

'Where the biggies leave off...'

Hill & Lake Press

Published for East Isles, Lowry Hill, Kenwood Isles, & Cedar Isles Dean Neighborhoods

Volume 43, Number 43

www.hillandlakepress.com

February 22, 2019

Thomas Lowry Park without Seven Pools fountain? *Park Board wants your feedback.*

By Michael Wilson

Thomas Lowry Park without Seven Pools fountain? Unthinkable, you might say -- yet this is one of two initial draft concepts to emerge from the Park Board's ongoing Southwest Service Area Master Plan (SWSAMP) process.

As a result of the historic joint ordinance passed by the Park Board and City Council in April 2016 -- fashioned and guided to success largely by our Ward 7 Council Member Lisa Goodman and our then-District 4 Park Board Commissioner Anita Tabb -- the Park Board is receiving a new 20-year funding stream of \$11 million per year to address the long-overdue needs of neighborhood parks.

To guide the herculean task of developing new master plans for all of the city's 160-odd neighborhood parks, the Park Board last year launched Community Advisory Committees (CACs) in all four quadrants of the city. On February 1 Park Board staff released draft concepts for all 43 Southwest neighborhood parks. (Google "Southwest Service Area Master Plan" for a link to the project page.)

Two initial concept designs.

Park planners cast a wide net in seeking ideas for the new master plans, according to SWSAMP project manager Colleen O'Dell. Input from the CAC members and residents who attended the CAC meetings and Open Houses, plus responses to earlier online surveys, was very important, O'Dell says. Sports, community, and school groups across the city also weighed in. Park Board planners and their consultants also incorporated a few ideas reflecting current trends in park design thinking.

The result was two initial concept designs -- "first explorations," O'Dell calls them -- for all the parks. "Concept A" proposes, in general, moderate changes. "Concept B" ventures further with some "what if" ideas. "They may be wonderful, they may be terrible," O'Dell says. "Let's try them out spatially, get everyone's responses, and go from there."

Concept A for Thomas Lowry Park keeps the park historically intact but suggests moving the Thomas Lowry statue and monument from Smith Triangle at 24th and Hennepin to Thomas Lowry Park and creat-



Proposed Design Features in "Concept B" for Thomas Lowry Park: (1) grassy seating mounds, (2) native plantings/sensory learning gardens, (3) nature play area, (4) additional walking paths, (5) entry area with flexible seating. (Illustration: Minneapolis Park Board.)

ing a plaza.

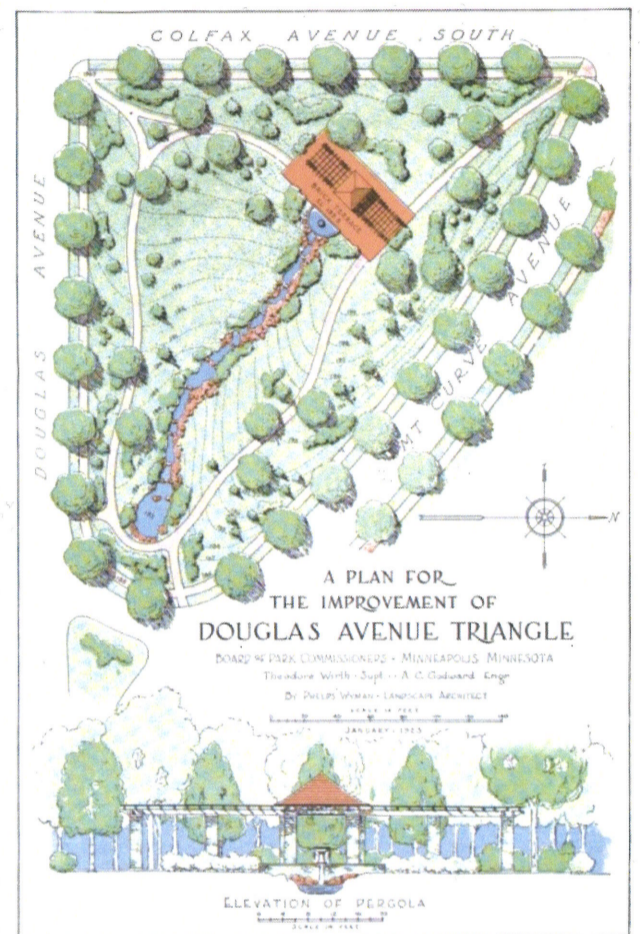
Concept B, with its "what if" idea for replacing Seven Pools fountain with a "nature play" area has certainly caught the attention of Lowry Hill residents and lovers of Thomas Lowry Park. Describing most people's response as "unhappy" would be an understatement.

Seven Pools fountain almost a century old.

As lovers of Thomas Lowry Park sadly know, Seven Pools fountain has reached the end of its serviceable life. The park design, with its distinctive pergola and artificial cascade, was created in 1922 by park commissioner and landscape architect Phelps Wyman, at the invitation of Theodore Wirth.

Acquisition and improvement costs totaled more than \$100,000 -- one of the "most expensive undertakings" for the Park Board up to that point, Wirth noted -- which was assessed to area property owners over ten years.

