

Cedar Lake Park

UPDATE

Fall 2009

20th Anniversary Edition

Volume 21, No. 1

Citizen Action: A Case Study

BY NEIL TREMBLEY

In the winter of the year 2000, at a meeting of the city Bicycle Advisory Committee, Public Works engineers presented their new plan for the completion of the Cedar Lake Regional Trail to the Mississippi River. CLPA was present. The trail's first segment had been completed in 1995, from Hwy. 100 to 12 and Royalston near the Target Center. Since 1989, CLPA had advocated for an off-road route through downtown along the BNSF rail corridor to link with the W. River Road trail.

We were stunned as we learned that the engineers had decided that it would be too difficult and costly to stay in the trench. Their new plan, we heard, would come up out of the corridor at Washington Ave.—three blocks short of the river—then proceed along 4th Ave N, on the surface with the cars. CLPA was aghast. Trail users would be on-road and need to navigate three downtown at-grade crossings. In vain we argued with the engineers about safety concerns. A new bridge would be built at Washington Avenue by Hennepin County, and a new non-motorized portion was included in the design to cross under the street. That was it. A done deal.

Reflection

For several months there was a pause. We mused about the trail, and considered our options. One Monday evening, at a meeting of the steering committee, we talked about one of CLPA's core principles—that pedestrians and bicyclists have a right to safe and secure transportation environment. We decided to take action.

In early 2001, our group took the offensive. Our strategy with any issue has always been to take a positive position. We realized that we quickly needed a viable alternative to the plan. Under the direction of Steve Durrant, we funded an engineering study



On Sunday, August 2, 2009, members and friends of the park and trail gathered under the Cedar Lake Parkway bridge to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Cedar Lake Park Association. They reminisced, discussed current issues and envisioned the future.

Photos by Meredith Montgomery, unless otherwise noted. For more great photos, see www.cedarlakepark.org/photos

that found that an alignment which would stay in the railroad corridor was feasible. However, it would cost more than the on-road proposal.

The group first approached MPRB Commissioner Vivian Mason—a staunch supporter of CLPA. In this case, there would be little help from the MPRB. John Richter began to cultivate his contacts at all levels of government, and with BSNF railroad. We called David Klopp. He and his brother Greg had contributed time and energy during the initial drive to “Save Cedar Lake Park.” David was piqued.

Signs of the Times

David did two things. He put up signs around the park informing the community that

Citizen Action...continued on page 4

LRT Route to Be Decided This Fall

BY BRIAN WILLETTE

This fall the route of the Southwest LRT will be decided. This light rail line will run between the intermodal station (which will be close to the new Twins ballpark in Minneapolis) and Eden Prairie.

Currently, there are four alternatives under consideration. Two routes use the Kenilworth corridor along the east side of Cedar Lake. The other two routes use the Midtown Greenway from its west end to Nicollet Avenue or First Avenue where the rail line would turn north and east to the intermodal station. **For details, go to www.southwesttransitway.org.**

Light Rail... continued on page 3



On the Horizon

BY KEITH PRUSSING

Welcome to the latest edition of the Update, the first in too long, and the beginning of a new phase of our outreach efforts on behalf of Cedar Lake Park and Trail. We will be publishing a paper version that will be available through the mail as well as in various locations throughout the park and the surrounding neighborhoods. In addition, we are enhancing our electronic efforts by having copies available on our website.

We want your email address. We have been building an electronic database to provide on-going, in-depth information about the Park and Trail. We need to be able to provide action alerts about park and trail issues. Further, we want to be able to reach out to you regularly with e-newsletters that will provide all sorts of interesting articles, photos, and other graphics, with links to our website.

We have a new blog on the website, where we post ongoing commentary by various authors who have a wide variety of perspectives. Please join the dialogue to about plants and animals, park and trail activities, and news and views of the wider world. This includes wonderful photos, maps and tables, seasonal observations, and points of interest to the few and the many.

CLPA is now over 20 years old. In early August, we celebrated under the parkway bridge, visiting with old friends and reaching out to new ones. It is a great thing, this Association, and I am privileged to continue to be its President. As you can see, there is a lot going on.



