



Park Notes

Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County
1621 Beechwood Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55116
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Letter from Executive Director Peggy Lynch

Two important policy issues, the rezoning of parks and the Parkland Dedication Ordinance, have been brewing in Saint Paul for several years. Action is urgently needed to protect and enhance Saint Paul's parks. Both issues are currently tied up in the Planning and Economic Development Department.

The Comprehensive Plan approved in 2009 requires that all parks be rezoned as Parkland. At the present time parks can be zoned as residential, heavy industrial or any other zone in the city. The goal to establish a park zone is to provide additional protections to all of the parks in the system. Getting the rezoning accomplished is the responsibility of the planning staff.

The Parkland Dedication Ordinance approved by the City Council in 2007 proved to be flawed. The goal was to ensure that when new development increased the density of housing, parkland would be set aside or created to accommodate the increased demand. This type of ordinance works easily in suburban areas with lots of undeveloped land. Accomplishing the same goal in a fully developed city such as Saint Paul is a more complicated matter.

In February, amendments were presented to the Planning Commission that would clarify the ordinance and assure that it accomplished the goal of assuring quality park access even when housing density increases. This change will be very important as new development comes to University Avenue where the goal is to increase the amount and density of housing taking advantage of the new light rail transportation.

The Friends eagerly await action on both of these important issues.

FURNESS PARKWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Furness Parkway is a 16 block linear park following a former streetcar right-of-way just west of McKnight Road. It extends from Maryland Avenue to Larpenteur Avenue. It also extends south of Maryland Avenue on the North Hazel Street right-of-way to Jessamine Avenue.

In March, the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department notified homeowners about their plans to complete pathway development and improvements throughout the entire length of the parkway. District 2 has been asking for the money to improve the parkway since the 1980s.

New improvements will create a bike and pedestrian pathway between Larpenteur Avenue to Maryland Avenue, and add landscaping, lighting and a year round wood-slat fence along the edges of the parkway. Encroachments over the years by the neighboring residents have caused some problems. There are gardens, garages, fences and driveways that the neighbors will have to remove.

Encroachments are a problem near many of the parks and trails. Residents should be aware of the boundaries of their property when they purchased their homes, especially if the houses are next to public land. Improvements on the Furness Parkway began shortly after May 30. It is expected that it will take 90 days to complete the improvements.

Trees along Central Corridor

You may have noticed the very strange “soil” the trees along Central Corridor are being planted in. What I saw looked sort of alarming, like we were asking these little trees to grow in rocks. Well, it turns out I was spot on.

Some of you may recall the numerous efforts to get trees to grow along University Avenue. One of the more memorable misadventures was “Universitree.” Funds to plant trees are always scarce. Keeping them growing is even more difficult. The trees along the light rail line are being given the equivalent of a princess bed. See the explanation below provided to me by Saint Paul Forestry. The trees are being planted in “CU structural soil.”

CU structural soil is 80% rock (granite in this case) and 20% soil containing nutrients. An emulsifier is used to keep the components together in the right place and in the right quantity.

The product was developed by Cornell University back in the early 1990s. It is commonly used in landscapes that are “hard surface,” like University Avenue, that have to meet a H-20 or better load bearing spec. The rock in the blend provides this capability as when it is compressed (unlike with regular soil for instance) the irregular facets of the rock create voids that allow for development of root stock. If regular soil is used in these instances, when it is compressed to meet load requirements, water and oxygen cannot be present in sufficient quantities to develop adequate root stock to support a viable tree.

CU structural soil of various types is a good product, albeit expensive. Product price is easily 5x the cost of select topsoil and is more difficult to install because it has to be brought up in 12” lifts.

The planting spaces on University Avenue are very technical, not only because of the soil but also because of the highly engineered storm water mitigation component that hopefully will help provide water for the trees.

Contributed by Jeanne Weigum



Frogtown Park and Farm

Since 2009, the neighbors in the Frogtown area of St. Paul have worked hard to persuade just about everyone they can think of to support the acquisition of nearly 13 acres of the land belonging to the Wilder Foundation. This property is located at 919 Lafond Avenue, bordered by Minnehaha and Victoria and Chatsworth Streets.

The residents have promoted the idea that this valuable greenspace should be turned into a new kind of park. The park will offer open space for play and exercise, a grove of trees where neighbors can meet and reflect, and a hilltop urban demonstration farm, where residents can learn the best ways to grow their own fresh food.

Ramsey County property records indicate the value of the land is \$3.54 M, plus the value of the buildings. Letters of support have come in from Rep. Betty McCollum, Sen. Sandy Pappas, as well as Friends of the Parks. Support came unexpectedly from the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, from whom Wilder Foundation purchased the property back in 1969. However, even with all of this backing, sources of funding have remained elusive.

