

Cedar Lake Park

UPDATE

Winter 2000

New Century Edition

Volume 12, No. 1

Movement on the Cedar Lake Trail

In the Spring, the City of St. Louis Park and MNDOT will let contracts and break ground for a new trail between the western end of the Cedar Lake Trail and the Hennepin County trail network in Hopkins. Running diagonally across the city,

is trail represents a key piece of the western region's network of trails. It is likely, with the CLT no longer ending at Highway 100, that there will be increased use of both the trail and the park. Citizens and public officials in St. Louis Park have worked hard to make this trail a reality. CLPA, with St. Louis Park, will participate in a "link-up" ceremony upon completion.

Though the Guthrie Theater has decided to relocate near the river, the vision for the Parade Stadium area remains fluid. The City of Minneapolis is conducting a study of the public works property where the impound lot and the materials recycling facility along I-394 are located. This study will determine what it would take to relocate these facilities elsewhere and clean up the land for other uses. Further, a

parkway is visioned running north from Dunwoodie to Plymouth Ave. as part of the Holman Decree process occurring in the near North.

There is a group that has been meeting for some time, attempting to understand and create a new vision for the Lower Bassett's Creek Valley. They are doing fine work, and CLPA is in close contact, as the CLT passes through this area. MPRB is committed to safeguarding the trail.

To the east, the CLT is going to the river, but not in the way that anyone expected. After years of delay, and hard work by Commissioner Mason and Minneapolis Public Works, the remaining issues concerning the right-of-way through a particular downtown parking lot were resolved, a land swap was arranged, plans were drawn, and trail work was scheduled for this spring.

What happened next is one of those magical stories that continue to be associated with the park and trail. At a local design firm, a design planner was walking past a colleague's desk when he noticed these plans, of which he had no previous knowledge. Exploring further, he realized that the same parking lot, and the same railway, were part of another project of this same firm, the Northstar Commuter Rail corridor project.

This represents an ambitious vision to implement commuter rail traffic between St. Cloud and the Twin Cities. When completed, it



Long-term park enthusiasts John Richter and Steve Durrant discuss park and trail issues.

will utilize existing rails in a resumption of short haul passenger traffic throughout this corridor. The planned Minneapolis terminus of this railway happens to be at this same downtown parking lot, utilizing the same railway that at present crosses Nicollet Island and the Mississippi, goes under Washington Ave., and passes along through the trail corridor.

A rail terminal building — including parking, access for bus and taxi traffic, change to the corridor alignment and reconstruction of the Washington Ave. bridge — was planned, so phone calls were made and meetings were held. It became clear that the original plans for the CLT to the river had to be postponed, and a coordinated approach developed.

This is all tremendously exciting, as the Northstar offers the potential for an enhanced trail design, brings some of the original CLT design team to the table to complete the trail, and offers an additional source of funds. Quite a lot of movement on the Cedar Lake Trail — even more when you go cross-country skiing!

Cabana Corner

BY PAUL DEAL

Today, I will participate in the mysteries and beauties of life.

"Gardening is an active participation in the deepest mysteries of the universe."

— Thomas Berry



On the Horizon

BY KEITH PRUSSING, CLPA PRESIDENT

It is a brilliant, clear night near the solstice. The moon shadows are long across the new snow. It is very cold. The temperature and the light have caught up with each other, and it is finally winter.

Winter in the park is very exposed, even deep in the woods. By this time even the buckthorn has lost its leaves, leaving the understory vistas long and revealing.

The animals that remain are easier to see, and snow brings out the patterns of life that are hidden at other times. I think the cooling of fall into winter makes the colors richer and crisper, those that remain.

It is dark at night in the park, dark enough to see lots of stars, and satellites, when the sky is clear. Orion is a favorite constellation of this time of year. The sun sets early and rises late, making the darkness more available. The quiet is palpable.

On the lake there are pressure rings concentrically along the shorelines, formed as the water froze in the presence of wind. A muskrat is visible through the clear ice. The ice sings when struck by a rock. The open water is going, gone.

The Conservancy area of Cedar Lake Park is a wonder, rich in variety of terrain, habitat and experience. Bounded by the parkway bridge to the west, I-394 to the east, and Burnham Road to the south, it also includes the lake. It is large enough to allow the feeling of "away," so precious in an urban environment.

Here also come together green corridors that radiate in all directions and allow movement of people and freight, animals and plants. The heart of the park beats, subtly and profoundly, magnetically powerful.

