

# Park Notes

A newsletter of the Friends of St. Paul and Ramsey County Parks  
1621 Beechwood Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55116 698-4543  
Volume 18, Number 4 November, 2003

## What (and where) is Dickerman Park... and what should it be?

*A design charrette is set for Thursday, November 20, at Midway YMCA, 1761 University Avenue, from 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM*

## TCAAP opens to public

A design charrette is set for Thursday, November 20, at Midway YMCA, 1761 University Avenue, from 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM to explore and make recommendations about the future of one of Saint Paul's most unusual and little noticed park. Even though it runs along University Avenue and is seen by thousands of people each day, few know it is a park and fewer see it for the potential it has to offer the community. The charrette, which is open to the public, hopes to begin to change all that.

Dickerman Park is a four-block expanse of green space that sits on the north side of University Avenue between Fairview Avenue and Aldine Street. It was donated to the City of St. Paul in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century at a time when University Avenue was envisioned as a grand boulevard connecting St. Paul and Minneapolis. To all outward appearances, it is the front yard of a number of commercial buildings including the Griggs Midway office complex, the YMCA and Marsden Building Maintenance, and few are aware that the green space is actually a city-owned park.

Because it is not recognized or used as a public park, a number of interested community residents and stakeholders, led by Friends of the Parks, have organized a series of meetings. Their goal is to create a community vision as to how Dickerman Park should be operated, programmed and/or developed within the context of the neighborhood and adjacent properties. These discussions led to the creation of a Dickerman Park Task Force, which hopes to complete a process leading to a recommendation by the end of this year.

The Task Force is hosting a design charrette at the Midway YMCA. The Y's "front yard" is actually a portion of Dickerman Park, and their desire to build a new facility is one of the factors to be considered during the charrette.

Several of the community stakeholders requested that University UNITED organize the Task Force and facilitate the community process. UNITED is a coalition of 12 community organizations and six individual businesspeople. The charrette will be led by architect Tim Griffin, Director of the St. Paul on the Mississippi Design Center.

Those planning to attend should RSVP with University UNITED at (651) 647-6711. For additional information contact Brian McMahon, Executive Director of University UNITED at (651) 647-6711 or [bcmahon@universityunited.com](mailto:bcmahon@universityunited.com).

Part of the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant, TCAAP, can now be accessed by the public under procedures set up by the Minnesota Army National

## Burning for preservation

Guard. The Guard controls 1520 acres at the TCAAP site located on the north edge of Arden Hills. The Guard's acres are now called the Arden Hills Army Training Site. The area is used by the National Guard, the US Army Reserve and other reserve components of the armed services for military training. Since most training takes place on weekends the Guard is now encouraging public groups to use the facility for scheduled outdoor special events during times when it is not scheduled for military exercises.

Over the years the area suffered greatly from contamination from the munitions manufacture and testing. Significant investment has been made in environmental cleanup. The Guard has been a good steward and has a lengthy history of environmental protection and community involvement. The invitation to the public to share use of the property is consistent with their overall mission to serve.

The 1520 acres is home to numerous wildlife including the Trumpeter Swan, Plains Pocket Mouse, Blandings Turtle, Red Shoulder Hawk, osprey, wild turkey, beaver, otter, mink, whitetail deer, coyote and numerous other small mammals and migrating birds. There are many unique natural features including a glacial kame, wetlands, woods and prairies.

To reserve a time for a group activity, contact Dave Hamernick at 651-634-5229.

The first and long awaited burn along Mississippi River Boulevard was finally completed the last week of October, just before the season's first snow fall. The burn carries out one of the most significant recommendations of the Mississippi River Bluff Management plan developed under the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR) grant to help restore the environmental health of the river bluffs in Saint Paul.

In 1999 the Friends won a \$200,000 LCMR grant to inventory the area between Emerald Street and Highway 5, remove exotic vegetation and begin restoring more native plants. The inventory told an ugly story. The beautiful bluff area had been overgrown with exotic buckthorn and tartarian honeysuckle. Native trees were generally large and old with younger seedlings crowded out by buckthorn. Native flowers and grasses were shaded by the invasive shrubs and in many places there were few signs of the flowers and grasses which had once dominated the area. Over two and a half years the Friends and our contractors worked to remove the exotics. Remarkable, with sunlight reaching the forest floor for the first time in many years, long dormant seeds began to sprout and natives began to make a comeback.

But the native can not compete initially with the rapid growing exotic buckthorn and honeysuckle so a management plan was developed to maintain the work and keep the invaders at bay until the natives had a chance to re-establish. The management plan called for periodic burns. Burning is now a common and well established practice in maintaining natural areas, but burning in the heart of the city presents unique problems, not the least among them public perceptions and public relations.

The Friends and the City hosted numerous meetings for neighbors and provided information to the community through the affected community councils. That was all in preparation for a burn in 2002. Then the weather refused to cooperate. When the winds were right, the temperatures were not. When the temps and winds were right, the humidity was not. In some places there was not enough fuel to keep a burn going. So, in spite of all the preparation, the burns were not completed in 2002. This fall, however, the weather and the fuel were right and a completely uneventful

## Commemorative trees for 2004

## Friends call for budget changes

### Bike lanes slashed

burn was completed. A few neighbors turned out to watch and hikers and bikers stopped to ask questions and observe. It all went off without a hitch, which should make future burns less controversial.

