

Four years ago, I had the privilege of participating in the Madison County Leadership Forum of 2010. When asked to imagine the possibilities for our community, I found myself scribbling a picture of a small lake on my notepad. I had recently visited a colleague of mine in South Carolina, where I was able to witness firsthand the re-birth of a community that once had been hollowed by the exportation of a textile industry. That textile industry was the primary source of jobs and had defined that community for generations. When the textile companies left, the town was left with a void and a need to re-imagine itself. They, like us, had a river running through. They, like us, dared to dream big and today, they are a cultural center of activity that has drawn people to live there and to invest in their economy.

I grew up in Madison County and now my wife and I are raising our two sons here. We love the people and believe in our community's future. That is why I am so excited to see so many rallying around the dream of Mounds Lake. To be clear, my family does not own property along the River, nor do we stand to benefit financially from its creation. Rather, we support this project, because we view this project as transformational and uplifting for everyone.

There is nothing I have seen proposed that could transform our community more quickly and more completely than Mounds Lake. That small lake I drew on my notepad was merely the beginning. At that time in 2010, none of us knew the potential the land has given us – a gift that makes it possible to not only fill a small reservoir as I had drawn, but to create a large lake with endless possibilities for recreation and development.

We have been fortunate to have new companies locate here since the days of General Motors. But, we need more. And, we want business owners and leaders to not only choose to work in our community, if we are to thrive in the future – we need them to choose to live here too. We need to give them reasons to choose Madison County, instead of Fishers or Noblesville. We want them here.

I feel so blessed that I happened to say this sketch of an idea aloud and in front of one of the few, if not the only person, who could actually take this brainstorm and see it through. There are going to be challenges ahead, as with any project worth doing. I believe in Rob Sparks, and I trust him to do the right thing for our community.

We are fortunate to have this opportunity before us; an opportunity that so many other towns like ours would love to have. Let's not waste our chance to challenge the status quo and define a new path. Abraham Lincoln said, "The best way to predict your future is to create it." We have the chance to create a new future for Madison County. Mounds Lake is the start!

-- Quinn Ricker