I believe we are succeeding in our vision of stewardship. I am grateful for your support of the Association. I hope to see you in the park.

Remember the Angels of Cedar Lake Park

A special note of praise needs to go out to the dedicated band of volunteers who came through in a time of need. Last spring we overextended our human resources by trying to plant 1,000 wildflowers in a day. Though we labored mightily at the end of the day we still had about 200 more to plant. That next day Ruth Jones led a band of diggers and planters that included Leo and Sue Verrett, Sue Bottge and Cher Simo. They cleared the ground, dug holes, prepped the plants with terrasorb and placed them lovingly into the ground. Such spirit is what enables Cedar Lake Park to become ever more beautiful.



Special Gifts

BY STEVE DURRANT, TREASURER

Cedar Lake Park Association gratefully acknowledges recent contributions for memorials, gifts and tributes to loved ones.

CLPA Contributors 10/99-1/7/00

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Bluebirds on the Move in 2000

Two bluebird nest boxes on the Cedar Lake Trail will be relocated next spring, in March. Last Summer, these two were vandalized more than once; but in spite of this, a pair of bluebirds re-nested three times and raised two broods successfully. Making the nest boxes a little less accessible will hopefully lessen their exposure to vandals.

Also in the spring, there will be a new pair of bluebird nest boxes on the Kenilworth Trail, just north of Burnham Bridge. If there are any residents in that area on Sheridan Ave. who are interested in adopting and monitoring the site, call Mary McGee at 612-377-0630. Watching bluebirds is a fascinating experience!



PROJECTS IN THE PARK

BY KEITH PRUSSING

1999 was a breakthrough year in our relationship with the **Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority**, the owners of the Kenilworth corridor. We were able to obtain two permits for sanctioned activities on their property; one for wildflower planting near the junction of the CLT and Kenilworth Trails, and the other for bluebird houses near the bus stop on Thomas Avenue, south of West 21st Street. CLPA continues to be committed to nurturing nature along the trails within the park.

Plans have been approved for the **reconstruction of the Cedar Lake Parkway Bridge**. The bridge will remain open throughout the construction period. The approved realignment involves reconstructing the present Y-shaped intersection to a new T-shaped configuration, with the Parkway intersected by Cedar Lake Road/Ewing/France Avenues.

The future will bring much needed discussion about improving the northern parkway corridor to increase safety in this narrow, multi-use area north of Cedar Point. Further, the MPRB is preparing a LCMR grant application totaling \$300,000 to fund the access and trail improvements planned for the Cedar Lake Trail in the bridge area. Approval is hoped for by summer. CLPA has been ably represented and present throughout the design process, and we are quite pleased with the overall results.

The **Kenilworth Trail is fully operational**, and responsibility for maintenance has been transferred to MPRB, who will keep one path open throughout the winter. Warning lights have been installed at the trail crossing at Cedar Lake Parkway. The intersection of this trail with the Midtown Greenway behind Calhoun Village is not finished, pending the completion of the Greenway. The impact of the vegetative clearing north of the Greenway corridor has been strongly negative for the adjacent neighborhoods located at grade between Lake of the Isles and Calhoun Village. This clear-cutting is a good example of the need for citizens to be proactive in any Public Works design process. Let's hope there are ambitious replanting plans for this area. The feasibility study concerning buses in the Midtown Greenway and the Kenilworth southwest commuter corridor is due for release soon.

The **Bassett's Creek Trail has been sunsetted**, which means that the original grant from the ISTEAF funds administered by the Federal government was allowed to expire in December, 1999. It will be reapplied for in the new funding cycle, with approval anticipated. The Canadian Pacific Railroad has continued to be resistant to the trail, and has been asking \$60,000 per month as rent for use of their corridor. So, more time is being created, and both MPRB and the City of Minneapolis continue to

be confident that this trail will be constructed.

MPRB, which at present utilizes the City of Minneapolis website, is working on creating their own web presence.

Anticipated completion date is Aug. 1. This will allow for information, communication, obtaining reservations and permits and a host of other services. CLPA itself is developing www.cedarlakepark.org for our own uses. Any help in this area would be appreciated. Our new e-mail address is info@cedarlakepark.org.

For several years we have been attempting to address the problem of **supplying adequate water to all the trees**, shrubs and wildflowers that we have been planting in the park. Recently we have obtained a permit from the MPRB to draw water from the lake utilizing a gasoline pump and transporting it to the needed areas. Yahoo!