The native Kasota limestone bench in the Memorial Cedar Grove invites reflection.



Gifts

Cedar Lake Park Association gratefully acknowledges contributions in the form of money, stocks, materials, volunteer time and in-kind services, memorials and gifts. Since the last Update, contributions have been received from:

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GIVE ONLINE AT www.cedarlakepark.org. All donations are tax-deductible.

Visit Our Website

Go to www.cedarlakepark.org for a wide variety of information on what the Cedar Lake Park Association is about. There you will find:

- This newsletter in **color**
- History of the park and the Master Plan
- Photos taken throughout the park and trail
- Volunteer opportunities
- Historical and aerial photos
- Publications and maps
- People enjoying and nurturing nature
- Blog, links and contacts with others

If you would like to volunteer or contribute to your park, email us at info@cedarlakepark.org, call (612) 377-9522 or write to: Cedar Lake Park Association, 2000 Aldrich Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55405.

Light Rail *continued from page 1*

In October of 2008, our board adopted the following Policy and Design Principles for the Southwest Transitways:

Our Board urges all concerned, especially the decision-makers, to select the Southwest LRT route that best serves the common good of the people and cities in the area.

If the Kenilworth Corridor is selected as the route of the Southwest LRT, it will have a major impact on the trails in the corridor and the park-like land that it passes through. Cedar Lake Park is adjacent to the Kenilworth Corridor, and the LRT using the Kenilworth corridor will definitely have an impact on Cedar Lake Park.



People who use the Kenilworth Trail and/or Cedar Lake Park with its trails experience the land north and east of Cedar Lake as one contiguous nature park. Although Hennepin Regional Rail Authority owns the Kenilworth Corridor, a growing number of people refer to the whole area as Greater Cedar Lake Park.

Regardless of land ownership, people enjoying Cedar Lake Park and the ridership of the LRT will experience the LRT going through a nature park, Greater Cedar Lake Park. Therefore, it is crucial that the impact of the LRT using the Kenilworth Corridor be seriously studied.

Cedar Lake Park Association's official position on the LRT going through the Kenilworth Corridor has seven major concerns. Our concerns are stated in the following seven design principles:

1. Safeguard human life, protect the water quality in Cedar Lake, and enhance wild life habitat, habitat connectivity and quality of the natural environment.
2. Minimize any negative impact on people's experience of Cedar Lake Park and the park-like surrounding areas.
3. Maintain neighborhood and regional access to Cedar Lake Park, Cedar Lake Regional Trail, the Kenilworth Trail, and the Midtown Greenway.
4. Minimize the intrusiveness of permanent and temporal changes to the environment of Cedar Lake Park and the park-like surrounding areas.
5. Mitigate unavoidable changes in the environment with investments that provide exceptional value to the goal of Nurturing Nature.
6. Wherever the LRT is not tunneled in the corridor, enhance the LRT riders' positive experience of Cedar Lake Park and the surrounding park-like areas as they pass through the corridor.
7. Design any and all stations that are adjacent to Cedar Lake Park in such a way that they are compatible with a park-like setting—like a park lodge or park ranger's station.

Should the Kenilworth corridor route be chosen by Hennepin Country Board and the Metropolitan Council, Cedar Lake Park Association will work with the light rail designers to assure the above principles are followed. The Association will also work to prevent the locating of any light maintenance facilities in the greater Cedar Lake Park areas.

If the Kenilworth corridor is chosen, we all must to stay alert throughout the design and construction phases. Stay tuned! Action may be needed!

Native Plants Flourish in the Meadow

BY RUTH JONES AND MEREDITH MONTGOMERY

When Ruth Jones and Mary Conway began yanking out buckthorn, garlic mustard, burdock, motherwort and other invasive plants in the meadow near the Burnham Bridge entrance to the park five years ago, they shared a passion for giving native plants a chance to grow.

Now native plants are clearly visible in the woodland restoration site, thanks to over 1,000 hours donated by volunteers such as Ruth and Mary, school and scout groups, neighbors and passersby.

