

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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Contract awarded for Dickerman

Kent and Ariel Dickerman will be recognized for their work by the St. Paul City Council March 9 at 3:30.

View other coen + partners projects www.coenpartners.com

View mid century Dickerman Park <http://www.universityunited.com/projects.htm#dickerman>

Twenty years and counting

Coen+Partners were awarded the contract to develop a preliminary design for rejuvenating Dickerman Park. Initial work could be completed as soon as the end of 2005. You have read about Dickerman Park in this newsletter for several years. It is a 2.5 acre, elongated stretch of land along University Avenue between Fairview and Aldine Avenues. It is so tiny and so abused that most people would never guess it was a park, even though the Saint Paul Parks Department erected signs there several years ago. Along with the signs the only hint that this is a special place is the presence of many mature oak trees.

Coen+Partners won the contract in a competition with several of the area's most prominent park designers. They pledged to include an artistic design that preserved the oaks, allowed continued access to the businesses that abut the park and appealed equally to those who chose to walk through the park and those who whiz by in cars or on busses. When the land was dedicated as park land in 1909 by the Dickerman Investment Company and Griggs, Cooper & Company, their vision was of a grand entrance to the heart of the city. Now, nearly a hundred years later that vision is closer to reality.

The timing of the Dickerman Park project coincides nicely with current discussions and plans for revitalizing University Avenue. Light rail transit along the central corridor is under serious discussion. New developments at Lexington Parkway and Dale are underway. Scrutiny is turning to upgrading at Snelling and University, the highest trafficed intersection in the state. The Midway YMCA will soon make a decision whether to build a new facility at their current location along Dickerman or if they will consider alternate locations. University Avenue is in the beginning stages of a major transition and Dickerman with its green open space could play an important role in shaping the image of the area.

Kent and Ariel Dickerman, the only members of the Dickerman family who still live in the area, are working with other family members to help fund design and early development. They have contributed \$25,000 and continue to promote contributions to support the park donated by and named for their family.

Believe! Yes, it really is hard to believe that for twenty years the Friends have been working to preserve and improve the parks, trails and open space in Ramsey County. From an inauspicious beginning in Peggy Lynch's living room in 1984, we have grown from an enthusiastic but not very organized band of park lovers to an enthusiastic organized band of park lovers. It is time to reminisce and celebrate as we look forward to the next 20 years.

The Friends story began when developers in Saint Paul announced plans for a high-rise complex at Watergate Marina near Crosby Farm Park. Developers envisioned a chilly version of Marina Del Ray. Park users were stunned by the announcement and a handful of determined souls vowed to save the park. We succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. The development plans were forever shelved but instead of disbanding and going away, the ad-hoc citizens group formed a permanent nonprofit organization. Using \$25,000 granted by the Saint Paul Foundation, the Friends organization was established in April of 1985.

Truman Porter was the Friend's first president and defined the mission: "To assist government in preserving the natural and historic values of our parks and open spaces while promoting increased public appreciation and use of these resources."

Over the next twenty years the Friends fulfilled its mission of advising citizens and policy makers on a wide range of issues affecting parks, trails and open space. We support ourselves with membership dues, grants, and since 1992 the popular annual tree sale. Over 3,000 trees have been planted on public land in the metro area since the sale was launched and thousands more now grace private landscapes.

To celebrate our 20th anniversary and review our accomplishments we will soon be mailing a special anniversary brochure.... our first twenty years.

Vento new president

Andrea Vento was elected President of the Friends at the January board meeting. Andrea is a Saint Paul native and currently lives in Maplewood. A long term member and supporter of the Friends, her commitment to the Friends became apparent as she regularly purchased commemorative trees for special occasions. She and her family planted 8 trees in Phalen Park for their father's 80th birthday and the tree planting, and a visit to the 'Vento Grove' became a tradition.

Andrea became more involved with the Friends after her retirement from Qwest/USWest, where she built and managed a half billion dollar business unit and represented the Company in national industry forums. She brings management and marketing skills to her new volunteer post. She also brings a long family tradition of community service and dedication to parks and open spaces. Her brother, the late Congressman Bruce Vento, received the Friends' Park Citizen of the Year award in 1994 in recognition of his work to preserve and protect parks, waterways and other natural resources.

"I'm enthusiastic about the challenges facing our group and I am especially honored to serve as president during the Friends' 20th Anniversary year. I hope I can contribute to the Friends' proud tradition of making a difference," said Vento.

Hot property

The hottest property in Saint Paul is the Mississippi River Corridor. Development is underway with the Upper Landing housing units. Island Station developers want to construct a levee wall to protect their proposed development. Lander/Sherman Developers are requesting a variance to allow construction of condominium units over 100 feet tall on the West Side Flats. Business is booming. But is it smart and is it good? On that, opinions are mixed.

Island Station developers recently requested a permit to construct a levee wall to protect the redevelopment of the old power plant and the new town homes on the east and west sides of the plant. 70 loft style condominium units are planned for the old

power plant. Sixteen three story townhouse buildings and eight two story River-Walk units are planned adjacent to the plant .

