



UNION PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

www.unionparkdsm.com

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PROPOSED REVITALIZATION FOR DES MOINES' BOTANICAL CENTER

A group of private citizens - Buzz Brenton, former mayor Tom Urban, Fred Weitz and Janis Ruan - have unveiled their plan to raise \$10 million in private funds to revamp the Botanical Center, changing the name to the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, with completion by January, 2013. The Botanical Center was built in 1979 and includes 14 acres located on Robert D. Ray Drive on the east side of the Des Moines River. It is one of only 2 river drives in the city - the other is Birdland Drive in Union Park Neighborhood.

The Group plans to spend the \$10 million as follows:

\$6,150,000 for outdoor gardens, an event lawn for weddings, walking paths, the entry drive, parking and the removal of Robert D. Ray Drive north of I-235. The Group along with their Chicago-based landscape architect, Doug Hoerr, requires the closure of the road - which must be approved by City Council.

\$1,350,000 for indoor concerns - relocating the restaurant, a new kitchen, a remodeled gift shop and offices, and improved bonsai and orchid displays.

\$500,000 for administrative expenses including campaign costs to raise the \$10 million, interest on construction loans and operating costs during construction.

\$2,000,000 endowment providing financial security for operations, education and programming.

The Group projects that the 60,000 people using the facility today would increase to 200,000 by 2018 once improvements are made. In future the Des Moines Public Charter School will use the new Botanical Garden weekly as an outdoor — more page 2



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From page 1: PROPOSED REVITALIZATION FOR DES MOINES' BOTANICAL CENTER

classroom which will include an outdoor xylophone and musical tic-tac-toe squares.

In addition to the \$10 million in private funds, the City of Des Moines will be required to contribute \$200,000/year for at least 10 years through an economic grant from TIF (Tax Increment Financing) funds; \$195,000/yr from BRAVO (the city's hotel/motel taxes) and \$50,000/yr for 5 years also from BRAVO funds (\$4,200,000 total). The Group and the City agree that it is a virtual certainty that the revamped Botanical Garden will operate at a loss. While the City has committed to the 10 years of funding, it also understands their continued support after the ten years may be necessary, which would be at the discretion of the City Council at that time.

Because public monies are/will be committed to this plan, public comment is important. Some questions are:

- With no money committed to the actual dome, what is the long term integrity of the structure? *The Group hired a Wisconsin consultant familiar with this type of construction to do an engineering study; the results are said to show another 30 years of life for the Center; the study is to be shared with UPNA shortly.*
- Should money be committed to the interior plantings in the dome from the \$6 million committed for outdoor gardens?
- With the projected increase in attendees to meetings and events, should existing meeting rooms be revamped, not just the gift shop and offices?
- What additional staff requirements will be needed - for food prep and service, educational programming and outreach to the community, grounds keeping, etc.
- What comparative studies were done with other Botanical Gardens, such as the 100 acre Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha, to support the allocation of interior vs exterior plant expenditures?
- What are the projections for increased revenue from memberships, gift shop sales, events usage, etc. which would offset future money required from the City?
- Is the closure of Robert D. Ray Drive acceptable to the neighborhood and daily commuter traffic (approx 2000 cars per day)?

Go to our website www.UnionparkDSM.com to view the PDF illustration of the proposed gardens, the marketing brochure and other information about Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden. The Group is promoting their plan to the public now. Contact Fred Weitz at 243-6697 or Tom Urban at 255-4553 to learn about their presentations and to ask questions.



History of Our Past

This morning I found an old letter that Alice Rodine wrote to the City Council when they were talking about a permanent building for the Carousel.

Read it (page 4) and see if it takes a stretch of the imagination to see a line drawn between the Botanical Center and the Carousel. I think Alice would have been all over this Botanical Center project if she were still alive. I want to say "Thank you!" to those who are asking the hard questions and carrying on the Rodine legacy.

Some background on the Carousel: A public meeting on the Carousel was September 18, 1997 and I attended that meeting. The Des Moines Carousel Association had been formed and Buzz Brenton was the face of that Association. (Buzz presented information at the April 1997 UPNA meeting.) The Carousel Association was to accept all costs of running the Carousel.

The city agreed to provide a drinking fountain, benches and landscaping and a concrete foundation for the carousel. The money came from the City's Capital Improvement fund. We were told no other cost will be incurred by the city in this venture. Liability, security, staff to run the carousel and so on was the responsibility of the Des Moines Carousel Association. The Carousel would operate for two years as a trial (It operated under a huge tent and was taken apart and stored at the end of the season for two years). After that time they applied to make it permanent. The concrete work was done in the spring of 1998 and the carousel was operating by Memorial Day 1998. My notes from that meeting say "...the Des Moines Carousel Association expects to shoulder all costs, other than what the City has agreed to do."

