
commonground

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PLAYING FOR KEEPS

Neighborhood Parks
and Open Space



Parks in: Summit-University • Phillips • Whittier
Lyndale • Loring • Nokomis • Washburn-Fair Oaks

PLUS: Community Newspapers • Vacant Lot Playgrounds
& Gardens • South St. Anthony Park History • Reviews

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Developers often point to their allotments of "open space" in the midst of a housing development. Jack has found, however, that this anonymous space does little to help residents feel at home, or to help them feel concern for their property. He stresses the importance of an age-old method for helping residents feel involved with their homes: the backyard.

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In this section are the experiences of four different neighborhoods as they have grappled with the planning and use of park space. We hope these examples will provide valuable lessons for people working in other neighborhoods.

A small group of residents acting out of their self-interest on behalf of an entire neighborhood, and the inability of bureaucrats to give residents any straight information, helps to fragment a neighborhood, Steve concludes. His solution is a set of neighborhood councils to perform comprehensive neighborhood planning.

"Summit-University: Open Space for the People" by Kokayi Ampah, Pauline Eichten, and Jeff Frank

From an area in which exploitive land use has resulted in a surplus of vacant lots, residents have taken over the unused land for their own uses. Community gardens now augment Summit-University's food supply.

"Phillips: Pay Your Taxes and Take A Chance" by Marcy Shapiro and Lynn Hinkle

Although the Stewart Field Activities Council had worked hard with the Park Board to increase use of their park, they discovered that another bureaucracy confounded their plans. Marcy and Lynn also suggest neighborhood councils for local planning.

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To solve dissension between neighbors who were trying to obtain a park, the Whittier Coalition realized a single common goal was needed: to bring relief to the densely populated area. A description of how the Whittier neighbors set their course, and what resulted, appears in Lou's article.

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"Neighborhood Parks: Seven Historical Views" (a photo study)

If you glance at these pictures, you'll see many activities that used to happen in the parks, but don't anymore.

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"A Tour of Three Minneapolis Parks"
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You can learn alot about a community by looking at its parks, Lanny suggests. He writes a light survey here of Washburn-Fair Oaks, Loring, and Nokomis.

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How to convert a vacant lot into a vegetable garden. A plan by Kevin Iungerman. And, how to convert a vacant lot into a playground that encourages parents and children to work together, by Lynn Hinkle. And, a list of the community newspapers in Minneapolis and St. Paul. This is the first installment of our ongoing series that will review community media sources.

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A new bike coop,
A community development corporation,
A new restaurant, and
A new photo collective.

letters to the editors

I have read your first issue of Common Ground, & I feel the production staff has worked long hard hours to obtain all the interesting information on the different neighborhoods of Minneapolis & St. Paul.

As I was reading, my mind wandered back to years gone by, as I have lived in three of the neighborhoods mentioned in this spring issue. One was Skid Row, & only a person who has spent time there & have got to know the people really knew what it was like. May I express my view points, as I remember Skid Row.

For three months of my life I lived on Skid Row, with its many bars, cheap hotels, & the people. Many who have never known any of these bums, hookers, winos etc. really knew why these people came there, or realized that they were humans with feelings.

I was not a bum, I held a job, I was not a hooker, it just so happened I was in love with a man who worked in one of the cafes on Skid Row, & this is how I got to know the people.

We were a united group, once you were in, you were always protected & safe, as long as you lived by the rules. There rules were to help one another, all they had were each other.

How fondly I remember a half breed Indian man, who I felt was one of the finest gentlemen I ever knew, yes he had a problem, he was a wino, but many times he would come to me & say help me to get off the stuff. It would take three days of talking & encouraging him, but soon he would, get a job setting pins in a bowling alley, go to Goodwill Store & buy a fresh set of clothes, keep himself neat & clean & for a few months he would feel like a member of society once again. His pattern would fall back to his old ways, many times, & we'd start all over again, but Jack was one man, who never swore in front of a lady, & always held high respect for my husband & I.

As for the bums, I knew many of them. Some were old men who had lost their wives, their children drifted off, & their loneliness drew them to the Avenue (as we called it). Many were dirty, I agree, as they slept in box cars, park benches, many covered with newspaper to keep them warm, but they enjoyed a friendly "Hello" or just the thought that somebody cared enough to say a few words to

them. I always felt they were some mothers son.

