



# Park Notes

A newsletter of the Friends of St. Paul and Ramsey County Parks  
1621 Beechwood Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55116 651- 698-4543  
Volume 23, Number 3 [www.friendsoftheparks.org](http://www.friendsoftheparks.org) November 2008

## You did it!

### Saint Paul names Director of Parks and Recreation

Thanks to you and hundreds of thousands of others, Minnesota has shown conservation leadership that will pay dividends for generations to come. On Tuesday Americans voted for change and that included Minnesotans voting to change our commitment to protecting the environment. Minnesotans proved November 4 that clean water and conservation are a top priority. At 58.89% approval, more Minnesota voters cast ballots for the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment than voted for either Barack Obama, John McCain, Norm Coleman or Al Franken and more Minnesotans voted for the Amendment than for Senator Amy Klobuchar in 2006.

Passing this amendment was an uphill battle, in part because there was well funded opposition and in part because many people simply skip casting their ballot for judges, soil and water board and amendments. In the case of a constitutional amendment not voting is the same as a No vote. We read this vote as a loud and clear message that Minnesotans cherish the great outdoors. It is a clear message that citizens expect elected officials to protect our land, lakes and environment.

Thanks are in order for legislators who worked hard to put this issue on the ballot. Thanks and congratulations go to the coalition of arts and environmental groups that formed the ***Vote Yes Minnesota*** coalition which coordinated the effort to pass the amendment.

Mike Hahm, a long time employee of the St. Paul Parks and Recreation Division was named the Division's new director by Mayor Chris Coleman. Hahm worked for the Parks and Recreation Division while he was enrolled in Business Administration at the University of St. Thomas. In his tenure with parks he has served as recreation center director, special services manager, special projects coordinator, recreation services manager. He has been Director and Campus Manager of Saint Paul's Como Park Zoo and Conservatory for the past two years. Hahm is a resident of St. Paul's Como neighborhood. Hahm will replace Bob Bierscheid when he retires in January.

"I am excited to begin this new stage of my career," Hahm said. "Mayor Coleman and Bob Bierscheid have demonstrated how parks and recreation can play an integral role in the education, public safety, and neighborhood development. I look forward to continuing the excellence established in the department, working with colleagues I have grown with, and showing residents and visitors why Saint Paul is the Most Livable City in America."

## Downtown Children's Playground

Bierscheid, the current director is retiring after six years in St. Paul. He is planning on becoming a full time recreator including more biking, hiking and occasionally golfing with his wife, Joan and five grandkids. He will also do some professional volunteering in national accreditation program. Bierscheid has been an ex-officio member of the Friends' Board and has worked closely with the Friends on many issues. "We have a great relationship with St. Paul Parks and that is in large measure because of the cooperation and collaboration we have through the director. Working with Bob has been a real joy and we are looking forward to working with Mike in the years to come," said Peggy Lynch, Friends' Executive Director.

Just a year ago *Park Notes* reported that, after twenty years, the Downtown Children's Playground located at Sibley and East 4<sup>th</sup> had been officially merged into the Saint Paul Parks system. The tiny park serves downtown residents and includes play stations designed to reflect the transportation nature of its location near the union depot. Play equipment includes a small boat, truck, train, and other transportation models as well as a water fall and benches.

Sadly, it is transportation that is now impinging on this pocket park. The Central Corridor light rail trains are coming and the required separation between the tracks and other uses means the park will lose about one third of its area. There will be major redevelopment of the park site as construction for Central Corridor proceeds. Park planners believe that all of the play equipment now on the park site can be accommodated, 'tho more tightly packed.

There is good news amongst the bad. The play space will remain and it seems to have more community support than ever.

## Zoning for Critical Area on council agenda

After years of deliberation, recommendations from the Saint Paul Planning Commission updating zoning regulations for the area adjacent to the Mississippi River (Critical Area) will go before the Saint Paul City Council in the next few months.

Some things the Friends work on are pretty clear and straight forward. Some, like zoning for the Critical Area are years-long projects with more twists and turns than the river itself. The Mississippi winds through Saint Paul for twenty-seven miles giving the Sainly city more miles of river front than any other city along its long journey to the Gulf. Conflicts between protection and commerce, recreation and industry complicate every discussion. Now, with the end of this zoning update in sight, the Friends are preparing to make the case to the council to ensure that the river and the surrounding area are protected for generations to come.

The Friends' primary concerns are protection of the bluffs, riverbanks, flood plains and wetlands; protection of scenic views; and prohibition of heavy industry such as metal shredders and concrete and rock crushing facilities in the river corridor.

