



# ParkNotes

*a semiannual newsletter published by the Lafayette Park Conservancy*

Issue 14

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## Boathouse Renovation Phase 2 Nears Completion

As *ParkNotes* goes to press, Phase Two of the Boathouse Restoration nears completion. The Near Southside Improvement Corporation is paying for the restoration and improvements with TIF funds. The new furnaces and ductwork are in place. The old men's restroom on the west side of the building was demolished. The area is now a catering kitchen complete with stainless steel sink and counter. There are lots of outlets for caterers to plug in their equipment.

Two new restrooms occupy the east side of the building. New circular windows and glass transoms above the exterior doors provide natural light. New drains and water lines were installed. Both restrooms will have handicapped accessible and regular facilities. New doors open into the meeting room and will be unlocked when the boathouse is rented.

A new patio overlooks the lake. The gracefully arched stairs will be covered in stone and have circular end caps on both sides. The stairs reflect the design found at Benton's statue. The most spectacular improvement is seen in the fenestrations. The round and multi-paned arched windows were reproduced using the original blueprints as a guide.



*View out toward the lake through the new entry door.*



*New windows as seen from the exterior.*

Details for renting the facility have not been created. Rentals will be handled by the Parks Department. Rental fees for the Boathouse and Cook Pavilion can only be used for capital improvements in Lafayette Park. The Boathouse will be dedicated this summer. The date will be posted on our website, [www.lafayettepark.org](http://www.lafayettepark.org).



*The partially finished catering kitchen sink area in the Boathouse.*

## President's Report by Ward Buckner

The 2003 Master Plan for Lafayette Square and the 2004 Master Plan for Lafayette Park were long on useful ideas but short on ways to pay for them. Chris Goodson realized that a TIF could take advantage of the Square's increasing commercial vitality as a way to pay for capital improvements. He persuaded the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Commission to create a TIF district covering some of the commercial property in the Square so the increase in taxes could be used to pay for the capital improvements. The Near Southside Improvement Corporation (NSIC) was formed to allocate the funds.

His idea was right. The money did come in. The neighborhood has Fountain Plaza, an improved Park Avenue, Chouteau Plaza, Vail Place connected to Park Avenue as well as new traffic calming and entrance features coming soon. The park has new curbs defining the Washington Statue circles, the Boathouse has a roof thanks in part to the NSIC. The full cost of the Boathouse renovation and new patio on the lakefront side are also being paid through the NSIC. We thank Chris and the NSIC for their patience and generosity.

Other projects are also receiving funding from other sources. The sale of bonds by the City this year to pay for capital projects in Forest Park and in other city parks will also provide funding for Lafayette Park. Our park's share of the proceeds is between \$360,000 and \$390,000. Alderman Phyllis Young and Parks Department Director Dan Skillman asked the LPC to give its list of priorities to the Parks Department for review.

The LPC Board decided that its top priority was to complete two major projects it started in the last two years. The Grotto Bridge will get a new railing and the rest of the pathway system will be upgraded and resurfaced. Repairing the fence was next on the list. Sections of the fence which were damaged years ago by falling trees will finally be straightened and missing spearpoints replaced. Leveling some of the bad sections of the perimeter sidewalk also made the list. We won't know how much of the bond sale proceeds will be left over for other projects until these projects have been completed and paid for. All of the capital projects should all be completed within three years.

## Lafayette Park Fence and Gates

Lafayette Park is unique in St. Louis, not only as the first city park, but it is the only park that is completely enclosed. Between 1869 and 1870 the city constructed the perimeter fence and gates at a cost of about \$54,000 (approximately \$1,000,000 in today's dollars). A fence was necessary to keep neighborhood livestock from grazing inside the park and ruining the grass and flower beds.

The scale of the fence is monumental—280 individual fence panels and posts stretch almost a mile around the park. The enclosure was designed by Francis Tunica, an architect and landscape designer that worked extensively for Henry Shaw at his botanical garden and at Tower Grove Park.



*One of the park entrance gates in need of repair.*

For 100 years the fence served the park well, but by the early 1970s it was in a serious state of disrepair. Many gates had been stolen, fence sections knocked over and hundreds of fence spear points were missing. In 1978 the fence underwent a complete restoration. Each panel was removed, missing spear points were replaced, and priming and painting was completed before the panels were remounted on new bases.