As for the hookers, there were many types. Some just out to turn a trick for the money angle, & some who went their way because of things that happened early in their lives to change them from being a respectable woman into the life they led. Lynn, once told me why she was on the avenue, she had been raped when she was 12 years old, her child was raised as her brother, & as she grew older she turned into a hooker to get even with the man who did this to her, yet Lynn was a person who would give the shirt off her back to anyone she liked or that she knew needed help, she'd even turn a trick to help a hungry family. Another hooker Joan was slightly retarded, & this was the only way of life she knew, yet somewhere along the line she met a man who treated her like a lady & married her, & now 25 years later she is raising 3 children, interested in school activities, such as PTA & is sending her children to Sunday School.

Have you ever been in a flop house? I have & it was a strange experience. In front of the hotel was a few really nice rooms, mine was clean, had a nice bed & a dresser with a large mirror, & clean linen once a week, then as you walked back, there were the trick rooms, & the further you walked towards the back, the worse it got. These cubicles were dirty, but at least a place for a guy with 50¢ in his pocket to get in out of the rain.

Yes, Skid Row is gone, but I never can feel that all these people were bad. I have to agree there were many of the drifters who created many problems, they'd roll the first one they saw, but I feel many of the people who were there, were like a little community all their own, looking out for their neighbors. They too were people of Common Ground.

This letter was sent to us anonymously. We normally won't print anonymous letters but decided it was important to share this perspective on Skid Row.

Dave Rosheim, the author of the article on Skid Row, is still researching. He needs to get in touch with the author of this letter in order to hear more of her viewpoints--we hope she will call Dave, either through Common Ground, or at his home phone, 827-1149.

overview

by Lynn Hinkle

Use of open space can either build or undermine a sense of community in urban neighborhoods. If open space is available to meet residents' needs for both larger plots of land (parks) to take quiet walks or to play softball, and smaller plots at home (backyards) to visit with friends or tend a garden, it's possible for a sense of community to grow. If, however, available vacant lots are left unused or if open space areas are depleted by developers, then a neighborhood's sense of community will be undermined. Articles in this issue of Common Ground discuss how neighborhoods are developing and using larger plots of land and suggest ways to use vacant lots and develop residential space to meet neighbors' needs.

Using Open Space To Build Community

Three articles in the "Parks and Neighborhoods" section describe how residents in the Phillips, Whittier and Lyndale neighborhoods in Minneapolis have struggled to obtain and use park space. These articles describe how these neighborhoods have dealt with fragmenting bureaucracies, resident conflicts, and complex neighborhood changes. We feel that the experience of these three neighborhoods may help other Twin Cities' neighborhoods to initiate or continue plans for development and use of neighborhood parks.

The "Resources" section of the magazine discusses two ways for neighborhoods to use vacant lots (land waiting to be developed)--adventure playgrounds and vegetable gardens. Beyond describing the advantages of providing food for residents and a space for children to exercise imaginations constructively, both articles describe how these projects provide neighbors with means to work together and share experience. The fourth article in the "Parks and Neighborhoods" section on the Summit-University area in St. Paul describes how gardening on reclaimed vacant land is helping to reweave the fabric of community in that area.

Open Space That Undermines

The article by Jack Cann talks about how residents' needs for private space outdoors (a backyard) are consistently disregarded by housing developers. Further, Jack suggests

how residents could plan higher density housing to meet their own needs for open space. Charlie Warner describes how Heller-Segal have provided a miniscule elevated concrete park to meet Tower residents' needs for open space. These articles make it clear that unless residents' take swift measures to insure private open space, developers will make the concept of the backyard obsolete and similarly the creation of parks absurd.

What all of this means is that residents need to become more conscious of using open space to build a sense of community in their neighborhood. There is no need to rely on fragmenting bureaucracies or profiteering developers for that consciousness.

This is not to say that bureaucracies and developers have no place in park planning, rather that they should work to carry out plans that are made at the local level. Metro and city-wide agencies could purchase equipment and supplies, handle park maintenance, provide communication sources to neighborhood groups (both for bringing in new ideas on park planning and for fostering conflict between neighborhoods), and provide technical assistance for refining neighborhood plans. These services could be made available much more economically on a regional scale than on a local scale.

However, the specific uses of resources can best be determined locally when their use can be tailored to local needs. How to use equipment, when to buy new equipment, deciding how to use open space, and how to develop parks, all are examples of decisions that can best be made locally. Many articles suggest the neighborhood council as a means to make these local decisions.

