

# Park Notes

A newsletter of the Friends of St. Paul and Ramsey County Parks  
1621 Beechwood Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55116 651- 698-4543  
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## Lilydale Park



**Black Hills Spruce**

### Engaging the community

Friend of Lilydale welcomes new members. To get involved or to be added to the mailing list, contact Grit Youngquist or Jon Kerr, 651-227-2264 or [editor@oldmanriver.com](mailto:editor@oldmanriver.com).

### Funding for Parks and Trails

Lilydale Park is sometimes affectionately called the 'wild sister' of Harriet Island. Together Lilydale and Harriet Island form a continuous regional park along the Mississippi River across from downtown Saint Paul. While Saint Paul manages the parks, it is straddles five jurisdictions, Saint Paul, Lilydale, Mendota Heights, Ramsey and Daokta Counties. It is enjoyed, and sometimes abused, by people from across the metro area.

The Friends of Lilydale Park (FOL) are part of the West Side Citizens Organization Environment Committee, District Council 3. Initially it organized for park clean up activities but soon they expanded their mission to include planning and shaping long range development. FOL turned their sights to the Lilydale portion of the Master Plan. While Harriet Island received much high-profile attention and resource allocation after the Master Plan was adopted in the 1980's, Lilydale was largely neglected. FOL set out to evaluate if the now 20 year old Master Plan was still the best vision of 'the wild sister'. Developing a contemporary vision for the park not only resulted in a commitment to a new improved plan, but it reinvigorated citizens to engage with the park.

FOL reached out to the whole community to raise awareness and appreciation of Lilydale's rich array of natural and historic resources and used that outreach to gather information and build consensus. Monthly "Saturday in the Park" events were free and family-friendly. They featured a theme highlighting park strengths including hikes, ice fishing, cross-country skiing, birding, fossil digs, old-timer story telling and historically inspired song-writing to reminisce about the Old Lilydale Village. The Village, which survived numerous floods, was ultimately defeated by the river and is now a ghost town near the center of the park.

Saturday in the Park participants and the broader community shared their ideas for Lilydale Park to assist with updating the Master Plan. Their ideas helped identify high and low priorities for park development. In 2003 the City of Saint Paul and WSCO signed a Letter of Intent to guide park preservation and development based on citizen involvement. The Master Plan will be updated and there is a solidified partnership between FOL and the City. *Grit Youngquist provided information for this article.*

The regional park system could be awarded \$7 million if Governor Tim Pawlenty's proposed \$760 million capital budget is approved by the 2004 legislature. Even-year legislative sessions are normally dominated by 'capital budget' items. These include buildings, highways, educational facilities and environmental projects which are funded mainly by state borrowing.



Indian Magic Crab

## News from Ramsey County Parks



Royal Star Magnolia

## Island Station

Included in the Governor's request are funding for park projects in Saint Paul and Ramsey County including Lilydale-Harriet Island Regional Park, Como Regional Park and the Samuel Morgan Regional Trail, the Bruce Vento Regional Trail, Long Lake Regional Park, Keller Regional Park, Vadnais-Snail Lake Regional Park and the Rice Creek North Regional Park. This is funding for the Regional Park system only and does not fund city park systems.

Some have raised questions about why the State should fund any of the parks in the metro area, arguing that the cities and counties should fund those costs. Metro residents argue that there is a matter of fairness here. State parks are funded 100% by the State even when those parks are small and largely serve only the nearby community. Metro parks, on the other hand, are often used by people from throughout the state with parks like Como and the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes trails each receiving more visitors per year than any of the state parks.

If you would like to support funding for the regional park system, a phone call or letter to your senator or representative highlighting the importance of parks to our quality of life would be most helpful. If you do not know the name or contact information for your elected representatives, call House Information at 651-296-2146 or the state's website, <http://maps.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/website/districts/>

The winter months mean cross-country skiing and ice skating for the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department. The nine members of the Parks and Recreation Commission have been busy investigating park financing options in preparation for a report to the County Board. Meanwhile, the Department is gearing up for the legislative session. At stake is capital improvement funding for the metro area's regional parks, including those in Ramsey County. (See article above)

The \$7 million in the governor's budget is the State's contribution to the metro park system. The Metropolitan Council, which has regional taxing authority and oversees the regional parks, would chip in another \$5 million. Of this \$12 million total, Ramsey County would receive about \$1 million. This would cover about 62% of the County's proposed capital improvement projects according to Greg Mack, Director of Parks and Recreation. If the State's contribution were increased to \$8 million, Ramsey County would receive an additional \$420,000 or 86% of the cost of these projects. The large projects in the County's Capital Improvement Budget include acquiring land for Long Lake Regional Park and redeveloping Keller Regional Park with new toilet buildings, picnic shelters, and parking facilities.

Many of the County's current construction projects are nearing completion. Except for spring site work, Lake Gervais County Park is ready to open this summer as is the new picnic area at Sucker-Vadnais Lakes. For golfers, the beautiful Ponds at Battle Creek will be fully operational this spring. Redesign of Lake Josepine County Park will begin this summer. Negotiations continue between the City of Maplewood, Burlington Northern Railroad and the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department to extend the Bruce Vento Regional Trail from Beam Avenue north across I-694 to Buerkle Road. Information for Ramsey County parks news provided by Park Commissioner Mark Davis.