More than 20 huge piles of branches, leaves and roots have sprung up on the site. These piles hide a cheerful surprise. Mary comments, "Every time I walk by a pile now, five wrens pop out to scold me. There are hundreds living there."

Ruth sees the "wren hotels" as evidence of the project's success. "The key to changing the habitat is to pull up invasives before they go to seed, she says. "Changing the seed bank is what makes long-term changes. It's thrilling to uncover native material that would have less chance without our intervention."

Changing the seed bank is a process that involves removing mature invasive plants, pulling up seedlings as they sprout, collecting and strewing seeds from nearby native vegetation—over and over again. Five years of persistent hard work are now beginning to pay off.

"My reward is seeing the abundance of wildlife and bird life," says Mary. Recently, I've seen Cooper's hawks, flycatchers, pileated woodpeckers, wild turkey, American woodcock, cedar waxwings, cardinals and finches."

Ruth likes hearing what people walking by have to say. "Neighbors are noticing the change. They ask what we're doing." Mary reports that a local landscaping firm has begun removing the piles. "But we may leave a few for the wrens," she says.

Thanks to Yale Alumni Volunteers

In May, 24 volunteers from the Yale University Alumni Group gathered at Burnham Uplands Restoration Site off Burnham Road. There, Alumni and their families removed dozens of mature buckthorns, thousands of buckthorn seedlings and blooming garlic mustard plants and lesser numbers of motherwort and burdock plants.

The kids made great contributions. One little girl proudly announced that she had personally taken out 10,000 garlic mustard plants! A pre-teen boy sawed up the largest fallen logs he could find, then helped place them along the borders of the main trail. His teenage sister industriously uprooted large buckthorns.

We thank Camilla Madson and Sharon Reich Paulsen for their efforts in coordinating the event for the Alumni Group. We look forward to seeing you again next year!

Volunteers Nurture Nature

Many volunteers have donated time and materials to restore native species in the Cedar Lake Park Woodland Restoration Site. Our Volunteers Journal notes:

- Mary Miller donated four gorgeous ostrich ferns and one meadow rue. Ruth Jones and Mary planted them together after a big rain. Perfect timing!
- Ron Adams, St. David's Society, joined Ruth Jones for ten total hours of hard labor, removing several dozen large buckthorn.
- Mary Conway is experimenting with hand removal of poison ivy. She has fenced off the poison ivy patches, and we teach volunteers how to recognize the "leaflets three" and avoid these aggravating invasive plants!

Baby oaks, cedars and sumac are returning to the woodland restoration area. The elderberry is producing fruit, and there's more of it in areas where volunteers have pulled up buckthorn as well as honeysuckle and mulberry.

We accept all the help we can get!



Ruth Jones with one of the many invasive plants she's removed from Cedar Lake Park. (This one's a garlic mustard.)



Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) volunteers take a break from planting on the prairie in May. (See the prairie survey at www.cedarlakepark.org.)

CLPA has been a partner with the **City of Lakes Loppet** ski weekend since its inception. For the 2009 races, we again had the help of students from **Providence Academy** to do the finish line food tent, servicing over 1500 racers. On the 3rd Saturday in October 2009, we will have a volunteer work group in the park for Trail Day.

There are two **prairie restorations** in the park. The larger, 35 acres surrounding the Cedar Lake Trail between Hwy 100 and I-394, was established in 1995. There have been ongoing yearly plantings by volunteers. This may be a burn year. STS crews from **Hennepin County** are no longer mowing an area to lawn near the trails junction, thanks to an alert citizen. The smaller abuts Upton Ave S near the beach, and was planted in 1998. Two one-hundred year oaks were removed this year.

Minnehaha Watershed District reports Cedar Lake water quality has dropped from an A- in 2004 to a B in 2008. Calhoun rates A, while Isles is C. The persistent drought has brought new plants to exposed shoreline. It has increased water clarity, concentrated nutrients and encouraged aquatic vegetation. Some milfoil has been harvested to **DNR** allowances, as it creates rich habitat. There has been good fishing for bass, panfish, muskies, and carp.

