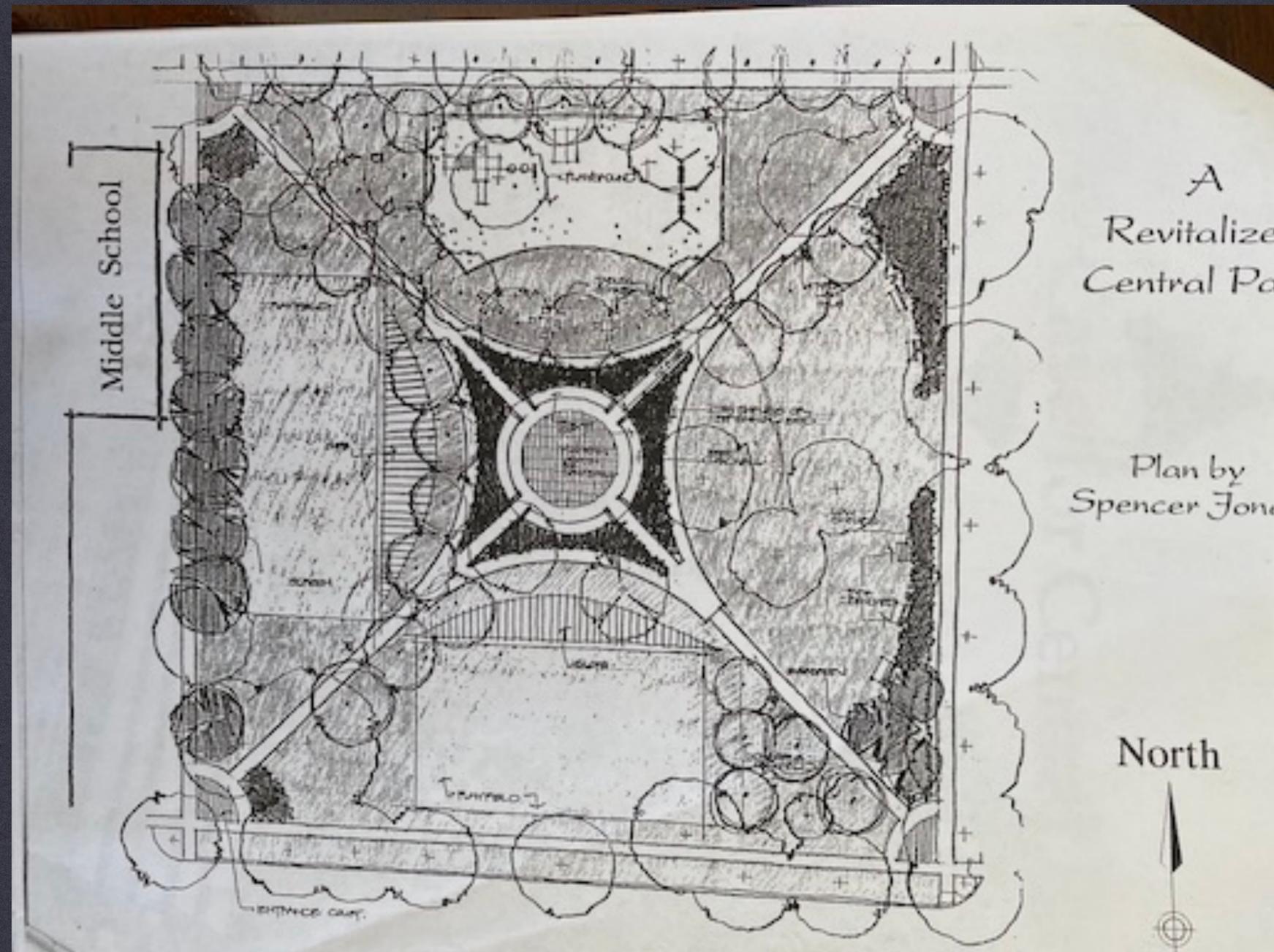


CENTRAL PARK

A PARK LIKE NO OTHER IN
NORTHFIELD





A BRIEF HISTORY OF CENTRAL PARK

- * 1855 - Central Park is one of the very first platted blocks in the city. John and Ann North donate it to the citizens, not the city of Northfield as a public square to be enjoyed for all kinds of public gatherings.
- * A public Square is different from a city park. The square is considered to be more urban, with sidewalks, benches and many trees for shade and beauty. Fountains and gazebos were common in these parks and were actually part of Central Park in the past.
- * This type of park is used for passive pursuits such as listening to music, public celebrations, small gatherings or quiet repose.
- * The symmetrical design is typical of most Victorian-era public squares that were brought west by settlers from New England.