An old power plant, Island Station, rises up from the Mississippi River where Randolph Avenue joins Shepard Road. After years of disuse and abuse this site is slated for 600 housing units. The Friends question whether this is the best or even a logical use of the Mississippi River flood way. But first some history.



**Heritage Birch**



**Prince Charming Lilac**

## Homan Field diking update

The power plant closed and a developer bought the property in the 1980's to develop it for residential use. He was unable to carry out his project and squatters lived in the power plant building from 1984 until 1992. The City designated the building "unfit for human habitation." The lower levels of the building are flooded and believed to be contaminated with unnamed hazards. Currently the power plant building is used for storage of vehicles, boats, construction materials, chemicals and/or chemical containers. A 49 megawatt electrical power generating station was proposed in 1998, but that project fell through.

But, perhaps more optimistic or those with bad memories (think back to 1965, 1969, 1993, 1997, 2001) are again pursuing housing. Springbrook Development Company, now fashionably renamed Springpointe Development Company, purchased the property for a 600 housing unit project. Springpointe and the City issued an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW), a preliminary evaluation of the project. Since Springpointe is allowed to determine if the findings of the EAW are adequate, Springpointe decided that the more stringent Environmental Impact Statement would not be required. The City agreed.

The initial EAW issued by Springpointe proposed diking the housing project and filling in part of the floodway (AKA the Mississippi River). A second EAW reversed that decision. The developers will now 'floodproof' the buildings. This means the housing will stay dry, but during periods of flood, the underground garages and the roads which provide access to the homes will not. It may well be that home owners will only be able to get into their homes by boat or amphibious vehicles. Since the Mississippi does not flood annually, this should be an infrequent inconvenience. Anyone who has viewed the landscape after a flood will remember mud. Lots and lots of mud. That mud will, quite likely, decorate the inside of the garages. Residents will have to store the automobiles from the 600 underground parking stalls during high water times. Though infrequent, this is likely to be more than inconvenient. Further, mold issues could also come into play and be much more than an inconvenience.

Public access to the river was proposed as a looped trail around the property and a canoe/kayak launch. The developers reserve the right to cut off the public access if they desire and the canoe/kayak launch will not be identified as public. There will also be no public parking for the boat launch area, so canoers will have to portage in.

The Friends oppose diking and filling in the floodway and floodplain. We question housing and the construction of additional structures in the floodway and do not consider housing as the best use for the site. This is fragile land and the Friends believe recreational uses are more suitable and less intrusive.

Diking Homan Field to avoid the costly inconvenience of being an airport located in a floodway will cost \$25,000,000. To pay for this project the City would contribute \$1 million. Saint Paul is asking the state to contribute \$6 million, and the federal government has been asked to contribute \$19 million. Saint Paul's senators and representatives met in January to consider whether to actively pursue the State contribution during the legislative session. After a lengthy and contentious debate, the delegation opted not to incorporate the request into their priorities for state funding. This decision is a blow to Mayor Kelly and those wishing to pursue the diking project but was encouraging to those in opposition including environmentalists and neighborhood groups concerned about possibly additional flooding upstream during flood periods and added airplane noise pollution in nearby residential neighborhoods which would result from the Field expansion.



Bi-color Oak

## Tree Sale 2004



Glossy Black Chokeberry

“The lessons from past floods are being ignored. The costs for the flood of 1993 were \$12 billion. After that flood many residents in the floodplain used a federal program to voluntarily relocate their home out of harm’s way. But, as memories of the flood fades, Saint Paul has been filling the floodplain with new development. The Upper Landing housing project removed 21 acres from the floodway. Diking the Downtown Airport would remove about 300 acres from the flood plain. And the Island Station development proposes an additional 600 residential units in the floodway. If we refuse to learn from the floods of '65, '69, '93, '97, and 2001 the cost to the river and people will vastly exceed the 1993 record,” said Friends Executive Director Peggy Lynch.

The 2004 tree brochure is in the mail and on the Friends' website. As always you can purchase trees and shrubs for your own use or you can purchase trees to be planted in parks and public places in Dakota and Ramsey Counties, Apple Valley, Blaine, Brooklyn Park, Champlin, Cottage Grove, Eagan, Mendota Heights, St. Louis Park, South St. Paul, West St. Paul, Woodbury, Saint Paul and most other municipalities within Ramsey County.

We work hard to select trees and shrubs that are hardy, disease resistant, attractive, offer year-round interest and food or habitat for wildlife. All of our selections are hardy in zone 4 and many are hardy further north to zone 3. We aim to offer something for everyone, small trees for small lots, vines for fences, large trees for large lots and parks. And, many of the items we offer are either hard to find or very expensive through normal outlets. If you like a tree, but your yard will absolutely not accommodate one more, contribute it to a park.

**Large trees:** Autumn Blaze Maple, Autumn Purple Ash, Heritage Birch; Bi-color Oak; **Small trees:** Indian Magic Crab, Royal Star Magnolia, Weeping Pussy Willow; **Evergreens:** Black Hills Spruce, Blue Star Juniper; **Shrubs:** Glossy Black Chokeberry; Regent Service Berry, Prince Charming Lilac; **Vine:** Aunt Dee Wisteria.

**The Friends of Parks & Trails  
in Saint Paul & Ramsey County**  
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