

September 2015 LBNA Monthly Meeting Minutes

Bike path update - From Lindsay Kimball on behalf of Jennifer Gehlhar

1. Nearly 70 volunteers planted over 960 trees, shrubs, and perennials in June 2015 and since then 15 volunteers have attended three mulching and weeding events, contributing over 34 hours of improvement to the bike path along phase 1. That's 2,850 hours of service, or at minimum wage \$28,848 worth of service! Combine that with the cost of plants at \$9,632 and St Paul Forestry's regular tree watering at \$270+ and MN Nature with the help of Little Bohemia community has essentially contributed \$38,750 to the bike path in phase 1 alone! Other volunteers and Tony from MNDOT have been to the phase 1 site to help water, weed, mulch independently and on their own time (some have reported to me via email while others have made their presence known by the work done), so the numbers are higher than what I'm reporting. And these hours don't look at the countless hours of MNDOT and volunteer planning and prepping leading up to the planting days. A successful community urban forestry venture so far!

2. The search for a few water troughs continues. Having water available along the path for walkers and volunteers to easily water perennials along the freeway wall would be a great help. We've been lucky with rain but cannot depend on that. I'll continue to watch for livestock troughs on Craigslist for free and MNDOT is also searching troughs for us but anyone with a lead or free resource please share!

3. 15% of the neighborhood definitely knows about the MNDOT project, including how to get involved with the project AND how to plant trees (DNR flyer) and the Roots in the City program (City program postcard) thanks to MN Nature's Gateway grant project with the Pollution Control Agency. MN Nature partnered with Wolf Ridge ELC and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to use the bike path phase 1 area to feature the MNDOT Community Roadside Partnership in the Fast Track Youth program. (More info. here: <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/about-mpca/mpca-news/featured-stories/youth-explore-careers-at-the-m-pca.html>) Fourteen-year-olds spent the day on site learning about MNDOT's program, how to implement this in their own community, the benefits of trees, and more. They then went door to door in the surrounding Little Bohemia neighborhood to educate the community on the importance of trees and provide info. on the bike path project as well as educational materials and resources for trees. I was one of the leads on hand for the event, and Tony from MNDOT also spoke. I compiled the responses from the Fast Track neighborhood surveys and we covered 15% of the LBNA neighborhood. I'd love to flyer the rest of the 85 percent of our neighborhood soon . . . but first . . .

4. Part of the Gateway grant project: I'd like to pull together a "Stewardship and Events Committee" like a "Friends Committee" for the green space, tasked to organize some regular activities along the bike path. I think we'll benefit from opening this opportunity up to people outside of the LBNA, but always with the expectation that a few neighbors from LBNA will be involved and regularly report activities at LBNA meetings. Some of these activities would be weeding and maintenance of plants along the bike path but others might be free environmental educational seminars, free environmental kids activities, free adult environmental classes, social events, organizing to get trash bins along the path, etc., to truly benefit from the green space and share it with others. It's my goal to have activities in place asap so I'd love to get those who might be interested together soon after our next LBNA meeting. A fall/harvest social may be fun.

5. Also part of the Gateway grant project: A Tree Trek on phase 1 is nearly complete. We have 25 unique tree species that will each have stakes identifying their unique features as well as a QR code and map. Gary Johnson of the Forestry Dept. at the U of M has donated three of those trees, most of the others were planted in June 2015 as part of the MNDOT planting. The U of M researcher Chad Giblin (who helped bring us the

disease-resistant elm) is also looking to plant climate-adaptive species as part of his ongoing research so we may have something as unique as an orange tree along the bike path! I'm still working this all out with the U of M and MNDoT. The bike path green space will be featured on local Tree Trek website (like this: <http://www.treadvisorypanel.org/tree-treks.html>)

6. Also part of the Gateway grant project: Two signs (one at Grand and one at St. Clair) will be built and installed to display the Tree Trek info, a map of the area, environmental education materials relevant to the path, doggie waste bags, community info., and with a space for the community to post other info./resources. An illustrator is working on the maps and the carpenter is working on the signs.

7. Also part of the Gateway grant project: An identity is needed for this entire project to display on the signs so I'm asking Little Bohemia to offer their suggestions. Perhaps the Stewardship Events Committee can vote on the final suggestions to give MN Nature for the signs. At the Sept. meeting I'd like to offer a box that people can anonymously drop in name suggestions so a tally of potential names can begin.

8. MNDoT is gearing up for phase 2! The St Paul Tree Advisory Panel visited the site in July and the wealth of knowledge from their membership shared many good ideas to re-naturalize that area from Western to approx. Duke street. I should have some preliminary ideas by late fall to present to Little Bohemia and to get additional input/ideas. Anyone is free to share ideas with me until then too! All input will be greatly appreciated and considered by the landscape designer at MNDoT.

Bike Naming

- We need to name the bike path for signage at both entrances (on Grand & St. Clair)
- Bike Path Name Ideas - Pleasant Trail, Pleasant Path, Little Bohemia Trail or Path, solicit corporate sponsorships, Little Bohemia Trail, Capitol View Bike Trail, Dave Thune Memorial Trail
- There was general consensus to name the bike path Little Bohemia Trail (or something Little Bohemia related) to provide some publicity for our neighborhood or Pleasant Path or Trail to tie into Pleasant Place.