1947 Headley v. City of Northfield

- * From the beginning, Central Park was a quiet residential park.
- * In 1874 the block immediately west became Central School. 1910 brought a new building and in the 1930's there were a series of additions to the school.
- * In 1940 the street between the park and school was vacated and in 1947 plans were made to develop athletic fields to replace the original park.
- * The public was mostly in favor of this except for a small group who voiced their concerns..
- * A series of restraining orders were petitioned by the small pro park group led by Leal Headly but there was fierce opposition from the city and public. The case went to the MN State Supreme Court and ruled in favor of Headley in January of 1949.

For Your Earnest Consideration

1—What is the issue?

Shall the public square, commonly known as Central Park, be turned over to the school district to be used for athletic purposes? The School Board proposes to incorporate much of the park physically into the school grounds by closing the intervening street; by removing trees; by grading to conform with the school property; and by laying out plots for competitive games.

2—Is outdoor play a legitimate part of a high-school program?

It is not only legitimate; it is highly desirable. Provision for it should be made.

3—Must we choose between parks and play grounds?

No. The question is not an either-or. The welfare of our children requires *both* parks and playgrounds. To bring up our children in a city—no matter how good its schools—in which the finer things in community life are constantly minimized is unfair to them. Adequate school grounds must be found. But they must be found without sacrificing other cultural assets.

4—Is the project well conceived?

There is evidence to the contrary. Archery, for example, is proposed. As a safety precaution the Minneapolis Park Board will not construct an archery course less than 1,000 feet long and then not in a residential area. Our park block is 330 feet long.

5—What would the proposed changes cost?

The lowest bid for demolition and grading alone is \$3500. The cost of the constructive work which would have to follow is not indi-

A Landmark Decision

- * Headley v. City of Northfield has been used for land that was dedicated for specific purposes to be protected from government, organizations and private citizens from changing it to another use.
- * “whereas a public square is a special public ground devoted to special and limited uses”
- * “a public square may be enclosed, improved, and ornamented, for grounds of pleasure and amusement or recreation or health”
- * Headley was used twice for Central Park and once for Lashbrook Park.

- * Central Park was left alone for four decades. By 1992, it was run down with the stone circle slowly crumbling, dirt and weeds in the center, large trees dying without being replaced, no sidewalks on two sides of the block and the grass worn thin by many decades of school use.

1992 Citizens for Central Park

- * In 1992 the school board and school board approached the city council about building two baseball fields in Central Park.
- * The council would take it up later. No Neighbors had been notified. So council member Paul Hager gave me a call...
- * Citizens for Central Park was born.

SMAN

Central Park's had ups and downs

Last week I began in the Maggie Says column a listing of the local newspaper references to Central Park through the decades beginning in 1884. Right now, when the movement afoot to improve the park, it is interesting to note that the park has been improved and neglected several times during the city's history. There are movements here and there for improvement in May 1895 when the Northfield News reported that bids had been received by the city council for placing a fountain in the park and for connection to the water main, but that contract had been let. Apparently the council probably let the matter drop. Three years later, in 1898, The News reported, "The parks are now in splendid condition, ideal places to spend a hot afternoon. But there is one thing lacking in Central Park that is a fountain. At a large expense a fountain could be put in that would add beauty to the park besides giving a great help toward supplying needed moisture to the grass."

Maggie says

Maggie Lee



The cost of sprinkling, which has to be done with hose from fire hydrants, has kept the city from doing this regularly, but the gentleman referred to has donated his spare time to the work and the park is beginning to show beneficial effects already."