It is anticipated that up to **10 off-leash dog areas, or "dog parks," will be operational by Labor Day**. The citizens' group, ROMP, along with strong support from some members of the City Council and MPRB commissioners, have been determined to make the dream of legitimate off-leash areas a reality. This will be the year that sees the success of their long efforts. Public hearings will take place soon in the immediate neighborhood of each proposed site.

Autumn brought together citizens, MPRB forestry personnel and youth crews from the county Sentence-to-Serve program to **remove buckthorn**. The parkway corridor between Cedar Point and the bridge was "adopted" by a group of neighbors. These citizens have committed themselves to a long-term relationship with this section of the park, in which they will remove buckthorn sprouting from cut stumps

or seed. In addition, a management strategy has been developed for this corridor, which includes property line demarcation, native plantings and enhanced viewscape from both the parkway and the neighborhood.

The **plantings are largely completed** in the Jones-Harrison native restoration project. This area is located on the hillside east of this nursing home, quite near the memorial daffodils and earlier native plantings done by CLPA volunteers. Jones-Harrison is to be applauded for their willingness to redress some earlier misdirected cutting and removal of park land.

There is **home construction** occurring in several areas on the borders of the park: on the bluff by the water tower, at 21st and Upton, on Burnham Road near South Beach. For Sale signs have also appeared on undeveloped lots along the eastern marshes.

Big Woods II plantings of over 300 trees and shrubs — including a 450-foot undulating prairie edge, wet forest, marsh-edge, maple-basswood forest and oak woodland edge — have been installed.

The design implementation of the **Cedar Grove** has continued with the clearing of the cardinal directions to the spirals' center and a six-foot spirals corridor. The cedar trees have been tended and mulched. A medicine wheel has been sited. Solstices and equinoxes have been marked. We continue to plant memorial trees and wildflowers.

The **City of St. Louis Park will convey 6.5 acres of city land** along the western extension north of the CLT to the Jewish Community Center. The JCC plans to expand their day school. This area presently is green-space and a buffer for the trail. This is a conditional contract with numerous stipulations.

Fall Wildflower Planting

BY NEIL G.C. TREMBLEY

Construction of the new Kenilworth Trail led to the inevitable disruption in the prairie. The area where the Cedar Lake and Kenilworth Trails intersect was badly damaged. To help nurture this area back to health, the Cedar Lake Park Association obtained permission from the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority to plant wildflowers in this area.

On a beautiful Saturday in October a half-dozen volunteers showed up to prep and plant. Several passersby got into the spirit of the day and volunteered their services on the spot. One gentleman in particular needs to be singled out. Dick Rubenstein, a bicyclist from the downtown

area, got off his bike and proceeded to dig and plant for five hours! He, along with others, made the day a success. We planted 500 wildflowers that Saturday.

Due to the generosity of Prairie Restoration, the plant grower we often buy our wildflowers from, we still had 100 plants left. Again the next Saturday, Cher Simo, Pat Shirley and myself came back and finished the labor of love.

The following volunteers helped to make our trails more beautiful: Carol White, Bill Gilbreath, Kelly Nelson, Pat Shirley, Susan Stegerwald, Amy Colehour, D'Ann Topoluk, Dick Rubenstein and Cher Simo. Thank you one and all!



Circa Early 1900s: Photos from William Wollof, whose machine company was then at 2200 Sheridan.



Looking east along the rails in Cedar Lake Park, note that the trail right-of-way presently crosses what used to be the lake. See the old ice house on the far-eastern side.



A southeast view from Hidden Beach looks toward the Burnham Bridge and Kenilworth corridor before the lake level was dropped in 1913 with the opening of the canal between Lake of the Isles and Cedar Lake.

Long-time Kenwood resident remembers Cedar Lake and its surroundings in the 1930s.



James Goit, a long-time resident of the Kenwood area, wrote this article. As a boy, Jim used to roam the railroad tracks and docks surrounding Cedar Lake in the 1930s. This is one of his reminiscences.

Bums' Point Revisited

On the first warm days in May, kids from Kenwood grade school would walk or bike to Bums' Point at the north end of Cedar Lake to skinny-dip in the ice-cold water. It was a rite of spring as old as the flying of kites, yo-yos, bean shooters or softball in Kenwood Park.

Cedar Lake was more than the pristine jewel of the city lakes; it was a teacher to a generation of youngsters who learned about nature and life in a world that was about to change forever.