At the CLRT and Kenilworth Trail junction, the City counted 1200 riders/day in 2008, with 650/day near the river end at Royalston Ave.

Nice Ride Minnesota will launch a

public bike sharing system—based on an internationally successful model - here in Minneapolis in May of 2010. Take a bike from one kiosk and ride to another. We remember the Yellow Bike program, an earlier bike sharing model. The eastern end of the Luce Line through Wirth Park is complete, allowing travel west past Wayzata. **Minneapolis** is developing a pedestrian and bicycle plan, and the **Met Council** is studying a potential new north/south trail in the CP corridor between Bloomington and New Hope.

The **Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board**, we will have a new commissioner after Election Day. Anita Tabb, an early member of **Park Watch**, is unopposed. We are grateful to Tracy Nordstrom for her service and support of CLPA. The Lakes District Council, comprised of 10 neighborhoods, meets monthly with MPRB personnel to inform, shape and coordinate parks development. Park histories, including Cedar Lake, are now online, compiled by David C. Smith. Did you know Cedar Lake was lowered in 1902?

Wildlife seen in the park include mink, Cooper's hawk, red and gray squirrels, muskrat, herons and egrets, turtles, loons, various ducks and geese, gulls, owls, dozens of songbirds, deer, woodpeckers, and wild turkey. The long-running Bluebird Project found continued success in 2009.

Hidden Beach, now East Cedar Lake Beach, has been largely well-behaved, with some issues at night. **Kenwood Isles Neigh-**

borhood Association (KIAA) continues to provide funds for increased policing. The swimming was great, and the mud bath had a season total of over 4,000 visits. The native plant restoration done in the late 90's is more evident with the buckthorn removal. Volunteers continue to manage the area.

TobaccoFreeParks is actively working on curtailing smoking

At Brownie Lake, there is a new canoe rack on the north end, an idea from the **Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association** There has been clearing of buckthorn on the steeply wooded west side, and new growth on the east hillside. The Target parking lot drainage into the lake has been upgraded.

On the north shore, plans for the Mound area continue to develop, beginning with buckthorn removal to open the views. The memorial Cedar Grove trees on the double spirals are reaching 20'. The view from the stone bench is wonderful, one can slowly walk the spirals, and the solstice sunrise/sunset lines are cut through the center.

There are so many activities in the park. A Sunday morning will have swimmers, kayaks and canoes, walkers and runners, cyclists and skaters, fishers and birders, yogis and meditators, even people sleeping.

Note: Names in bold type have websites.

In Memory of Theodore Wirth III

A long-time friend of CLPA



A race photo taken in the park. As an important partner with the City of Lakes Loppet, CLPA volunteers helped groom trails in the park. Further, we worked with Providence Academy students to again staff the finish-line food tent, serving refreshments to over 1800 skiers.

Photo by Dawn Luoma.

The Tale of the Trail to the River

Excerpts of a letter to CLPA President Prussing from Minneapolis Director of Public Works Steven A. Kotke:

“... The chosen route for the bike trail requires us to negotiate easements and access rights with many entities, both public and private. We have a number of competing interests in the properties along the route including a new ballpark, a new commuter rail line, accommodations for future rail, a future multi-modal station, and future development interests. While this may make securing and obtaining right-of-way for the trail a challenging and complicated process, these uses will ultimately complement each other very well and reinvigorate these once abandoned and neglected stretches of land with activity.

The Minnesota Ballpark Authority (MBA) and the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority (HCRRRA) have been excellent project partners who are as committed to seeing the successful completion of the Cedar Lake Bike Trail. It is important for agencies to represent the specific interest of their charge and the staff have done that vigorously but without jeopardizing each others schedules. The Twins Stadium and the Cedar Lake Trail are on track to be completed on schedule.”

From Ed Hunter, Minnesota Ballpark Authority:

“... MBA and the Twins have expended significant time and money towards the redesign and construction of the ballpark to accommodate City’s Cedar Lake Bike Trail through the ballpark site.