The Aug. 20 News reported that the materials for the fountain and sprinkling services had arrived and that the work of installation would be started in about two weeks. That issue of the paper revealed the name of the "generous First Ward citizen" with a paragraph, "The residents of the First Ward feel very grateful to George Bush who is keeping the grass in Central Park sprinkled without raising the taxes on their properties." I have no idea who Bush was!

The Sept. 3, 1898, News reported, "Work on the fountain in Central Park was begun Thursday and will be finished the first of next week, together with laying of the pipe around the park for sprinkling services. The basin (for the fountain) is 20 feet

considerable distance to daily travel of First Ward park crossers. Later on as cold weather approached it was thought necessary to cover the fountain with a straw stack to prevent injury from frost. The drifts about the fountain have made it desirable for pedestrians to take a still wider circle as they cross the park until now they have to go around the band stand itself. Should any reader be curious to see how it is, a walk from Winona to College or the reverse across the park diagonally will disclose the situation."

In August of 1903, Alderman Revier of the city park committee reported to the council that the fountain basin was leaking and that he had ordered the fountain turned off.

A special meeting of the council was called a month later "for the purpose of voting on the report of the park committee. The committee reported favorably on the purchase of a fountain, i.e., to make up the necessary difference between the fountain fund already subscribed to and the cost of the fountain. The council accepted the committee report, the mayor's vote deciding the tie." In October, 1903, The News reported that the new fountain had been received

pre- ed we tre sid pot of gut E rest citiz par city and orna gene and not streets and surpr I'n was started report story those A s said t of the Associ summe improv So far dead tr from th the con from th and hause neighbor to the park, School District 659, probably did the most to get the whole thing into the public limelight when it offered \$15,000 for work on the park.

It remains to be seen when, or if, a new plan will be recommended to the council.

Christie Clarke, a spokesperson

Central Park Controversy ignites fix-up sentiment

By Murray Cody Staff Writer

Although the controversy over proposed changes to Central Park has included a battle of words, a constructive outcome may come of it. It apparently has ignited efforts to fix up the historic city park.

And, it seems to have the necessary elements. Neighbors have met as a group. Both park board and city council members have attended some of the meetings. And the largest Northfield neighbor to the park, School District 659, probably did the most to get the whole thing into the public limelight when it offered \$15,000 for work on the park.

for the neighbors of the park, said 36 people attended a meeting early last week. Some park neighbors also attended a meeting on Thursday with Superintendent Charles Kyte at the middle school.

A meeting was proposed that would include the neighbors, or park board and school district representatives to come up with a plan.

While neighbors originally were linked that somehow a proposed plan to renovate Central Park made it to the council for an official vote without their input, there was appreciation that the school had

initiated the matter from neighbor school) has raised our

outlet about felt needed to areas that kinn-ball trenches in played the said.

There was a lot of the park down and the neighbor need to add support to distinguish.

The people have a feeling said.

While the plan to fix up the park, resident Eve Webster said the neighbors would

See Central, Page 9A

Central Park history repeats itself

Maggie says

Maggie Lee



Like many other Northfielders I've been watching Central Park to see what on earth is going on there. And other people keep asking me, assuming that I know all about such things. So the other day I met with some of the "civilians" who are working on the project for a revitalized park.

Cer got

From Pa

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See Central, Page 9A



In this picture that is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society, a gazebo that once stood in the park is clearly visible. According to Northfield News references to the park in the late '80s (to appear in this column next week), this was probably called a band stand, although it seems small for that purpose. The fountain in the center of the park, which Maggie can remember but of which there is no known photo, was

actually in place at the time this picture was taken. It can barely be seen with the use of magnifying glass on the blown-up copy of the picture that is on display in the lobby of the library. It was a morning glory kind of shape formed in dark metal, placed in the center of the concrete circle that is visible in this picture. — MHS Collection, used by permission.

being made by the Northfield School District and the Grace Whittier Fund for Children, but much more money must be raised by private subscription.