The levee is intended to solve a rather worrisome problem. Many of these buildings are to be built at the 711 foot level. The river, no respecter of wealth nor design, has a 710 foot 100 year flood level. When the river rises to that level water will come up from the ground in and around the site. The developers would rather avoid the cost of flood insurance (no doubt a pricey little item) thus are proposing a levee to keep the river out of the flood way. They will be constructing a 4 foot flood wall and a 16 foot retaining wall on one side of the property. City planning staff and a representative of the Friends and other environmental groups will have input about vegetation on the property to try to screen these barriers.

National Treasure

Few cities possess Saint Paul's panorama, a view that powerfully distinguishes it from other cities. Even along the Mississippi River, Saint Paul's context is unique. Above Saint Paul, towns do not lie on top of a magnificent bluff. Below Saint Paul, they generally rest on one of the lower terraces. Saint Paul is not just another city. It is a gem in a platinum setting on America's greatest river. It is a real and distinct place, different from all other places.

But how can nice views stand up to the hard currency of development? Has landscape no monetary value? Consider this. If we could sell our city's view on e-bay how many cities would bid for it? One of the editors recently sold a town home in Arizona. Identical home on the side of the street with a mountain view were priced at \$20,000 more than those without the view. Yet in Saint Paul, we seem to give little thought to preserving that view.

For sale - historic site. English colonist Jonathan Carver met Dakota Indians here in 1766.

The Mississippi also has a history that matches the view. Imagine **that** on e-bay. For sale - 2000 year old burial mounds where Hopewell and Dakota Indians interred their dead to eternally gaze upon the landscape below.

Are we in danger of going from a ***Geography of Somewhere*** ***Profound*** to a ***Geography of Anywhere?*** *Geography of Nowhere*, by William Kunstler

Every building that rises to or above the bluff tops severs us from spectacular views and from our connection to its history. Every billboard that perches at the river's edge denies us a sense of place, a sense of this Mississippi River valley. The views of the Mississippi River Valley are our most tangible and powerful connection with the past of this place. As the views are sundered by one new tall building after another, a powerful piece of nature will be diminished. A legendary view will be lost. An inspirational panorama will slip toward the mundane.

Congress established the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area because the historical, ecological, recreational, scenic, scientific and economic values of this river are national treasures. The decisions made at this, the local of levels, will resonate nationally... and forever.

Tony Schmidt Park

It has been the real estate purchase of three decades, but it is finally complete. As December came to an end the county closed on a deal to purchase 14 acres from the Canadian Pacific Railroad near Tony Schmidt Park. Efforts to make the purchase began in 1974. (Call that a tribute to patience!)

The County also acquired a twenty foot easement to construct an underpass to avoid the railroad tracks. The railroad bisects the park east to west so the 14 acres and the underpass will allow park users to connect with trails in Arden Hills.

The new trail system will provide linkage to a beach in Arden Hills, Mounds View

Stay away

Tree Sale 2005

Trees: Sugar Maple*; Heritage Birch*; Weeping Caragana; Donald Wyman Crab; Northern Red Oak*; Shamrock linden, BBBlack Hills Spruce.

Shrubs: White Snowberry*; Gray Dogwood*; Korean Lilac; Chippewa Blueberry; Endless Summer Hydrangea.

Vine: Wisteria Aunt Dee

** native*

High School, Bethel College and the Arden Hills Library. The railroad has proven a huge barrier to residents in Arden Hills trying to connect with Tony Schmidt Park and other amenities in Arden Hills. Construction of the underpass will begin this summer with the City of Arden hills contributing 10% of the construction costs.

Don't tell anyone. Please, Please don't go! Here is a little secret just for you. Eagles are building nests near Keller Lake and in Otter lake Regional Park. Make our new park residents feel welcome.... by staying far away. Although it appears the eagles have adjusted well to the noise along Highway 36 and have successfully nested there, hikers and general human activity have spooked them at other locations. If you accidentally discover you are in their nesting area, quietly make an exit, stage left.

The 2005 tree brochure is in the mail and is posted on the Friends' web site. As always you can purchase trees and shrubs for your own use or you can purchase trees to be planted in Dakota and Ramsey County parks, Apple Valley, Blaine, Brooklyn Park, Champlin, Cottage Grove, Eagan, Mendota Heights, St. Louis Park, South Saint Paul, West Saint Paul, Woodbury, Saint Paul and most other municipalities within Ramsey County. Only Saint Paul will accept the two native shrubs we are carrying this year.

We work hard to select trees and shrubs that are hardy, disease resistant, attractive, offer year-round interest and food or habitat for wildlife. We offer many natives. All of our selections are hardy in zone 4 and many are hardy further north to zone 3. We try 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. It will be there for decades for you and your family to enjoy.

Our web site has links to color photos and more complete descriptions of all our items. Check it out. www.friendsoftheparks.org
If you have not received a tree brochure or you need extra copies, call 651-698-4543.
If you get a duplicate, please pass it on to a friend.

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