To insure a CLBT connection to the ballpark on Opening Day, the MBA began last year to design a bike trail/sidewalk connection from the existing trail exit on 3rd Ave. N., up to the



Downtown route of the Cedar Lake Trail, looking northeast, to the river

ballpark. Those design efforts are complete, and we are ready to commence construction within two months. By the end of this year, we expect to have a newly expanded sidewalk and CLBT connection to the ballpark along 3rd Ave. N., with new landscaping, lighting, fencing and bike racks.

However, we have recently learned that in order to accommodate the new CLBT connection to the ballpark, certain improvements and minor encroachments upon ballpark property are required....

...the MBA is pleased that the Twins have

again offered their support and endorsements of The 3rd Avenue Bike Trail/Sidewalk Improvements Project. It will enhance the streetscape and the pedestrian experience, and it provides the direct connection from the CLBT to the ballpark and to light rail, that the City’s project does not yet accommodate....”

From Project Engineer, Jack Yuzna:

“..... the Cedar Lake Trail Phase III will be moving forward this fall. Much of the Right of Way has been acquired and we will finalize the necessary acquisitions in the next two months. The project will be bid early in 2010, with construction to start in the spring and be completed by December 31, 2010. Funds for construction require authorization to proceed by MNDOT and FHWA by March 2010....”

The surveyor’s stakes are in the ground, marking the way to the river. YAY!!!

Volunteer Opportunities

There are a variety of ways to volunteer:

- Database Management—experience needed with Excel and Access programs.
- Electronic Media—info@cedarlakepark.org
- Plantings—spring through fall. Contact Neil Trembley.
- Leadership—an opportunity to make a difference. Contact Keith Prussing.
- Newsletter—contact Jim McPherson.
- Presentation/Tours—contact Keith Prussing.
- Community Relations—contact David Klopp.
- Group Activities—contact Ruth Jones.

To volunteer or contribute to your park:

Email info@cedarlakepark.org, call 612-377-9522, or write: CLPA, 2000 Aldrich Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55405

Citizen Action: A Case Study

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the new plan would “bring thousands of commuter and leisure bicyclists, pedestrians, roller bladers, wheelchairs and strollers, many of them children, into the path of dangerous downtown traffic”. Second, he called Lisa Goodman, city councilwoman, whose ward included much of the proposed trail.

Lisa had heard about the signs. She proposed to referee a meeting with the public works engineers and. At that meeting, held at City Hall during the spring of 2002, we made our case for the off-road alignment. We were successful in creating an opening in their minds, and Lisa invited us to raise the money to fund our off-road alignment.

And so we did...

To be continued



Celebrating CLPA’s 20th Anniversary was much more than “a piece of cake,” but that was good too.



2000 Aldrich Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55405

(612) 377-9522

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

Since 1989, CLPA has worked with individuals, neighborhoods, corporations, foundations, churches and schools, as well as with state, regional and federal agencies.

We have successful partnerships with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and other city, county, regional, state and federal agencies.

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Photo editor: Meredith Montgomery
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(612) 377-9522
info@cedarlakepark.org
www.cedarlakepark.org

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CLPA Update, Fall 2009

If you want to be added to our mailing list, or would like earlier editions of this newsletter, please visit www.cedarlakepark.org/publications

CALENDAR

CLPA Steering Committee

Second Monday, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Kenwood Recreation Center. You're invited.

Loppet Trails Day

Saturday, October 17.

Annual Fund Drive

November, 2009—Please contribute

Winter Solstice

On December 21, beginning at 17:46 GMT

CLPA Annual Meeting

January, 2010

Spring Equinox

March 20, 2010, starting at 1:32 EDT

Ice Out of Cedar Lake

April 4, 2010



The spirals of the Cedar Grove.



Kayakers reflect fun on Cedar Lake. East (Hidden) Beach is on the shore.

Photo by Meredith Montgomery

Welcome to Cedar Lake Park!

Cedar Lake Park Association Mission

1. Create and nurture a park at Cedar Lake with a thriving nature preserve and connecting trails and greenways.
2. Provide opportunities for people to learn to live in community with nature and one another.
3. Continue to foster citizen leadership and private involvement in the development and management of the park and trails.
4. Support similar efforts throughout the metro area and beyond.