I know it would be impossible because of the cost that would be involved, but I yearn for the return of the fountain that I remember being in the center of the park when I was a child. I don't know when it was removed, but I recall how sad I was when I found that it was no longer there. It was a quite simple fountain, but with very gracious lines. The committee has not been able to find a picture of it and hopes that someone reading this might have a picture — perhaps in the background of a family group. And does anyone know what eventually happened to the fountain?

The committee did obtain a picture from the Minnesota Historical Society — reproduced here and on display at the Public Library — of the park when it contained a gazebo. Although it seems small, I think it must be what items in The News' of that day refer to the fountain that's gone into this, but a lot of thought has gone into it by park and

this. The first note in 1884 said that "someone has been making hay in City Park. While mowing has improved the appearance of that block somewhat, it does seem as though some sort of grass should be sown that would not grow to such a size." A month later The News said, "City Park could be made a delightful place if the grass was cut. With grass neatly trimmed, a little filling up and a few rustic seats, it would become a popular resort. A few dollars would make it all that could be desired. If the city cannot do it, let it be done by private subscription and The News can be put down for its share."

Further notes show that the Northfield Improvement Assn., one of the city's earliest organizations, was also urging park improvement. Finally in 1886, two stories reported, "Twelve new seats have been secured for the City Park. The City Park with its neatly trimmed grass and rustic seats is a pretty site. We would like to suggest to

boulders that escaped from the (gravel) crosswalks so regularly avoided by people of sensitive understanding. No lawn mower can be used in the park in its present condition without being ruined. Citizens who have occasion to go through the park report that it has never been in such poor condition since it was opened to the public. The season is fast approaching (this was in May) when the city will be visited by hundreds of people who are quick to notice untidiness of a public nature and the park should receive prompt attention."

A year later The News commented, "Benches have been placed in the park, but some of them are in a dilapidated condition. And the whole lot needs to be painted — to give them a respectable appearance." Whoever wrote "Heard on the Square" in April of 1895 — perhaps William F. Schilling who came to Northfield that year — penned: "I heard the other day that the shade trees of the

from us."



Barbara Wornson, who lives at Sixth and Nevada, told the Northfield Park Board her feelings about a proposal to renovate Central Park.

Many neighbors voiced objections to the proposed revisions.

Photo by Murray Cody

Central Park

Neighbors protest lack of communication

By Murray Cody
Staff Writer

Neighbors of the Central Park area packed the Northfield council chambers on Tuesday night to voice objections to proposed changes to the park east of the middle school.

The neighbors were irked that changes had been proposed without seeking their advice. The proposal had earlier made it to the city council for review. And, adding fuel to the neighborhood fire, some rumors made the proposed revisions sound even less palatable.

At the meeting, School Superintendent Charles Kyte agreed to meet with park neighbors at 7 p.m. Thursday at the middle school to

work out their differences. They may even take a stroll through the adjacent park.

What apparently disturbed residents the most was that the renovation proposal made it to the council last week without their knowledge. The council tabled the proposal when it came to light that park neighbors had not been asked whether or not they approved of it.

The most controversial part of the proposal brought to the council last week called for the installation of two ball diamonds on the south side of the park, which would probably require removal of some trees. Also, the crisscross sidewalks, which are a hallmark of the park, would be taken out on the south side.

On Tuesday night, Kyte said he just got back from vacation, but he said that he talked to a few of the neighbors prior to the meeting. He said the school district came to the Park Board about two months ago. The district offered to pitch in \$15,000 to fix up the park.

"With that, hopefully, the park would be upgraded," Kyte said of the earlier proposal. "It would be more usable to the public, more usable by the school."

Kyte said that neighbors object to the plan that was developed. "We want to be good neighbors," he pointed out. He said he didn't want to battle the neighbors.

Kyte asked the Park Board to hold off on the plans for the park until he

sits down to talk with the neighbors. The Park Board agreed.

So the two sides can "figure out what uses everybody sees to make the park, and the kinds of things that everybody sees as objectionable or problematic."

From there, he said they will be able to determine what can be done to the park that is agreeable to the residents and still works for the school district. Kyte said the school district might withdraw its offer to fund work, but he thought it could be worked out.