Apparently by December 1999, discussions were taking place with the City Council to ask them to shoulder more financial burden than originally expected, and provide a permanent building. Unfortunately, I do not remember how this all shook out, but obviously the permanent building is there. I know there is ongoing fundraising and the Carousel Foundation has been established to maintain the Carousel. Among the Carousel's benefactors are the Rollin' Relics Car Club which raised \$6,000 last August to subsidize the nominal cost of rides for kids at \$.50 per ride. The Carousel is a jewel for Union Park and I am proud to see it in our neighborhood. This is not about the Carousel. It is about asking questions. Maybe Alice's letter had some affect.

Paul Sadler, Editor

UPNA

Meeting Invitation

The Union Park Neighborhood Association holds a Spring and Fall General Meeting. We also have monthly steering committee meetings that are held the 2nd Tuesday of every month. Meetings start at 7:00 pm at Grand View College in the Humphrey Center ("Old Main") on the 2nd floor. These are all open meetings and any neighborhood resident is welcome to attend. The more of us that can get involved the better, so consider this your invitation to attend any meeting. If you can't make it to every meeting that's ok but we would love to have you come whenever you can. Everyone's input is welcome, whether you would like to help with a special event or project or just come to meet your neighbors. UPNA is accomplishing more each year so the more people that are involved the more good we can do!

Alice Rodine 282-6206
2328 Amherst- 50313

Dec. 9,1999

Most residents will agree that the Carousel in Union Park is an asset to the city.& that it needs to have a building of some sort to protect it year'round. Apparently the Heritage Carousel Foundation has only been able to raise \$ 110,000 & expect the residents of Des Moines to make up \$140,000 for a total building cost of \$250,000. That is a very expensive bldg. & no details were furnished to justify such a high cost. The funding for this project was discussed, as \$40,000 of Reiger Estate Gift money for Union Park has been designated. That gift was to be used for Union Park playground equipment, & for baseball facilities. A building is not playground equipment,even if it houses a carousel, especially since one has to PAY to ride it. When questioned, the Parks Director admitted the \$100,000 was not in the "approved" budget,& that it would mean other park projects would be cut.

There was another aspect of the project that was not even mentioned by anyone on the council,during the funding discussion. This issue affects every taxpayer in Des Moines. In the council letter (99-531),it mentions entering into a long term (10 year) agreement with the Foundation to secure Union Park as the home of the Heritage Carousel. ...quote : "The Foundation is requesting the city contribute \$140,000 towards construction and draft a ten year operation agreement"... " The agreement would allow the Foundation to operate and maintain the carousel and improvements for a period of ten years.At the end of the agreement term,the City would own the pavillion and all associated improvements."

This means the Des moines taxpayers will have to make up the operating deficit that occurs each year, in order to keep the ride price at 50¢. And if the City OWNS it, we also will pay for all maintenance costs. By the end of 10 years for any structure, there are sure to be repairs needed, not to mention the cost of re-painting all the hand painted animals.

As mayor & council members, you dare not obligate the residents to these kinds of long term,unknown costs, without being upfront & explaining to residents what is really being considered. This is more than a \$140,000 one time cost! This is one more example of of a private group starting something & then letting the residents pick up the bills. When this Carousel project was proposed to us, as individuals,& as a Union Park Assoc., over & over we were told "this will not cost the city one dime"

As council members,you are accountable to those who elected you,but the public can't be aware of such "deals', unless you bring them up. Even those watching on cable,can't know by listening, unless the details are discussed. One would hope the paper's reporter would at least inform the public on such issues, but it was not mentioned. Rob Borsellino hit the nail on the head in todays column,when he said : "Usually by the end of these (council) meetings,it's the public that's in tears". Not everyone can attend every mtg. to watch for "deals" such as is proposed regarding the carousel building. But this must have a great deal more discussion,to see if the public is willing to pick up the costs that will go on indefinitely before any such agreement is approved.



CC: Mayor & council members- City Manager & Parks Director
Media & Public

Parks and Recreation Department Union Park Update

With all of this snow it's hard to believe that spring is right around the corner. Soon there will be green grass being mowed, flowers being planted and more birds singing in Union Park. But don't let the cold and snow keep you from enjoying the park . . . a walk around the circle, sled rides down the hill or a stop at the bench that overlooks the river to watch the bald eagles soar.

You'll also see Parks staff has and will be working at Union. Winter pruning has begun on oaks in the south part of the park and staff will be attempting to work on the remainder during the coming winter months. There are only certain times of the year that experts recommend pruning oaks due to a disease called Oak Wilt that utilizes fresh sum-

mer prune openings to enter the trees and infect them. The hillside west of the carousel has been completely seeded with native grasses and flowers; the new prairie will take a few seasons to become established. Among the benefits will be improved bird habitat, reduced runoff, and lower mowing costs than we have with manicured turf.