Recently The Trust for Public Land has stepped in and reached an agreement to purchase the land from the Wilder Foundation. The negotiated price is \$2.2 M. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a non-profit organization which specializes in purchasing land to be turned over to government entities for open space uses. The eventual likely owner of the new park will be the City of St. Paul.

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The Frogtown area has less greenspace per child than any other neighborhood in St. Paul. The Wilder property is a unique opportunity to secure a large open space with a sledding hill and stands of beautiful mature trees.

The TPL must now raise \$2.2 million to complete the transaction. They will also raise money for the initial development and future stewardship. The TPL has 18 months to pay Wilder for the land.

Donations Made by Laura Sweney

Throughout her life, Laura Sweney was a very good friend of the parks in St. Paul. From 1999 to 2010 she donated 29 trees to St. Paul parks, particularly in Phalen Park.

Laura was born in Illinois. In her youth, she moved to Minnesota. She first lived in International Falls, and then moved to St. Paul, where she graduated from the University of Minnesota. She lived in the Midway District of St. Paul. She worked as a scientific researcher at the University of Minnesota for a number of years. She also worked for the City of St. Paul helping to map the city.

Laura died in March 2011, at the age of 81. Because of the value she placed on our work, she left the Friends a bequest of nearly \$17,500 in her will. The Friends will plant trees in Phalen Park in 2013 in honor of Laura and her efforts to beautify St. Paul. Laura loved nature; her gift to Friends of the Parks will go a long way in protecting our parks and trails and greening our city.

The Friends are very grateful to Laura for looking ahead to future generations enjoying the parks in St. Paul. What a wonderful example!



Tom Russ – Park Volunteer of the Year

Tom has been working to improve the Big Urban Woods, which was a forgotten St. Paul restored wooded area. He has picked up trash and removed other refuse in the woods for many years. He has also cut in chipped walking trails for the public to use. His goal has been to create a wood where children, big and small, can learn and grow in.

Tom has worked with schools in the area and with community center teaching kids about birdhouse building for the Big Urban Woods. As part of a group of volunteers, Tom helped gather supplies and then repainted the Duluth & Case Community Recreation Center. This center serves as a play area and sports facility for children and adults from various neighborhoods.

Tom has the motivation and drive to work to make this community more attractive and safer both for today's park users as well as future generations. The Friends is very grateful for his excellent efforts.

Individuals Honored for Parks Volunteer Work

Carrie Wasley received the Public Service Award at the FOTP's annual meeting, held June 20 at Como Park. This award is given to an elected or appointed official who has done an outstanding job of supporting parks and trails in the county. Super job!

Kathy Sidles has shown a commitment to maintain St. Paul's natural resources for three years. She volunteers with the Parks and Rec Department, Ramsey County Parks, the Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District, Phalen Parks and Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. Many thanks!

Chris Engelmann, a resident of Macalester-Groveland since 1990, was recognized by the Friends of the Parks and Trails of Saint Paul and Ramsey County for his energetic and unflagging efforts on behalf of the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation system.

For 15 plus years, Chris has left his imprint on Saint Paul's recreation landscape with his unmatched dedication and commitment to improving the skating surfaces of facilities across the system. With Chris' leadership, and the commitment of numerous volunteers he has recruited, Groveland Warming House and Ice Rink has become one of the premier outdoor skating and hockey facilities in Minnesota - and perhaps the country. He has also worked to improve and maintain skating rinks across the south side of St. Paul. Much appreciated, Chris!

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

CHANGE SERVICE
REQUESTED



Ann White Eagle accepting Public Service Award for **Carrie Wasley**; **Chris Engelmann**; **Jason Etten**, Volunteer of the Year; **Tom Russ**, **Kathy Sidles**; and **Andy Holewa**, President of the Friends of the Parks, at our Annual Meeting and Picnic, held on June 20, 2012, at Como Park.

Jason Etten first became involved with Villa Park, which is in his neighborhood. The more he worked to improve his neighborhood park, the more he became interested in and engaged with the entire Roseville Park system. In 2009 Jason was appointed to the Roseville Parks and Recreation Commission. He was elected Commission chair in 2011 and Vice-chair in 2012.

Jason worked diligently on the Parks and Recreation system-wide Master Place Update in 2010. After the plan was adopted, he worked with community members and the Roseville City Council to begin implementation of the Master Plan. His leadership led to the City of Roseville funding the first phase of the plan. Jason exhibits excellence in community leadership.

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