The Friends helped pay for the burn costs. Funds for this type of environmental activity are made possible through contributions to the Friends including a special contribution from Stewart Corn and the annual tree sale.

Trees donated to area parks as memorials, tributes or as the holiday gift that gives to the whole community are important to the parks and open spaces in our community. They also help the Friends fund our many projects. We make a modest profit off each tree and because these trees help increase the number of trees we purchase each year, it brings down the price of the trees we are able to offer. Each year we work with our supplier and the park departments to identify the most suitable trees, trees which are hearty and disease resistant. We also make sure to make native trees\* available as they are often preferred in park areas. Commemorative trees available for 2004 are Autumn Blaze Maple\*, Heritage Birch\*, Royal Star Magnolia, Swamp White Oak\*, Indian Magic Crab and Black Hills Spruce.

Gift trees can be donated to:

**County parks:** Anoka, Dakota, and Ramsey.

**City parks:** Apple Valley, Blaine, Brooklyn Park, Champlin, Cottage Grove, Eagan, Mendota Heights, Saint Louis Park, South Saint Paul, West Saint Paul and Woodbury and all municipalities in Ramsey County.

Ramsey County parks will accept only Autumn Blaze Maple and Swamp White Oak.

Saint Paul needs trees in the following neighborhood and regional parks: Edgumbe Road; Phalen Park; Harriet Island; Ames Lake; Prospect Boulevard; Johnson Parkway; Crosby Park; Hidden Falls; Lilydale; Raspberry Island; Prosperity Park; Cherokee Park; and Como Park.

Mayor Kelly's changes to the Saint Paul Long Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) recommended by the advisory committee are not in the best interest of the city, according to testimony offered by Friends of the Parks president, Michael Prichard, at the city council's November budget hearing.

Budgets in a city the size of Saint Paul are complex animals which are sleep inducing reading for all but the most dedicated. But the impact of all those numbers can be dramatic for the future look and livability of the city. Priorities which are only words become reality, or not, once the budget is approved. The impact of this year's budget will be long term, and will be negative for the Saint Paul Park system.

Slashed from the mayor's budget is \$413,000 for Como Bike Lanes. Linkages among the myriad trail segments has long been a need and shared goal. This budget item takes great strides to creating many of those linkages. The bike lanes will add safe and convenient bicycle connections to the University of Minnesota/Dinkytown area and the bikeway along the University of Minnesota Transitway in Minneapolis with the Saint Paul campus, the Mississippi River Trail along Mississippi River Boulevard in Saint Paul, State fairgrounds, Como Park, the Ramsey County West Trail/Lexington Avenue Bikeway in Roseville (which extends north to the Rice

## Millions to dike Holman field

Creek Regional Trail and Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park), the south end of the Munger Gateway State Trail (which extends northeast through Phalen-Keller Regional Park and Stillwater Township and eventually north to Duluth), and the east end of the Summit Avenue Bikeway with a destination of the Sate Capitol and downtown Saint Paul.

Most remarkable is not just that the mayor proposes to cut funding for these links, it is rather that by so doing, the mayor will be forgoing a \$825,000 federal matching grant. Saint Paul has been awarded this match before and was unable to provide its share of the match and the federal funding was lost. If Saint Paul again passes up these federal funds, it will be a very strong signal to the feds that Saint Paul is simply not serious about the project and future federal assistance with the project will be very unlikely. "Talk about penny wise and pound foolish," said Jeanne Weigum, Friend's board member. "The city sets priorities, writes grants and actually wins the money only to walk away from it. The person who said we needed to get our priorities right had a mighty good point."

Mississippi river floods. Yup. Always has. Always will. There are a number of ways to prepare for and respond to these natural and necessary occurrences. The Army Corps of Engineers, the nations dam builders, in a recent report called for, "greater reliance on non-structural alternatives like relocation and land acquisition and less reliance on traditional tools like levees. Many studies found that levees had constricted the river, raising flood heights."(*Mississippi Monitor*, 7/03)

Saint Paul in its priorities and budget seems to be ignoring the reality that if you choke the river's flow in one place it will put more pressure in another. Saint Paul contributed about \$48 million for the upper Landing housing development. This project not only ignored the admonition to relocate and certainly stop building, but actually added housing development in the floodway, taking 21 acres out of the flood plain. This further restricts the natural flow of the river. The problem could be made even worse with a multi-million project of diking Holman Field, which is located squarely in the floodway. The mayor propose to use \$1 million of CIB funds to help finance the diking.

**The Friends of Parks & Trails  
in Saint Paul & Ramsey County  
1621 Beechwood Avenue  
Saint Paul, MN 55116**

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Saint Paul, MN  
Permit #3413

**CHANGE SERVICE  
REQUESTED**