The east side of the lake was framed by the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railroad (we called it the M and St. L), a cash-starved line which once carried ice from Cedar's frozen surface to chill the ice boxes and restaurants of Saint Louis and Chicago in the summer. On the north was the Cedar Lake yard of the Great Northern Railroad, an industrial dynamo of the late 19th and early 20th century.

Steam engines, for all their smoke-belching fury, were slow moving and lethargic when joined to a cargo of grain, coal, lumber and farm machinery. As kids, we often rode the empty box cars south to Cedar beach or west to hunt pheasants and ducks, which were abundant along the right-of-way in what is now St. Louis Park.

We were not the only free-loaders that rode those great trains. Hobos, tramps, bums, itinerant workers—call them what you will; we called them "bums"—rode as well.

The north end of Cedar Lake was port of entry and departure for hundreds of unemployed and down on their luck men during the 30's and 40's. For a handful it was home when they built squatter shacks and began a new life on the shore of Cedar Lake. Building material for the shacks was easily obtained from the spoil cast off by the railroads. Block lumber, sheet metal and coal for heat and grain for flour lay in heaps all around the yards.

My friends and I got to know many of these squat-

ters. For instance, a toothless, soft-spoken stump of a man named Stan White had built a two-room shack and six wooden rowboats from wood liberated from the railroad. The boats were rented to fishermen, providing Stan a small income. We often ran errands for Stan, and his payment was to let us use the boats when not rented.

As pre-teens and early teenagers, we felt no fear moving in the company of so many rootless men. We never experienced their rage or heard them complaining. If there was violence, we never witnessed it. Perhaps there was no energy left in them for it. Most of the men seemed quiet and contained, not speaking unless spoken to.

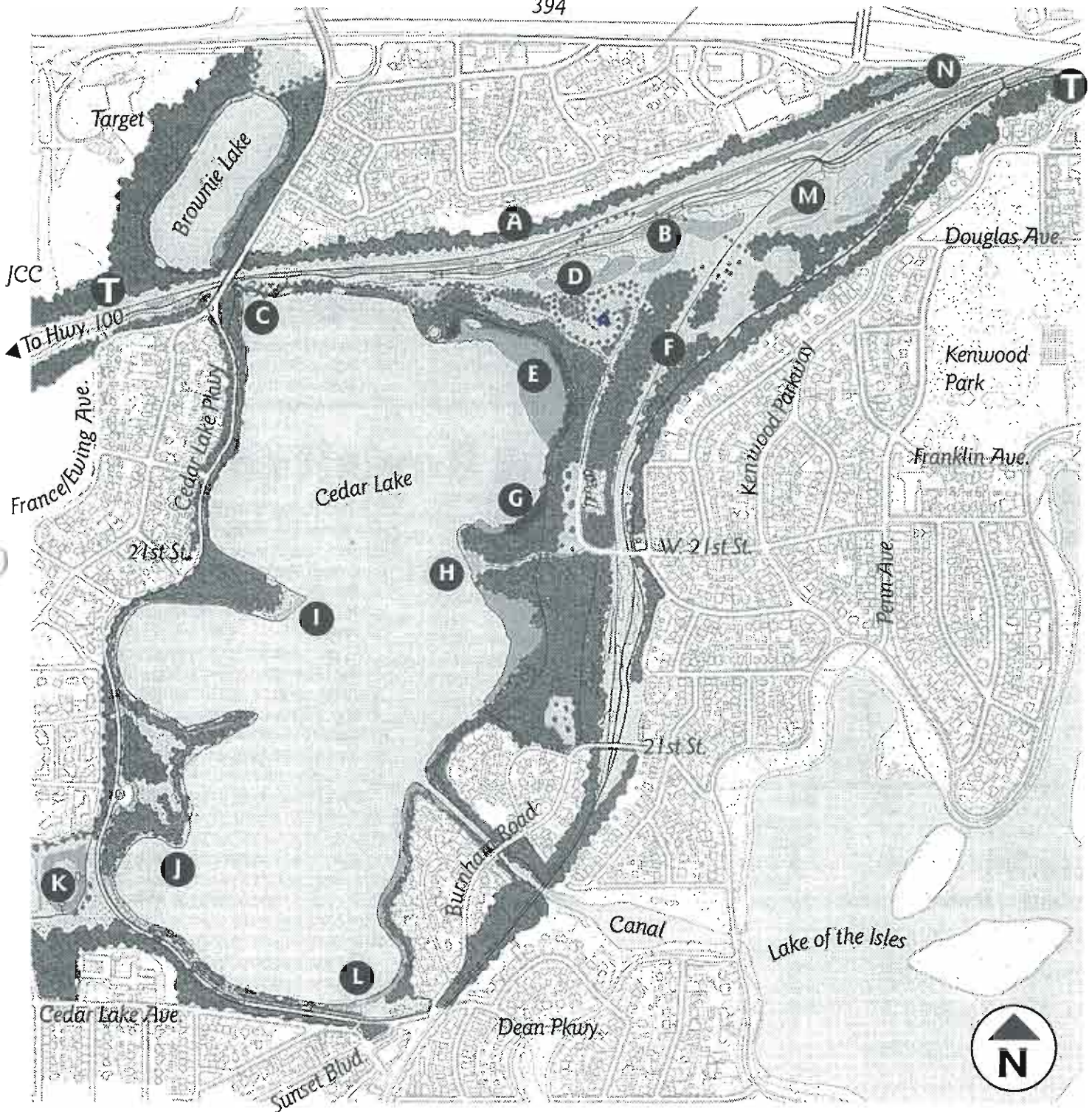
Once I recall rolling a large boulder down the Bryn Mar bluffs. In the path of the boulder was a large piece of sheet metal, which made a loud clang when the boulder hit it. Out from under the sheet metal came a bum who proceeded to climb up the long slope towards us. We stood our ground; when he reached us, he mumbled a few words and then headed back down the hill before we could apologize.