The issue has a history. A lawsuit brought by Leal A. Headley and others against the city in 194

- * Thanks to Cathy Ann Brown and Marsden Headley, son of Leal Headley who took the case to the MN Supreme Court, we were given a copy of the decision and the school backed off the plans. Not surprisingly, within a less than a decade the new middle school was built.

Named Gift Opportunities

Revitalization of Central Park creates a great opportunity for individuals, families, service organizations or businesses to either recognize, remember, or celebrate someone or some occasion. Whether it's a plaque on a park bench or recognition on the roll of contributors your contribution will not only revitalize the park but also say something special about someone you care for. There are many options.

A Small "Family Tree".....\$100

A Large "Family Tree".....\$250

"Chess Table".....\$200

One Park Bench.....\$600

Playground Equipment...\$1,000

One Light Standard.....\$1,200

Bandstand(Gazebo).....\$25,000

If you or your group is interested in one of these named gifts please contact Jennifer Edwins at 645-9653.

If you would like to volunteer your time and talents to help with the effort to revitalize Central Park please call Christie Clarke at 645-5210 or Barb Wornson at 663-0760. We would love to have you on the team.

Revitalize
Central Park!

Citizens for Central Park
PO Box 59
C/O First National Bank
Northfield, MN 55057

You Can Help
Revitalize
Central Park



WE WERE NOW STUCK WITH A VERY SHABBY PARK THAT NEEDED HELP!

WE GOT TO WORK!



Central Park Update

Council to say yea or nay to park plan

It's hard to believe it has only been a few months since neighbors rallied to save Central Park. After much work and consultation with city and school officials, park board members, the Historic Preservation Commission and neighbors and friends of the park, a final plan for the park will be presented to the Northfield City Council June 1.

The plan is based on the design created by local landscape architect Spencer Jones. The council is expected to approve the plan and to send the project out for bids. Groundbreaking in the park will begin early this summer.



Phasing in the plan

Because cost estimates have been higher than expected, Citizens for Central Park have proposed that the plan be phased in over several years.

The first phase, which would be done this summer would include grading, filling and re-seeding the park, replacing the sidewalks on the periphery of the park, repairing and capping the circular stone wall at the center of the park, installing four Victorian-style light standards, moving and improving the play equipment, planting some trees and adding up to four benches and a chess table. Later, more trees and shrubs will be planted and arc-shaped walks will be added at the entrances of the park. A bandstand or gazebo is still on the wishlist.

Watch for our sign

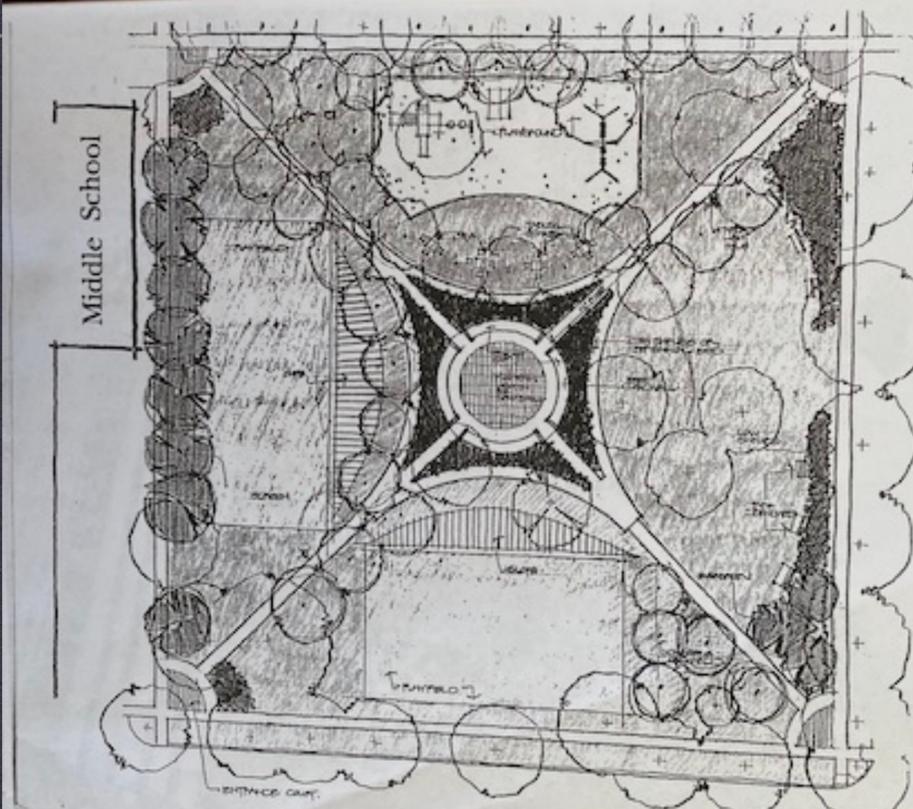
Look for a Central Park sign on Bridge Square soon!