This fall, the rocket slide area received a new rubber surfacing with an outer-space theme. If you didn't see it in the fall during construction you'll want to make a point to do so this spring as it has really improved this Union Park signature feature. The Birdland Shelter is shut down right now for renovation and is scheduled to open later this year or early next year. Along with the levee

construction, the shelter will get a much-needed new parking lot. Since parking has temporarily been removed and access has been eliminated the lagoon will not be open for public skating this year, but it will be back next winter. An exception will occur during the Des Moines Winter Games' Pond Hockey Tournament that will be held at the lagoon again this year, on February 5-6, if ice conditions are favorable. For more information about the Winter Games and your Park and Recreation Department please visit us on the web at www.dmparks.org. To reach staff based at Union Park, call 265-2277.

Mike Gaul

Birdland Development Meeting December 7th

On December 7th, at the Union Park Baptist Church, the Union Park Neighborhood Association brought together residents of the Birdland area and City Community Development staff to discuss the future development options in the area that was hard hit by flooding in 2008. Large parcels are available and will be developed. This

was an opportunity for the Birdland residents to have input on how the area will look in the future. Mary Neiderbach and Kyle Larson from Des Moines Community Development brought graphics and maps and explained development issues and time frames. They stressed that decisions need to be made by Spring 2011. City staff took com-

ments made at the meeting and will work on some proposals to bring back possibly in February.

City Sidewalk Ordinance

To help ensure that sidewalks are safe during the winter, City ordinance requires residents to remove snow and ice from sidewalks within 48 hours following the end of the snowfall. Property owners who do not comply are subject to a civil citation. A helpful hint for residents on snow routes – clear your sidewalk after the snowplows have finished plowing to the curb. When you remove snow from your driveway or sidewalk, please remember that City ordinance prohibits placing snow on any public street, sidewalk, or right-of-way.

Equipment operators often work 12 or more hours in a shift, and appreciate courteous and friendly drivers and pedestrians. Please help them to help you.

When shoveling out the mouth of your driveway, throw the snow to the right or left, but **NOT** in the street.

Residents who wish to report sidewalks not cleared of snow and ice accumulations may call 283-4950 and report the address of the sidewalk. You are not asked to identify yourself.



Union Park Garden Club

If you don't like sitting in meetings and would rather get your hands dirty and feel a sense of accomplishment, then the Union Park Garden Club is for you! Last summer we saw small beautiful flowerbeds bursting with color and variety. You will recall that one flowerbed on the east side of the park was shaped like a heart. That was the work of Tom and Yvonne McDermott and they are starting to gear up for the upcoming flower season. The Union Park Garden Club is not a formal garden club with dues and meetings and tea, just a group of hard working people who have an interest in helping beautify the gardens at Union Park.

Tom and Yvonne attended the Fall General Meeting and brought huge bouquets of flowers from the flowerbeds. They wanted to share the beauty with us that night before the frost got them. At the meeting we got to meet the couple and they told us about the gardens in Union Park. Tom and Yvonne are interested in any one that can help in caring for, contributing to and just plain showing interest in the gardens at our park. One way to contribute is to donate plants such as those that you divide and would like to see live on in Union Park. This club is in its infant stages and will grow by trail and errors.

Yvonne recently had a little setback. After the Fall General Meeting, she started a database of people who responded to the handouts about the club. Unfortunately, in the early winter, her computer crashed and the list was lost. Please, if you are interested in helping with the Union Park Garden Club, send Yvonne an e-mail at Unionparkgardenclub@yahoo.com and give her your contact information: name, address, phone number, e-mail and any other input you can offer pertaining to the club. If you do not have e-mail, call or write to any of the UPNA officers and they will get the message to Tom and Yvonne. Hope to hear from you.

Membership Dues

A reminder to everyone about the Annual Dues. Membership dues are now due the first of the year at **January**.

Dues are on a calendar basis. Dues are \$10 for individual membership, or \$25 if you want to be a Supporter and \$30 for a Business Membership. If you have any questions about your Dues, please feel free to contact Paul Cole—Membership Chair.

Snow Ordinance Streets

As a follow up to the Snow Ordinance article in the Fall UPNA newsletter, the Snow Ordinance was passed by the City Council after two readings and has been in force this winter in the Union Park Neighborhood. The Snow Ordinance has enjoyed widespread support from the 16 neighborhoods that participated in the program. In the Union Park Neighborhood, UPNA officers fielded about 8 complaints total (out of 2500 households). We found that we were able to suggest reasonable solutions for most. A couple of the complainers simply wanted to vent but were not willing to participate in future neighborhood meetings.

What we have learned:

Parking on streets is still allowed. The only time parking is not allowed is after snow has stopped falling and until the snowplows have cleared the snow from the streets. Parking may resume on the

streets.

Parking on the streets was NOT banned forever.