Neighborhood Councils

These neighborhood groups would develop their own criterion for land use, including open space, and accept or reject land use plans for the neighborhood according to these criteria. City or metro-wide agencies and private developers would have to submit land use plans, including effects on other neighborhoods, far in advance of a planned development to insure approval by a neighborhood council.

Neighborhoods that are empowered in this way will obviously have an important opportunity to build a sense of community together. As residents work together to create plans and see their fruition, and as residents enjoy open space that they have suited to their own needs, much stronger personal ties can develop.

Planning for Personal Open Space

by Jack Cann

Why "Parks" Are Important

A park is not a backyard. Obvious enough, but so what? The distinction is about to become pretty important in the face of a widespread planning mentality which holds that, given the coming population crunch and soaring urban land costs, backyards have become luxuries which society as a whole can no longer tolerate. This mentality, as reflected in comprehensive plans, zoning laws, and redevelopment programs gives developers the justification and the tools they need to emphasize construction of rental units with "amenities" rather than ownership and "open space" rather than backyards. The result is a central city population which is increasingly transient and uninvolved in community affairs.

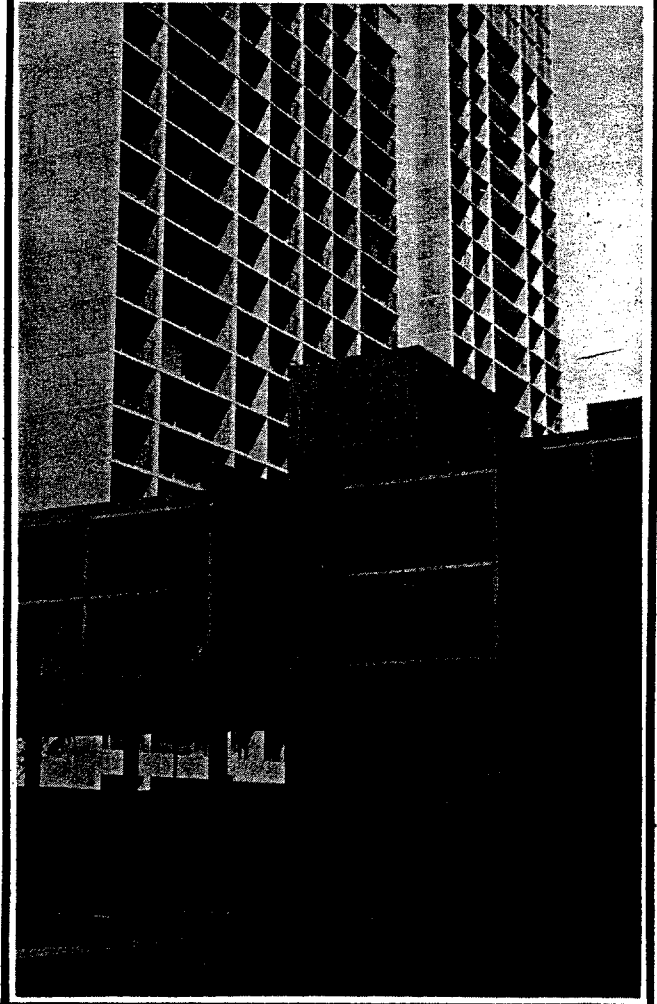
Since a developer's main investment is the cost of the land and since his returns all depend on the value of what's built on the land, the way to maximize profits is to maximize density. Planners aren't ones to challenge "economic facts of life" like these but they do pride themselves on their concern for "meeting human needs." Hence their concern for providing open space and other amenities along with high density housing.

Their concern for "open space" is laudable, perhaps, but in the developers' hands

it quickly becomes absurd. For instance, a few years ago a group calling themselves Concerned Builders proposed amendments to the Minneapolis zoning code involving a series of "density bonuses" -- the right to build at higher densities than normally allowed -- if certain amenities were provided. They proposed density bonuses for building next to such "open spaces" as cemeteries and freeways!

The planners were appalled. They had in mind green vistas, space for children to play, pleasant places to relax and catch some sun -- in short, parks. Backyards are a middle class hangup we can no longer afford, they argue, but human beings do need green vistas. So high density housing ought to be built in park-like settings.

What grassy open space does exist on the Cedar-Riverside Stage I plaza is unrelated to any of the dwelling units. It is therefore totally public in character (as are the hallways inside). There is no way that the highrise tenants can develop feelings of ownership about their environment. Photos by Ken Meter.