The group that successfully raised the funds for the city pool has donated its sign to Citizens for Central Park. The sign will be repainted with a tree design. We hope this will draw the entire community into the park improvement project as well as remind us what it will take to revitalize Central Park.

Your support is needed

The strong support from the neighborhood was the spark that ignited the Central Park project. We saw that support again at the Kickoff Picnic, where more than 250 people showed up. We need you again. If you would like to voice your support at the council meeting, please join us at City Hall at 7 p.m., June 1. Even more importantly, please **make your contribution to the park fund today**. You can drop it off at the First National Bank or mail it to the bank using the form on the back of this newsletter.

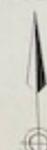
With your help, Central Park can be a true center of our community. Please act today!



A Revitalize Central Pa

Plan by Spencer Jones

North



THE TIME IS AT HAND! ★

→ **A VERY IMPORTANT MEETING**

TUESDAY, NOV. 12 7:00 P.M.

FIRST U.C.C. CHURCH

→ **THE FINAL PLANS FOR THE RESTORATION AND RENOVATION OF CENTRAL PARK WILL BE PRESENTED FOR YOUR REVIEW.**

MR. SPENCER JONES, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT FOR SMSQSE ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS, HAS VOLUNTEERED HIS TIME AND EXPERTISE. THE RESULTING DRAWINGS ARE BASED ON THE IDEAS WE'VE GENERATED AS A NEIGHBORHOOD!

THIS MAY BE YOUR LAST OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS YOUR OPINION BEFORE THE PLANS ARE PRESENTED TO THE PARKS BOARD AND

Central Park revitalization to blend look of the past, needs of the future

The revitalization that is occurring this summer in Northfield's Central Park is intended to bring back the feel and many of the aspects of an old-fashioned park, while still serving a modern community. "It has taken a great deal of work on the part of the city, the school district and the supporters of the park to come up with a plan that works for everybody. We appreciate the hard work the Street and Park Department has done as well as realizing the physical work," said Christie Clarke, co-chair of Citizens for Central Park, which is raising money for the park project. "The park is a good example of how earlier settlers viewed open spaces. It's an important part of Northfield's history."



Street and Park Superintendent Lanny Gleason (right) and Assistant City Engineer Rick Bevering (third from right) answer questions posed by the Citizens for Central Park group, which includes architect Steve Edwin (left) and Co-chair Christie Clarke (second from left) and Co-chair Barb Worwies (second from right).

Carole Zellie, a landscape historian who reviewed the revitalization plans for Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission, agreed. "Central Park embodies the characteristics of the formal town square as brought west by 19th-century New England settlers. In general, these spaces were intended for passive, rather than active recreation and their historic character is dependent on their simple arrangement of paths, open grassy areas and rows of clumps of deciduous trees."

The revitalized park will contain many of the hallmarks of a 19th-century park. Unlike many 19th-century parks, Central Park never had a gate at its entrance. However, the revitalized park will have decorative arched sidewalks at each corner. The arches will be filled with paving stones to mark the entrance to the park. Through the city's infrastructure project, the park's east and south sides will now include sidewalks, making strolling around the park much easier. In addition, there will be curved walks near the center circle, connecting the four prongs of the diagonal sidewalk. Flowers or other greenery may be planted

between the center circle and the curved walks.

The center circle, which was worn and deteriorated in recent years, will be repaired, with a cap added at sitting height.

