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### Brookside HOA Property Evaluation

John Del Marto  
36336 N Old Woods Trail,  
Gurnee, IL 60031

A consultant from Davey Resource Group, Inc. (DRG) was contracted to visit outlots "lots", owned by the Brookside HomeOwners Association in Gurnee, IL. DRG's assignment was to visit the site and provide professional assessment of the status of the property. This memo serves to document the observations and recommendations from the visit.

### Observations

#### Lot K

Approximately 5.14 acres. Overall the site is severely degraded from a native habitat, aesthetic, and stormwater capacity standpoint. Small pockets of native vegetation found within the site. Lot K has not been maintained for many years and will require investments in removal, maintenance, and monitoring to bring the lot back to proper functionality. Dominant species in the lot was Common Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*). Other species included Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Narrowleaf Cattails (*Typha angustifolia*), Rice Cut Grass (*Leersia oryzoides*), Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), Joe Pye Weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*). Noticeable lack of old growth native tree species located within the lot. Storm structures are in good condition.

#### Lot J

Approximately 10 acres. Overall the site is severely degraded from a native habitat, aesthetic, and stormwater capacity standpoint. Small pockets of native vegetation found within the site. Lot J has not been maintained for many years and will require investments in removal, maintenance, and monitoring to bring the lot back to proper functionality. Dominant species in the lot was Common Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*). Other species included Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Narrowleaf Cattails (*Typha angustifolia*), Rice Cut Grass (*Leersia oryzoides*), Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), Joe Pye Weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*). Noticeable lack of old growth native tree species located within the lot. Several flared end sections in Lot J have started to detach from their pipe. The concrete of other flared end sections have started to break apart.

#### Lot I

Approximately 20.4 acres. Overall the site is severely degraded from a native habitat, aesthetic, and stormwater capacity standpoint. Small pockets of native vegetation found within the site. Large sections of Lot I have buckthorn dead zones, where no other vegetation grows underneath large old buckthorn trees. Lot I has not been maintained for many years and will require investments in removal, maintenance, and monitoring to bring the lot back to proper functionality. Dominant species in the lot was Common Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*). Other species included Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Narrowleaf Cattails (*Typha angustifolia*), Rice Cut Grass (*Leersia oryzoides*), Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), Joe Pye Weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*). Noticeable lack of old growth native tree species located within the lot.

## Recommendations

Successful natural area restoration and management efforts begin in the planning and design phase. Unfortunately after the visit walkthrough it was clear that Lot K, J & I have not been maintained in any way for 20 years. The property is the equivalent of a building that has been abandoned. The following are, minimum, big picture steps required to get the lots back to a functioning asset for the HOA.

- **Retain an Ecological Consultant.** With over 30 acres of natural areas, it would be unrealistic and inefficient for the HOA board to attempt to manage this property without expert advice. A consultant will be able to provide a road map to restoring the site, handle the day to day requirements of maintenance, and provide resources need to manage the property
- **Develop a Phased Management Plan.** Managing the outlots will not be a one, two, or five year project. The HOA needs to plan for maintaining the outlots in perpetuity. Without a long term management plan, the site will return to its current conditions in time. .
- **Remove Buckthorn.** The buckthorn has become so overgrown that it will be difficult to come up with a proper management plan. There were large sections of the property that could not be accessed because of the overgrowth.
- **Establish Annual Stormwater Inspections.** Perform regular inspections of your storm water structures to assure that they are functioning properly.

## Benefits of Restoration

There are many benefits for property owners that decide to restore their “unimproved” land.

- **Improved Habitat & Usable Environment.** Buckthorn crowds out our native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers. Buckthorn also contains a chemical that harms birds, frogs, and other beneficial wildlife. Removing buckthorn will bring sunlight back to the woods and allow native vegetation to reassert itself along with beneficial native species like dragonflies, song birds, and reptiles.
- **Potential to Lower Property Taxes.** Illinois’ Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) encourages landowners who have at least five acres of unimproved land and commit to implementing a habitat management plan may apply for CSP in exchange for reduced valuation of property taxes.
- **Lower Populations of Nuisance Species.** Skunks, ticks, mosquitos, coyotes, raccoons, squirrels are all species that benefit from overgrown and unmanaged natural areas. Clearing out all the buckthorn will create a more open woodland that provides fewer hiding spaces for nuisance species.
- **Improved Stormwater Capacity.** Invasive species like cattails and phragmites drastically reduce the holding capacity of ponds and stormwater basins over time.
- **Removes Easy Cover.** Originating in Europe, buckthorn was initially introduced as a hedge plant. It grows in dense clumps of understory to mid-canopy tall shrubs. This limits visibility with the woodlands and can provide easy hiding spots for vagrants to move in and out of the property.

Please contact DRG with any questions or for further clarification of any of the information provided in this memo.

Sincerely,

*Jake Kyrias-Gann*

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*Image 1. Facing south toward Lot I from Grand Ave.*



***Image 2. Facing south toward Lot 1 from Grand Ave. Overgrowth damaging fence.***

***Image 3. Lot 1 overgrowth. Very difficult to move through.***



***Image 4. Lot J overgrowth.***



*Image 5. Lot J overgrowth.*



***Image 6. Facing north toward Lot K. Phragmites encroaching in the lot. Dead trees most likely caused by drastic change in local hydrology***



***Image 7: Facing north toward Lot J. Degraded concrete***



***Image 8: Lot J detached flared end section. Will cause significant erosion damage if not corrected.***