The Friends will notify members about the public hearing and will provide additional information about the river's Critical Area and the proposed zoning regulations. Previous issues of *Park Notes* have carried extensive

## Signs to guide you

information about the Critical Area designation. If you would like to review those articles, please consult the web site at [www.friendsoftheparks.org](http://www.friendsoftheparks.org) .

Come spring, bicyclists along the Mississippi National River Recreation Area corridor will actually be able to find their way with a little help from some signs. Seventy two miles of signed route is a cooperative venture involving the National Park Service, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Mississippi River Trail, Inc., State Bicycle Advisory Committee, and numerous local units of government.

The Mississippi River Trail will be a world class bicycle route from the Headwaters of the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico. Signing will take bikers along suitable roads and trails that parallel the River. The newly signed route will be dedicated on National Trails Day, June 6, 2009.

## Bequest makes a difference

When (Paula) Sunray Culp died she remembered the Friends in her will. Sunray lived in the Highland neighborhood of Saint Paul during the terrible storm of 1998 that destroyed so many trees near her home. Perhaps that was what motivated her to leave some of her estate to the Friends to support our tree program.

*Please consider including the Friend's in your will.*

A grove of trees will be planted in Highland Park in Sunray's honor in the spring. Some of her bequest will be used by the Friends to match tree contributions so we can provide bigger trees for the parks. Money will also be used to help keep young donated trees well watered during periods of drought. Sunray's bequest will make a big difference. Please consider including the Friend's in your will. Together, we can all make a difference.

## Lafayette Bridge workshop set

Plans are well underway for the new Lafayette Bridge, with preliminary design to be completed by the end of the year. Public input is critical prior to the adoption of the final design next summer. Major requirements for the design include moving vast numbers of cars and trucks and accommodating river navigation, airport approach height restrictions, existing streets and trails, barge traffic patterns and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. And then there is the issue of aesthetics.

During tight budgetary times it is pretty easy to start looking at which of these requirements could be compromised, and, not surprisingly, the pedestrian and bicycle facilities on the bridge are not assured in the present plans. Although Minnesota Department of Transportation representatives state that they are "optimistic" that trails for bikes and pedestrians will be included on the bridge, it is far from guaranteed. Also in play are the connections on both sides of the river and whether to end the bike/pedestrian path next to the river or extend it the entire length of the bridge.

The Mississippi River Design Center will host a workshop on Thursday, November 20 to give the public a chance to review and comment on different scenarios. The workshop will run from 12 to 6 pm. Please contact the Design Center at 293-6868 or the Friends at 698-4543 for the location of the meeting and for more information about the agenda.

## Tribute trees



## Tree Sale 2009

The holidays are just around the corner and now is the time to think about gift giving. Consider a gift of a Tribute Tree. A Tribute Tree is one that you give in honor of someone and it is planted in a park by city staff. Voila! No gift-wrapping! No shipping! No spending hours at the mall! AND, it is perfect for that person who already has one or two of everything you can think of and can afford. Even better, a tree is a gift that will be enjoyed by the birds and critters just as much as it is appreciated by the person you are recognizing. Such a deal. Everyone benefits: you; your friend; the Friends; the park system adds young trees; and our shared environment. These are not puny saplings and they are Minnesota hardy.

Gift trees cost \$75 each or three for \$200. A hand stamped holiday card announcing your gift will be sent to the person you wish to honor. Park staff will plant the tree next summer and we will send a map showing its location after it is planted. To purchase your gift tree, please use the form include with *Park Notes* or download an order form from the Friends website at [www.friendsoftheparks.org](http://www.friendsoftheparks.org).

Trees may be planted in Dakota and Ramsey County and in Apple Valley, Arden Hills, Blaine, Brooklyn Park, Champlin, Cottage Grove, Eagan, Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Little Canada, Maplewood, Mendota Heights, North Saint Paul, Roseville, Saint Louis Park, Saint Paul, South Saint Paul, Shoreview, Vadnais Heights, White Bear Township and Woodbury.

It is too early to buy or plant next year's tree, but it is not too early to begin thinking about it. Below are the trees and shrubs the Friends will carry next year: Sugar Maple, Kelsy Crab, Honeycrisp Apple, Butterflies Magnolia, Bicolor White Oak, Viburnum Nannyberry, Black Hills Spruce, Helmond Pillar Barberry, Hydrangea Pinky Winky, Snowflake Mockorange, Sensation lilac, Gray Dogwood, and Carefree Beauty rose. You have got to admit, with names like Sensation, Pinky Winky and Butterflies, these are got- to-have additions to your yard!

**The Friends of Parks & Trails  
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