The SWSAMP endeavor comes at the same time as the Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association (LHNA) and Friends of Thomas Lowry Park (FTLP) have concluded a Conditions Assessment Report conducted by Aune Fernandez Landscape Architects to evaluate



Phelps Wyman's 1922 design for Thomas Lowry Park, with water cascade. Area residents were assessed the park's \$100,000 cost. (Illustration: Minneapolis Park Board.)

Thomas Lowry Park.

The report documents major degradation to the Seven Pools fountain, arbor, and pathways over the past century of use. The report estimates restoration costs for the fountain, arbor, and pathways at \$600,000 to \$650,000.

Go to <thomaslowrypark.org>, click on "Project," then on "Project Details" to read the Aune Fernandez report. And consider making a donation while you're on the website!

LHNA hosted a public meeting on February 5 to discuss spending up to \$300,000 to match FTLP's fundraising efforts to restore the Seven Pools and its



Seven Pools fountain today. (Both photos: Friends of Thomas Lowry Park.)



Seven Pools fountain, the walkway, and the pergola appear in this undated photo.

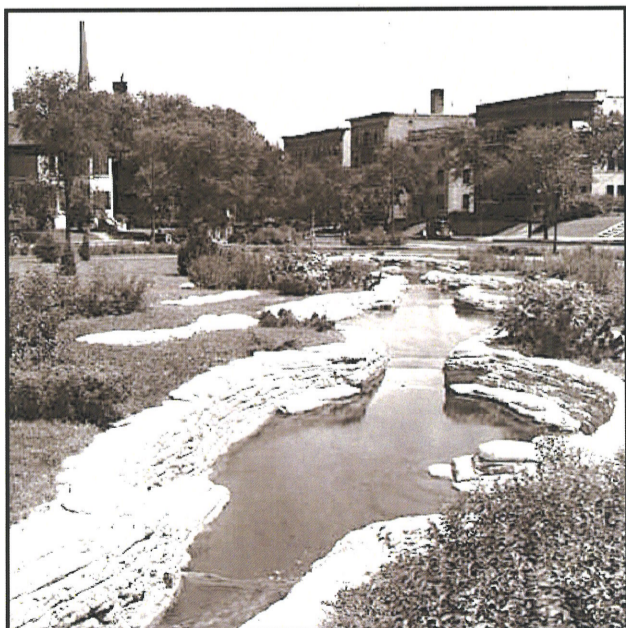


Girl Scout Troop 10398 has helped for several years to keep Thomas Lowry Park beautiful. This May 2017 photo shows Lily and Ava (sitting, first row); Grace, Daisy, Tatum, and Naomi (sitting, middle row); Molly and Peyton (standing). Ann Do and Dawn Lindquist are troop leaders. Thank you, Troop 10398! (Photo: Ann Do.)

pump system. The vote of Lowry Hill residents attending overwhelmingly favored having LHNA support the project financially.

LHNA will draw \$225,000 from Neighborhood Revitalization (NRP) funds that have been returned to LHNA after being loaned to support affordable housing projects in other parts of the city. LHNA is now allowed to spend those dollars on local initiatives that benefit Lowry Hill residents.

(LHNA is currently required to spend approximately \$100,000 of its remaining NRP funds on housing efforts and will consider options at the Board's meeting on Tuesday, March 5.)



Seven Pools fountain soon after construction, in the 1930s. (Photo: Friends of Thomas Lowry Park collection.)

O'Dell: 'We want residents' feedback.'

SWSAMP project manager O'Dell emphasizes that the planning staff want to hear from us about the proposals for all parks, including Thomas Lowry. The best way to do so is to go to the SWSAMP project page (see above). Under "Key Documents," click on "Park Concepts Survey."

"I guarantee that I, my three planning staffers, and our two consultants will read every comment submitted," O'Dell states. "We will give particular weight at this point in the process to residents who live near and use the parks they are commenting on."

While some may regard online surveys as a waste of time, O'Dell stresses that this one is not. "We wouldn't be asking for residents' feedback if we didn't want to know," she says.

People can email her at <codell@minneapolis-parks.org> or call (612) 230-6469 if they wish, but the best way to give feedback to her, the staff, and the consultants, O'Dell says, is through the online survey.

Cowgill supports rehabilitation campaign.

Jono Cowgill, District 4 Park Board commissioner, has voiced support for the Seven Pools fountain rehabilitation campaign. "Seven Pools is a beautiful fountain that should be kept operational. Similar to the Berger Fountain in Loring Park, it is an asset that needs additional support beyond the capacity of current MPRB capital improvement dollars," Cowgill says.

Since capital improvement funds are not immediately on the horizon for the fountain due to the racial equity lens used to allocate those dollars, Cowgill says he is "supportive of the Friends of Thomas Lowry Park raising private funds to rehabilitate the Seven Pools fountain. I look forward to working hand in hand with the neighborhood and the Friends of Thomas Lowry Park to make this rehabilitation a reality."