The results of this more liberal interpretation of "open space" are developments like the infamous Pruitt-Igoe public housing in St. Louis -- 17 highrises arranged, more or less at random, within a large open space. The reasons that Pruitt-Igoe was dynamited as unlivable when less than 20 years old has a lot to do with the important differences between parks and backyards.

Why Backyards are Important

Backyards are under the control of their residents (you can't plant a garden in a public park; park police can't tell you not to play frisbee in your back yard). They are private or semi-private. Their use is intimately related to the use of the dwelling which they adjoin. Most importantly, people have a fundamentally different feeling about their backyard than about a park, for a backyard is one very important element in giving a dwelling unit a feeling of "home". This feeling is more a function of the physical space itself, and the degree to which the resident can influence what goes on there, than of whether the home represents a significant cash investment.

Every recent North American study done on housing choice has shown that nearly everyone has an ideal image of what a "home" ought to be -- a free standing house with ground attached. In general, the further their actual living environment deviates from this image, the more people will tend to perceive it and treat it as an institutional environment -- one which is merely a temporary stopping-off place and which they have little reason to show concern for.

Disappearing Community

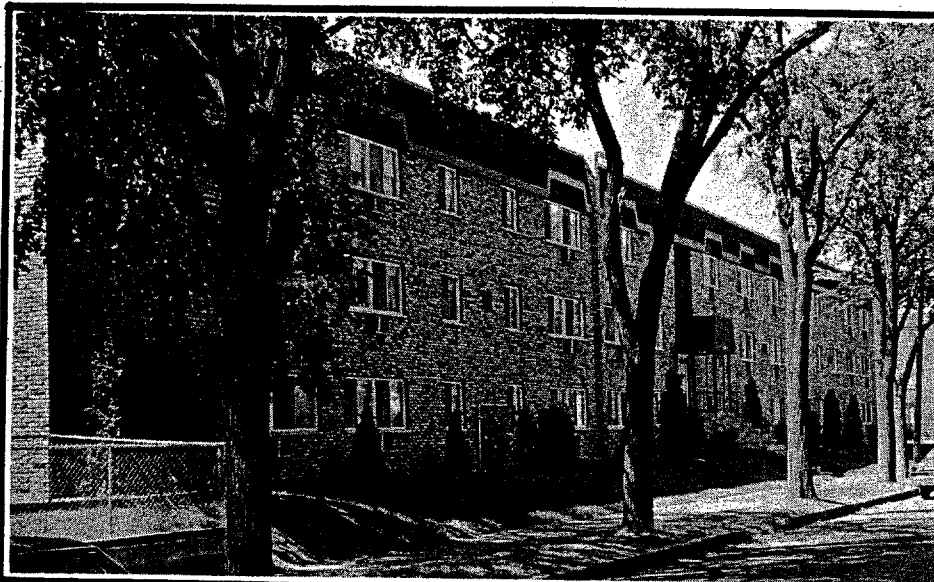
Residents of housing projects do tend to be highly transient. They tend to put on "public faces" as soon as they step outside their apartment doors. With no reason for them to feel much concern about upkeep, the buildings run down quickly. The tenants, isolated and anonymous, are easy prey for oppressive leases, snooping caretakers, and rent-gouging absentee landlords.

This kind of housing is becoming increasingly significant in Minneapolis. Between 1960 and 1970, the city lost about 14,500 units in single family homes, 2-, 3-, and 4-plexes. It gained nearly 11,000 units in larger apartment buildings. The phenomenon of walk-up apartment buildings replacing entire blocks of single family homes and du-

"... A backyard is a very important element in giving a dwelling unit the feeling of home."

plexes has become a common one in inner-city neighborhoods. Walk-up developers seldom give any consideration to open space at all, let alone semi-private open space that's related to the apartments.

Large-scale developments, like those in Cedar-Riverside, Loring Park, and on the Burlington Northern property downtown, will become more and more important as suppliers of housing in the '70s. Cedar-Riverside, the forerunner of these super developments in Minneapolis, will have far less open space



This walkup apartment at 26th and Harriet is typical of those disrupting inner-city neighborhoods. It was built by Zollie Baratz, who has developed over 1,000 units of such housing. The anonymous nature of its open space discourages any feeling on the part of residents that their apartments are "home." In fact, the populations of most buildings turn over almost completely each year.

per person than any other new community in the country. Worse, the emphasis on highrise housing makes it impossible to relate plots of ground to individual apartment units or small groups of units.

