drain bright hopes for this year's crops. Curry said.

After two years of drought, "it seemed like it was really going to catch up. The corn was really looking good."

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