Four Victorian-style lights also will be installed at the center circle. The lights look old-fashioned, but are heavy-duty enough to handle the daily wear they might get in the park. The lights were donated by Community National Bank, First National Bank, Norwest Bank and Northfield Lions Club. Other features will add to the Victorian flavor of the park. Patricia's Super Value and those families have donated Victorian-style benches. A chess table, which includes an embedded chessboard and attached seating, also has been donated. Finally, many new trees will be

added in configurations typical in 19th-century parks. At one time, the park contained more than 120 trees. Just last week, seven red maple trees and seven pin oaks were planted in a row along a new curved sidewalk. In the near future, nine hackberries and at least five larger trees will be planted. Other plantings are planned as money is donated to the Central Park fund. Many families are buying a tree to honor their own history in Northfield.

While the park will have the look of a passive, Victorian park, it will have features to allow for better recreational use as well. Grading and filling of the south and west quadrants has been done to remove the stumps and bumps that tripped up many Northfield Middle School students. Sodding will be done later this summer in the areas, which will

form playfields that can be used for a variety of athletic activities.

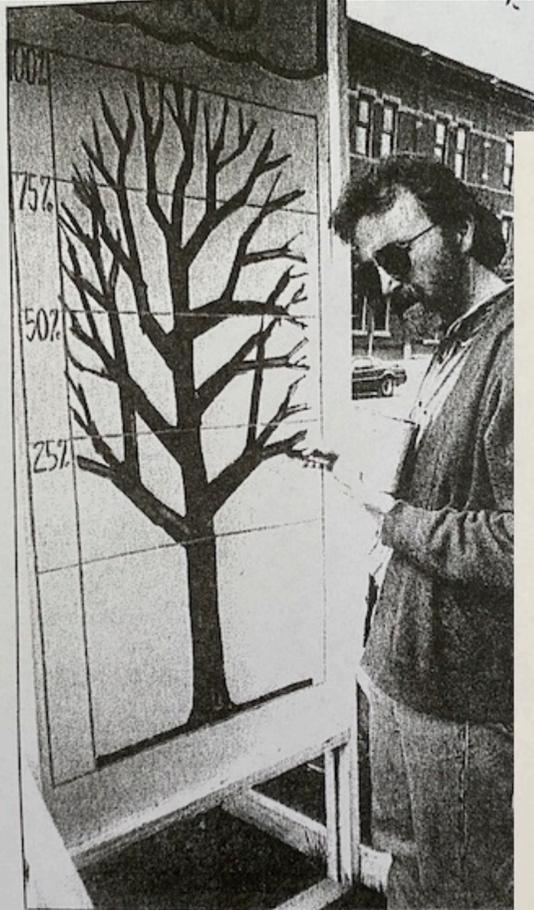
The children's play equipment in the north quadrant has been shifted slightly and the play area will be expanded. Through a grant from the Grace Whittier Foundation, additional equipment has been added to appeal to a wider age-range of children. Some of the equipment also will be accessible to disabled children.

The revitalization of the park is coming at a good time, said Dan Rogness, Northfield Director of Community Development. "There has been a real national emphasis on the preservation of historic landscapes," he said. The effort to improve Central Park also have led to a greater interest in the historic housing in that part of the city, he noted.

The News, Northfield, Minn., Friday, July 31, 1992, 3A



A worker from Sebels Electric installs wiring for Central Park's new lights.



Central Park progress

Joe Byrne finished up this week the painting of the sign that will mark progress on Central Park renovation fund raising. The sign, located on Bridge Square, probably seems familiar. It was donated by Memorial Field pool renovation group that has wrapped up its efforts. As the park funding campaign progresses, leaves will be painted on the now-bare tree. 1992



Sunday in the park

Citizens for Central Park are planning a Sunday in the park celebration to help promote their revitalization efforts. Co-chair Christie Clarke is pictured at the recent Home Grown event where the group had a display. The picnic, scheduled to begin at noon in Central Park, will include music, old-fashioned games and a display drawing of the plans for revitalization.