Building Community

There is little question that central cities will have to become more dense. But there is also no question that this does not mean that "backyard" types of space will have to disappear. Most four-plexes, for instance, have spaces that all their tenants can relate to as a shared backyard. There is no reason that walk-up apartment buildings can't be built as a series of 4-plexes or 6-plexes, with a number of vertical stairwells rather than long internal corridors. This type design, in combination with appropriate landscaping can result in a series of semi-private yards shared by 4-6 units, even at relatively high densities.

Having usable private or semi-private space intimately related to an apartment can help enormously to give that apartment a feeling of "home". And a home, unlike a "housing unit," is worth maintaining and fighting for. The sharing with other residents of space which each feels is part of their home can transform an anonymous apartment building into a community.

This is precisely why developers, even those who want to market amenity-loaded buildings, should avoid this type of design like the plague. The second-to-last thing any sane landlord wants is to have his tenants feel that his building is really their home. And the last thing is to have them develop into a community with enough clout to make that feeling a reality.

This small section of the site plan of the proposed Findley Place housing illustrates the possibility of providing private outdoor space even in an apartment complex. In addition to these private courts, the plans feature semi-private entrance paths shared by small clusters of units and a larger semi-private central court. These physical elements are designed to encourage residents to consider the development theirs -- that's important since the housing will be totally controlled by the people who live there.

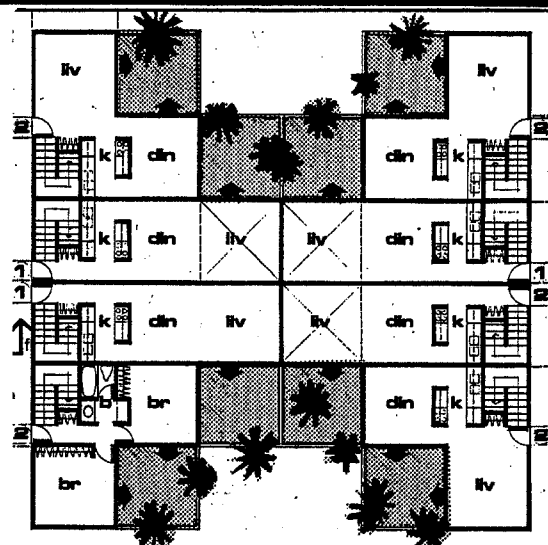
Some Lessons

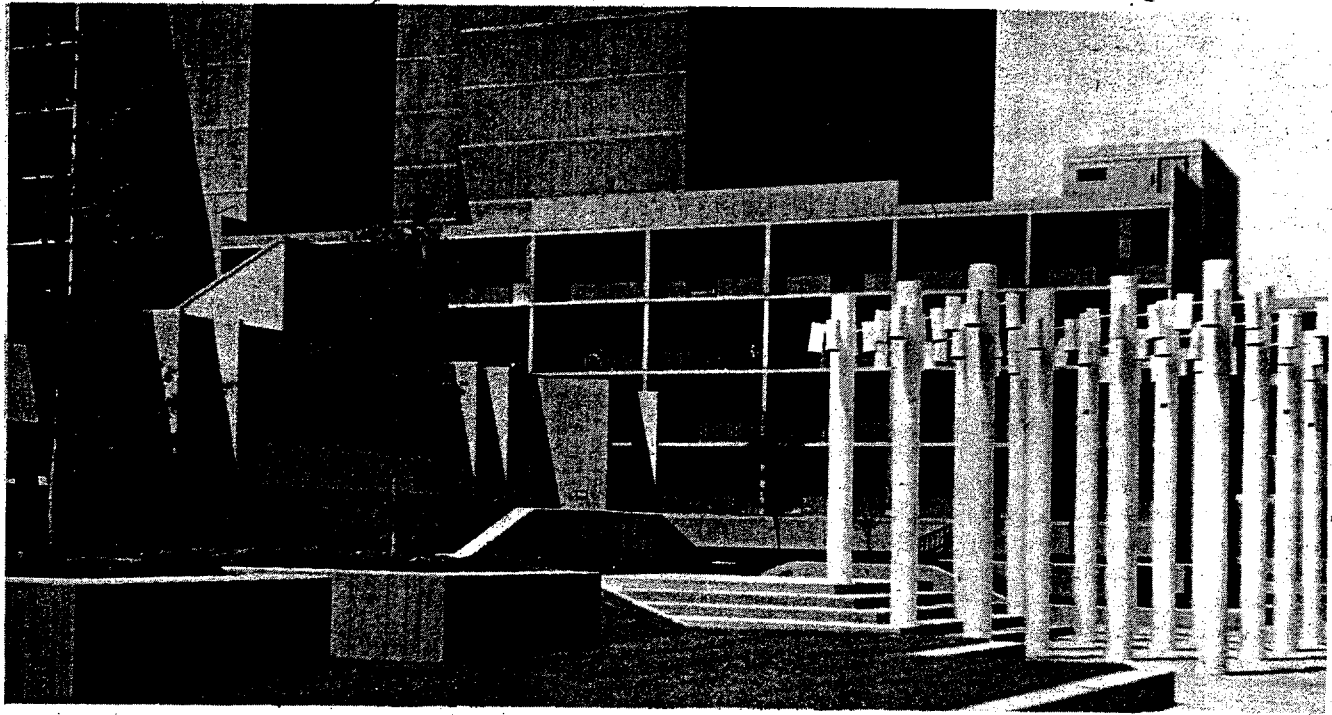
These differences between "backyards" and parks have some very important implications for the way in which housing is built and neighborhoods are redeveloped. First, neighborhoods built up with single family homes and duplexes are irreplaceable resources. It's certainly possible to build at higher densities in ways that will encourage residents' proprietary feelings. But buildings with smaller numbers of units are still the best solution to this problem. A society toys, only at great peril, with scarce resources which represent a time-tested solution to an important human problem.