Housing update - Mark Fangmeier on behalf of Joe Musolf STP Planning & Economic Development

- 8-house rehab deal with West 7th Fort Road Federation
 - 29 Douglas sold
 - 280 Forbes, if not already listed for sale, soon to be
 - 284, 286, 288 Forbes rehabs underway with completion soon
 - 326 Harrison, 301 Sturgis, 457 Smith will be the 3rd phase, W7FRF expects to take possession and start rehabs this fall
- House move to 41 Douglas (Charlie Browning, developer). Excavation started, house will be moving soon.
- Rehab of duplex 337 Goodrich (Neighborworks Home Partners). They still intend to complete this rehab, and work is expected to begin sometime this fall
- 47 Douglas and 69 Garfield - Joe met with a number of developers during the last 4 months trying to drum up some interest in one or both of these houses. Some interest has emerged, which is excellent. Joe has asked those interested developers to be prepared to submit formal proposals via our upcoming RFP
- New homes at 314 Harrison and 376 Sturgis - Neighborworks Home Partners experienced some construction pricing challenges and couldn't get the budgets in line with their proposal. HRA will re-offer

these lots in the upcoming RFP. Joe expects Neighborworks will re-submit a Proposal. The construction bid for both properties came in quite a bit higher than what was expected from the fall of 2014, when the RFP was submitted. This was due to construction (labor and material) price increases and the bedrock. We had budgeted for higher excavation and water/sewer costs due to the bedrock, but that work came in higher also. According to our real estate agent, the values in your neighborhood have increased from what we originally thought the anticipated sales prices would be. This did help offset the increase in costs, however we are still over budget. We have had conversations with City staff at PED (Planning and Economic Development) about the possibility of increasing funds for these projects.

- Upcoming RFP (anticipated release last week of August)
 - Will include vacant lots 314 Harrison and 376 Sturgis
 - Will include houses 47 Douglas and 69 Garfield

424 Goodrich maintenance - Emily

- 424 Goodrich demolished in May following fire.
- Contractor who raised building was also contracted to put in grass seed, seed never took, has been dirt ever since.
- Eligible for seed money from Thrivent Action Teams financial to purchase bee friendly seed mix, \$250
- Best time to plant is middle of August to middle of September, anyone who can help out get in touch with Emily.
- Journeys offered to have students come over to prep lot for seeding. Emily will work out details.
- Emily also working on trying to get driveway pad removed of debris. Vote for it to get fixed on see click fix: <http://en-us.seeclickfix.com/issues/1892147-damaged-sidewalk>

Journey's Playground Update/Discussion

- Background: 16 months ago SPPS started long range facilities studies management study process.
- Letter sent to neighbors living within 350 feet of the school, many neighbors did not receive the letter.
- SPPS has no intention to expand the parking lot.
- Journeys leadership mentioned the idea of a greenhouse and large garden that students could work on, moving forward after playground would want something that can be used as part of students curriculum.
- Budget is directed towards removal of the playground and not much is available for replacement costs. SPPS does have some matching funds available for projects.
- No date set for playground removal. Urgency to conversation because SPPS knows that the playground is unsafe and does not want anyone being hurt. Playground safety audit done every year, 2013 was first time warning signs were discovered and 2015 became point where there was not a meaningful way to address safety concerns through maintenance.
- Timeline - no firm deadline, ideally an October action plan. Even if action is taken the playground would be removed but not the end of the process. If the two projects could
- If playground comes down in October it would be replaced by grass while final sight plan is taking shape. 6-12 month of committee work to come up with community/SPPS partnership plan.
- SPPS is open to allowing new equipment to come in that is paid for externally, concerns about ongoing maintenance costs of any new structure.
- Ideas from neighbors for how area can be used...
 - Currently used as a recreational space for kids in the neighborhood, would like to have that use continue.

- Currently playground is used by Montessori School in neighborhood.
- Interactive public art space.
- Treasure Island Expo off of Randolph as an example, community supported and maintained facility.
- Any option for SPPS to sell land to STP Parks to develop and maintain?
- Skatepark.
- Something that targets teenagers (kids age 10-15)
- Fenced in off leash dog park (emailed suggestion)
- Community wants to remain welcome on the school grounds
- Next step
 - Organize smaller group session to brainstorm ideas - will be spearheaded by Tom Parent at SPPS
 - Have LBNA obtain list and notify key community stakeholders. Tom Brock will be SPOC (Single Point of Contact) for our committee.
 - Emily, Aaron, Meg would like to be involved in committee

Current Problem Properties / Safety Concerns

- 292 West Sturgis Street
 - Post on West 7th Facebook page concerning break-ins at this property
 - Reminder to all neighbors to call any suspicious activity to police or non-emergency number.
- House on Forbes next to Evan has been abandoned since he's lived at his property. Bank owned vacant property. Call because the house is not posted as foreclosed. Call DSI?
- Possibly invite license and inspection representative to our next monthly meeting? LEEP? Ask for best practices related to problem properties.

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 1st at 7pm, location Aaron's house (374 West Sturgis Street)

Events:

- **Grand Oak Opry** - Saturday, September 12th at 7:30pm, a backyard concert with The Cactus Blossoms.
- **26th Annual Czech and Slovak Festival** - Sunday, September 27th from 11 am - 5 pm, live music, folk dancers, vendors, children's games, ethnic food, Czech beer, silent auction. Free Admission. Accessible facilities. For more information: <http://www.sokolmn.org/events/>
- **West 7th Community Center's Annual Spaghetti Dinner** - Thursday, October 6th from 4:30pm - 7:30pm, \$8 per ticket, on sale beginning September 1st at the West 7th Community Center, advanced tickets discounted \$1 when purchased by 9/18.