

Friends on the Front Lines

Dickerman Park

The Friends are part of the Design Advisory Committee convened by the City of St. Paul to inform the development of Dickerman Park. After many years of being mistaken for private property, complete with parking lots and a tree sale on this park property, plans are finally moving forward to transform it into a park. It is vital to have this public green space developed as such, being the only parkland along the Central Corridor on University Avenue owned by the City of St. Paul. Conceptual designs are expected to be finalized in the beginning of 2015.

Critical Area

The Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) rule revision process for the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) is currently underway. The Friends testified at an open house hosted by the DNR in July and before the St. Paul Planning Commission. We spoke with the DNR Commissioner, met with the City Council, and participated in working sessions at the invitation of the DNR. The projection is to have adoptable rules by the end of 2015. You can help by writing a letter to the DNR in support of strong protections, as well as contacting the City Council and the Mayor, giving them the same message. When it comes to environmental protections, we only have so many chances to get it right.

The Friends also gave testimony regarding the MRCCA to the Mendota Heights City Council when it came to our attention that a property owner had clearcut the bluff within the Corridor. The property is very near Lilydale Regional Park, the location of a landslide in 2013 that killed two children. St. Paul parkland lies below the property in question.

Parkland Dedication

In 2007, the St. Paul City Council passed a parkland dedication ordinance. In 2013, the Minnesota Legislature passed legislation authorizing the City of St. Paul to require a developer to donate land or money for parks when applying for a building permit, as well as at the time of platting.

The requirements in the current ordinance were based on the number of new parking spaces provided for in the development. As the City has discovered, the ordinance does not work for areas such as the Central Corridor nor the Ford Plant property. The state legislation will allow St. Paul to pass a new ordinance, helping to provide new parkland and funds to develop it, as the population increases.

A public hearing is scheduled for January 16, 2015, 8:30am, before the Planning Commission, City Hall, Room 40. Please attend to show support for parkland dedication. The Friends will give testimony at the hearing. The hope is to have this ordinance passed in early 2015.

Contact Mayor Coleman and the St. Paul City Council, urging them to support a strong Parkland Dedication ordinance. When dedicating land is not an option, we support 12% estimated market value of the land, cash in lieu of land, to apply to Parkland Dedication. We believe 12% should apply to all, equally, to build an equitable park system. We keep hearing that St. Paul is, "The Most Livable City in America". It's time to put some action behind that slogan.