The squatters lived by candlelight or kerosene lamp, drank water from the lake, kept warm with coal from the yard and fed from the most bountiful gardens I have ever seen. Gardens grown from the rich humus of dead leaves hauled by handcart from the city dump at 21st and Upton. As they loaded their carts, we used to watch them from a huge tree house my friends had built in an old cottonwood. Later, the Minneapolis Fire Department burned our tree house to ashes.

In the aftermath of World War II, the great steam locomotives were replaced by diesels. The changing times brought an end to the settlements on Bums' Point. The park board bought up the land around the north shore of the lake, and moved out the squatters. And so ended a unique chapter in the history of Cedar Lake.

Points of Interest in the Cedar Lake Park Conservancy Area

394



A Cedar Lake Trail
B Prairie
C Parkway/Bridge
D Cedar Grove
E Big Woods II

F Kenilworth Trail
G Big Woods I
H Hidden Beach
I Cedar Point
J Fishing Dock

K Cedar Meadow
L South Beach
M Wildflower Plantings
N Burlington Northern
 Railroad

T Trail access

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Cedar Lake Park Update is published seasonally by the Cedar Lake Park Association (CLPA).

CLPA's mission is to create and nurture the nature park at Cedar Lake and the connecting trails and greenways.

Since 1989, CLPA has built a membership of over 3,000 households, developed a successful partnership with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and other city, county, regional and state agencies, and raised money for acquisition and development.

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Welcome!

CALENDAR

- CLPA Steering Committee**
Second Monday monthly, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
Kenwood Recreation Center
- CLPA Annual Meeting**
Wednesday, Jan. 26th, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Jones-Harrison Residence
3700 Cedar Lake Ave.
- CLPA Annual Retreat**
Saturday, March 4th, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Kenwood Recreation Center
- Earth Day Watershed Cleanup**
Saturday, April 22. 9:30 a.m. Please join your friends and neighbors in this special city-wide event. Call the MPRB for details 313-7722.
- Big Woods II Plantings**
Selected Saturdays, call to help, 377-9522.
- Spring Equinox**
Monday, March 20th, 7:25 a.m.
- Wildflower Plantings**
In May, call to help, 377-9522.

Your support is important—

Send your tax-deductible contribution TODAY to Cedar Lake Park Association
2000 Aldrich Avenue Minneapolis, MN 55405.

The Cedar Lake Park Association is set up to accept donations of appreciated stocks, bonds, etc.
Please call 612-377-9522.

Volunteers Always Needed!



Here, volunteers transport water to various Cedar Lake Park tree and wildflower plantings.

OUR VISION

Our vision for Cedar Lake Park is to restore the lands and waters and create a new community with nature through which we can transform ourselves, our city and our society.

OUR GOAL

Our goal for Cedar Lake Park is to bring people and nature together in harmonious community... a goal symbolized by the spiral.