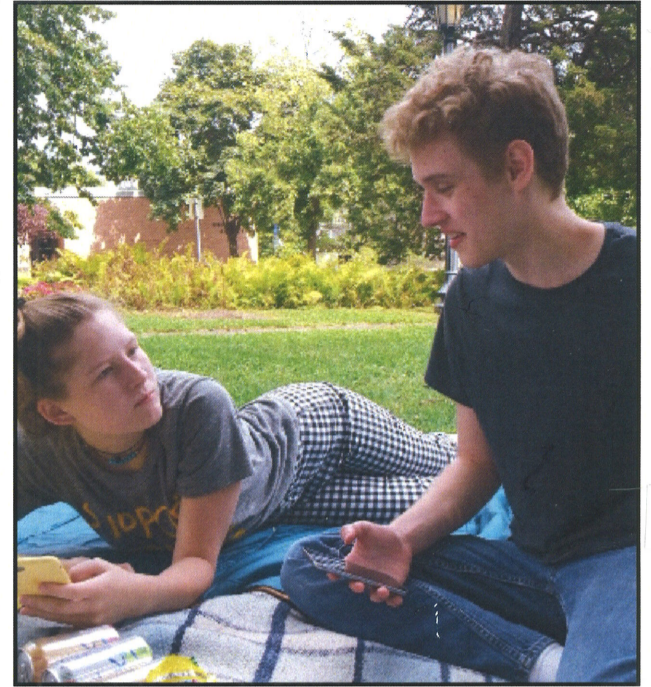
The full Park Board will hopefully vote on Wednesday, March 6, on whether to accept a donation from Friends of Thomas Lowry Park of a refurbished or restored fountain, according to Elizabeth Shaffer, FTLTP president.

Two important meetings: March 5, March 6.

A crucial part of the \$650,000 FTLTP goal is the \$300,000 in NRP funds which residents at the February 5 meeting, hosted by LHNA, voted to support. While Cowgill supports the FTLTP project in general, some residents are concerned that he expects the entire \$650,000 to be raised privately and will not support the plan if it includes NRP funds. "We can't do it without the NRP funds," Shaffer says.

Lowry Hill residents and Thomas Lowry Park supporters have two important meetings coming up. The first is the Tuesday, **March 5** LHNA board meeting (Kenwood Rec Center, 7 pm). O'Dell will present on the status of SWSAMP planning. Cowgill has been invited to attend.

The second, obviously, is the Wednesday, **March 6** Park Board meeting (Park Board HQ, 5 pm). Residents will be able to address the board during Open Time, which begins at 5:30 pm. Go to <minneapolis-parks.org/boardmeetings> to check the



Friends enjoying a picnic in Thomas Lowry Park. (Photo: Rhea Strom.)

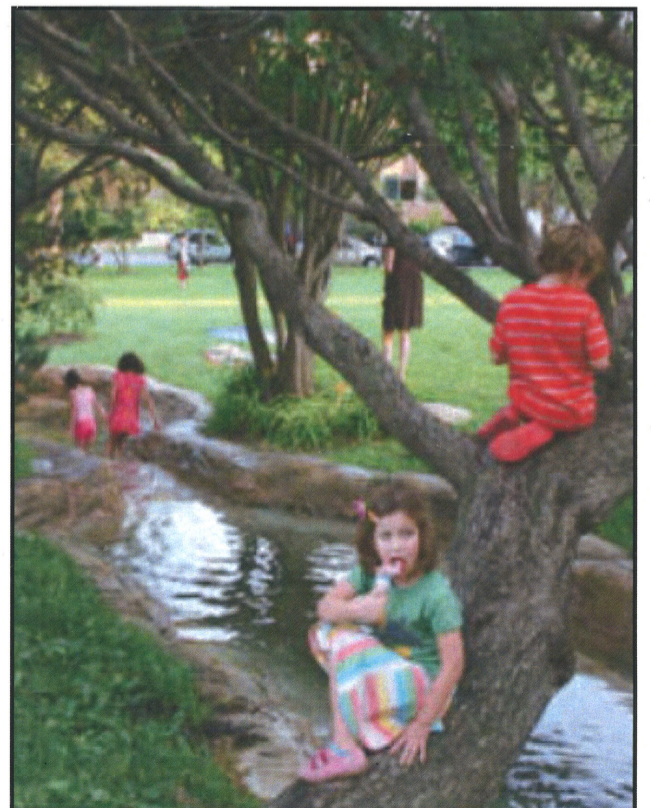
agenda for March 6. If the FTLTP donation item appears, show up and voice your support!

District 4 residents can also email Cowgill at <jono.cowgill@gmail.com.>

'The heart of Lowry Hill.'

We all love our parks -- it's in our civic DNA. But even among so many other great Minneapolis parks, Thomas Lowry Park stands out. "Visiting Thomas Lowry Park is like stepping back in time to a place where going a park was about relaxation, respite and beauty," observes Craig Wilson, LHNA and FTLTP board member.

"The heart of Lowry Hill is Thomas Lowry Park, and the soul of Thomas Lowry Park is the Seven Pools fountain" Wilson says. "There are generations of memories embedded in that landscape."



These youngsters enjoyed ice cream and a wade in Seven Pools during the July 2011 Lowry Hill Ice Cream Social. (Photo: Dorothy Childers.)