Central Park sod laid



Park lights

The traditional light standards recently erected at Central Park are a hallmark of the current renovation. In order to pay for the new lights, three Northfield banks donated \$2,000 each and a substantial contribution was made by the Northfield Lions Club. Pictured above (left to right) are Earl Sjoblom of First National Bank, Eve Webster of Citizens for Central Park, Bernie Renander of Norwest Bank and Bruce Christians of Community National Bank. At left, Webster accepts a check from Northfield Lions, Ed Gass (left) and Leroy Kruger. Barb Wornson and Christie Clark are co-chairs of Citizens for Central Park.

Building a community park

Neighbors to celebrate Central Park renovation

Dawn Johnson
Staff Writer

Neighbors and community members will celebrate the recent renovation of Central Park today, June 5, from 12:30 to 3 p.m. at the park. An ice cream social is planned for the day and local musicians will perform for the crowd. The

the park's center and resod many areas.

A group of citizens concerned about Central Park formed Friends and Neighbors of Central Park in 1990. With the desire to keep the park a "public square," which was what the park was historically designed to be, the group scheduled meetings with



Before the renovation, the circular park was crumbling away.

Wornson said. Many local residents donated their not only their time, but

North
City



Mayor Marvin Grundhofer greets the picnic crowd at Central Park as Citizens for Central Park co-chairs, Barb Worenson and Christie Clarke, listen.

Throng gathers at picnic for Central Park renovation

A picnic promoting the effort to renovate Central Park attracted a crowd of around 250 last Sunday afternoon. Mayor Marvin Grundhofer offered some historical and personal perspectives on the park. School Superintendent Charles Kyte also spoke.

Besides the opportunity to picnic, much was offered, including singing by the Carleton Knightingales, jugglers, facepainting, parachute fun for youngsters, the Carleton Comedy Troupe and a Citizens for Central Park information booth with details about the planned park renovation.

The group hopes to raise at least \$75,000 that will pay for sidewalk improvements, tree plantings and improvements in lighting and park bench seating. If the goal is exceeded, the additional money likely will be used for purchase of a bandstand.



Felicia Hansell and her mom, Terri Takehiro, enjoy a picnic lunch in Central Park.



Photos by Joel Hoekstra

Park party

Neighbors and community members gathered Sunday to celebrate the renovation of Central Park.

Toddlers climbed the playground equipment, while older kids played volleyball and other games. Volunteers scooped up ice cream, and the Northfield Trombones, above, provided music for the event.

Northfielder Barb Wornson, left, who spearheaded the renovation project with another area resident, Christie Clark, shakes hands with a grateful Central Park neighbor.



\$80,000 was raised

- * We had donations from the schools, the city, Carleton and St Olaf, most of the banks in town, service organizations, the Grace Whittier fund, small businesses downtown and so many Northfield citizens.
- * Neighbors laid sod in the rain and set the pavers all by hand.
- * Paul Krause made a great video about the Central Park
- * There was even a play written about the Park that was performed in the the stone circle.
- * Once the park was revitalized, NAG began their yearly Shakespeare in the Park, the Showmobile made regular visits bringing music and more groups began to use the park for their events.
- * Many couples have been married in the stone circle
- * The neighbors planted bushes, annuals and perennials around the circle and have managed to maintain it for thirty years. (Thank you to Alice Thomas for the last few years or more)

30 years later

- * Circle needs repairs and a limestone cap
- * An historic plaque is needed
- * More benches are needed
- * Trees to line all the sidewalks will complete the original plan by Spencer Jones.



30 YEARS LATER





SOME REPAIRS NEEDED



AND MORE TREES ALONG BOTH SIDES OF THE SIDEWALK

Our work is not quite done.

- * We have reconstituted our old group for the most part and intend to apply to the city for Heritage Preservation Site Designation to name Central Park as a historical site.
- * This will require the cooperation of the Park Board and the city of Northfield.
- * We feel that this park is like no other park in Northfield. It must be protected and preserved as a historic public square so that it can remain the same beloved green space that was given to the people of the city by the town founders John and Ann North almost 175 years ago.
- * I sincerely hope that you will agree with us and support and secure the future for our most historic, beautiful and well used park.