Snow is cleared quickly from the streets in a matter of hours. Instead of days.

The notification system works. Notification of the snow ordinance in effect is given by e-mail, radio and TV.

The winter of 2009-2010 was much more severe than normal. This year has been mild by comparison and we have had only a few snowstorms where the Snow Ordinance has been in effect.

Streets are designed for transportation not for parking.

Odds are remote that snow removal operations take place during Church services or business hours. And most have of them have their own parking lots.

Neighborhood associations do not remove snow. They also do not vote for parking bans. Or enforce them. Why is this news to anyone?

Name a government program that provides better service at less cost.



This and That:

Kathy Kahoun has retired. Her farewell party was January 28th in the St. Etienne Room of the Armory. She was long time City employee as the Director of the Community Development Department and the guiding force behind the Neighborhood Revitalization Board. She made a big difference for a lot of people. Her knowledge and passion will be missed.

What is going on at the NE Corner of Guthrie and East 14th? Construction of a 11,500 square foot general practice clinic will begin as soon as the dirt work is completed. The address will be 2301 E 14th ST. The "Parks Area Family Physicians Clinic" will be affiliated with the Iowa Health Systems and will include urgent care as well as regular professional medical services. The new Clinic will replace the one on Euclid in old Eastgate.

Dog and Cat licenses - Wednesday, March 31 is the deadline to purchase your City of Des Moines dog and cat licenses without a penalty. City ordinance requires all dogs and cats six months and older to have a license. The cost is \$15 for dogs and cats that are spayed or neutered, and \$35 for dogs and cats that are not spayed or neutered. Special rates are available for citizens over 65 years of age. The late fee is \$50 for each pet license. Applications are available on the city website at www.dmgov.org. Applications must be postmarked on March 31 or earlier to avoid the penalty. The City Clerk's Office is open from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM daily, and will be open late, until 6:00 PM on Wednesday, March 31st to accept applications. The City Clerk's Office/City Hall address is 400 Robert D. Ray Drive. Call the Clerk's Office at 283-4209 for more information.

Did you know that the traditional date to take down your Christmas decorations is January 7th, the day after Epiphany. Outdoor decorations should be taken down and put out of sight by that date too. If you still have Halloween decorations out, well that is just plain wrong! wrong! wrong!

The Fremont opened on E. 9th where Palmer's Pub used to be. It has been reported that it is pretty nice, has a nice crowd, and there's a table with the Scrabble board built in, and they keep a cribbage board. So...not quite in the UPNA neighborhood, it is worth checking out. And, there will be a Bloody Mary bar and breakfast on Sunday.

The Voice of the Vikings: KGVC is on the air at 94.1 on the FM dial every weekday from 4 a.m. to 4 p.m. playing the Flashback hits of the 1980's and 1990's. On Sundays KGVC plays Latino music hits all day. The FCC awarded Grand View University the non-commercial license on a shared frequency with Drake University. At 4:00 pm weekdays the 94.1 FM becomes the Drake University's KDRA - "The Dog" and airs rock music 4 p.m. to 4 a.m. weekdays and all day Saturday. KGVC's signal at 94.1 FM is 100 watts strong and reaches most of the city of Des Moines and some of the surrounding suburbs. The station can also be heard online from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays during the school year and 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. during the summer.

Did you know there are graves in Union Park? A small family plot that belonged to the original owners of "Thompson Bend" used to be located in the south western part of the Park. The gravestones have long disappeared but if you have any information or documentation, please share it with us.

New Year's resolutions should include volunteering for UPNA projects in the coming year.

Finally open just before Christmas! Thompson Avenue at E9th Street. It still looks like a war zone. City Engineer told us at the UPNA Fall General Meeting on Oct 21st that the sewer separation project work would be finished and the street would be open "next week". Two months late! Though ALL the barricades were not remove from Thompson till December 23th.

2011 Union Park calendars are now available at Highland Park Hardware Store, North Side Library and at Found Things in East Village.

Union Park Neighborhood Association

PO BOX 16113

Des Moines , IA 50316-9402



BECOME A MEMBER / SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER

Name _____

Address _____

9-digit zip code _____

Form is also available on our website at www.unionparkdsm.com

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Yearly Dues: Three levels of Membership: \$10.00 Family membership, \$25 Supporter, \$30 Business
please mail to UPNA Treasurer, PO BOX 16113, Des Moines, IA 50316-9402

If you have any questions, please feel free to call Paul Cole at 263-1885.

All memberships renew on January 1st.

I am interested in:

- Helping with the Lawn of the Week Program
- Serving on the Steering Committee
- Assisting with the Newsletter
- Helping plant trees and flowers
- Helping on UPNA's Home Tour

- Having my house on the Home Tour
- Helping with Jazz in July
- Helping with Rendezvous on Riverview
- Helping with _____

More information on _____