Today the fence is in fairly good condition. Currently the Conservancy has been working with the City Parks Department to have about 10 severely damaged panels repaired. At the same time a special conservancy fence committee is working to create a plan for future fence restoration projects—including repairing bases, replicating missing gates and parts and of course painting.



## Monarch Mania

The LPC wants to help Monarch butterflies by making the park a refuge, a safe place to rest their wings (and lay a bunch of eggs!) Tell every one you know to plant a few host plants, based on your site requirements you can choose from Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), and Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*). Check out this website for helpful info: [www.MonarchWatch.org](http://www.MonarchWatch.org).

## Garden Volunteers Spring Into Action



*Whitfield School student volunteers at work in the park.*

Lafayette Park is lucky to have a core of volunteer gardeners to maintain the many beautiful gardens in the park. Marilyn Lane tends the Washington Statue area while Susan Pinker-Dodd, Mark Kalk, Ward Buckner and Carolyn Willmore concentrate on the Grotto area. Rebecca Wright, Susan Linhardt, Vickie Houghton and Rob Forrest work in the Missouri rock garden. We are always looking for volunteer gardeners to join our ranks. Contact Susan at [doddsp@swbell.net](mailto:doddsp@swbell.net) or Carolyn at [cwillmore@gmail.com](mailto:cwillmore@gmail.com).

The Flora Conservancy of Forest Park is a great support for Lafayette Park gardens. Tender plants are overwintered in the City Greenhouse and bedding plants are grown from cuttings and seeds. Once a month during the growing season, Flora Conservancy volunteers and greenhouse workers spend a morning in Lafayette Park planting, weeding, mulching and pruning. What a great resource! Many thanks go to Anabeth Weil and Tina Rein for their continued support. In May, a group of students from Whitfield School worked alongside the Forest Park greenhouse volunteers. The 8 young men and one teacher weeded, mulched, divided and moved plants.



*Flora Conservancy volunteers working on Grotto hillside.*

## Park Pathways

Pathways in Lafayette Park will be repaired and resurfaced using funds generated by the sale of Park Bonds earlier this year. About three-fourths of the parks paths need to be worked on. Last year, the southeast quadrant paths were resurfaced thanks to a grant from the Darden family of restaurants via LongHorn Steakhouse.

To be addressed are the pothole riddled paths in the Grotto and around the main lake, as well as the Missouri Avenue entrance. Some historic paths will be reintroduced. The Grotto path will once again connect with the main pathway system. Excess asphalt will be removed from the old bandstand area. The gravel path from the Park House to Washington will be paved.

Recently completed drawings for these proposed paths were presented at the June 13 Lafayette Square Restoration Committee meeting. Feedback was solicited from the membership.



*A worn pathway in the Grotto area.*

## Rock & Roll Trivia Night

Elvis Presley and Gene Simmons of Kiss were spotted at St. Vincent DePaul's church hall on the Ides of March. The theme for the Lafayette Park Conservancy's fourth annual Trivia Night was Rock and Roll. We appreciate Rick Ponder suggesting the theme and writing many of the questions. His knowledge of rock and roll is encyclopedic.

Special thanks go to Karen Pecaut and Lynn Keay for chairing the Silent Auction, and to all our friends, neighbors and businesses for their generous donations.

The evening provided plenty of Rock and Roll trivia and camaraderie, and raised almost \$6,000 for LPC projects in the upcoming year.

Friends are saying,  
"Join the Conservancy!"

I/we want to join/renew at the following membership level.

- \$35 - Friend
- \$50 - Family
- \$75 - Botanist
- \$150 - Historian
- \$300 - Preservationist
- \$500 - Benton Society
- \$1000 - Lafayette Society

Name(s):

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Address:

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Phone:

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Memberships are valid for one year. The Lafayette Park Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. If your contribution is eligible for a matching gift, please include your company's matching form. Return with your check or money order to:

Lafayette Park Conservancy

2023 Lafayette Avenue

St. Louis, MO 63104

Or make your contribution on our website:

[www.lafayettepark.org](http://www.lafayettepark.org)

- I want to donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Boathouse Project.
- I want to donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Guns Project.



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