Second, highrises are generally a highly inappropriate building type when rebuilding ought to occur. Highrises inherently discourage the development of feelings of concern and involvement among their residents. Buildings whose physical designs do encourage those feelings can be built at reasonably high densities.

Third, control of redevelopment and production of housing is far too important to be left in the hands of planners and profit making developers. Developers have every reason not to build living environments that will catalyze resident concern and involvement. And our planners have demonstrated again and again that they're more interested in providing developers with profits than with meeting human needs.

Jack Cann has worked for the Minnesota Tenants Union, and now for the Cedar-Riverside Environmental Defense Fund (CREDF). He is also a board member for the Findley Place Housing Corporation.





Cedar Riverside's Plaza In the Sky

by Charlie Warner

What Minneapolis park is seventeen feet above the ground, made entirely of concrete, virtually surrounded by high rise buildings, and cost nearly a million tax dollars? The answer is the "plaza in the sky" in the middle of Heller-Segal's Cedar Square West.

The "park" is actually a slab deck covering the central parking garage for the New-Town-in-Town project. Designers and architects call this kind of space "hardedge" which aptly describes its character. The major functions of the plaza are to provide a place to walk for the tenants of Cedar Square West and to give the private developers of the project a value-adding amenity to their real estate. As such, the benefits of a million public dollars, both state and federal, are primarily accruing to already wealthy high-rise investors and not to the public at large. As an added fillip, snow removal, maintenance, and police protection must be provided by the Minneapolis taxpayers since the whole area has been dedicated to the City.

The question of open space in the Cedar-Riverside New Town has been a long-term source of controversy. As proposed by Heller-Segal and approved by the Federal Government (Dept. of HUD), the project has no open space plan at all. HUD went along with \$24 million of guaranteed financing on the basis of no more than vague suggestions that University of Minnesota West Bank intramural athletic fields be counted as open

space for Heller-Segal's tenants and that more "plaza's in the sky" would be incorporated into future stages of the development. At this point, the University has not committed itself to this scheme -- their fields are already over-used and the developers have still not presented an open space plan -- nearly three years after approval.

The extremely high density projected for Cedar-Riverside (30-35,000 people housed on less than 90 acres) should call for added emphasis on providing recreational and natural open space to make up for the lack of built-in elbow room and back yards which occur in less dense single family neighborhoods. Instead the developers are already underway with work on the second stage, the Riverbluff development, which is projected to consume a significant portion of the open space along the Bluff with more high-rises and parking ramps.

This insensitivity of the Cedar-Riverside developers to the needs of providing recreational and natural open space is the result of profits coming before people. By any established standards, the Heller-Segal project is woefully lacking in open space; the Federal and State money granted for open space development has to this point instead been sunk into a plaza amenity which adds value to their property but adds little if anything to meeting the needs of the people who must live there.

Lyndale: Overcoming

Steve's chronicle of park development in the Lyndale neighborhood stops short of the park. However, his description and analysis of this and other development issues in

by Steve Moore-Miles

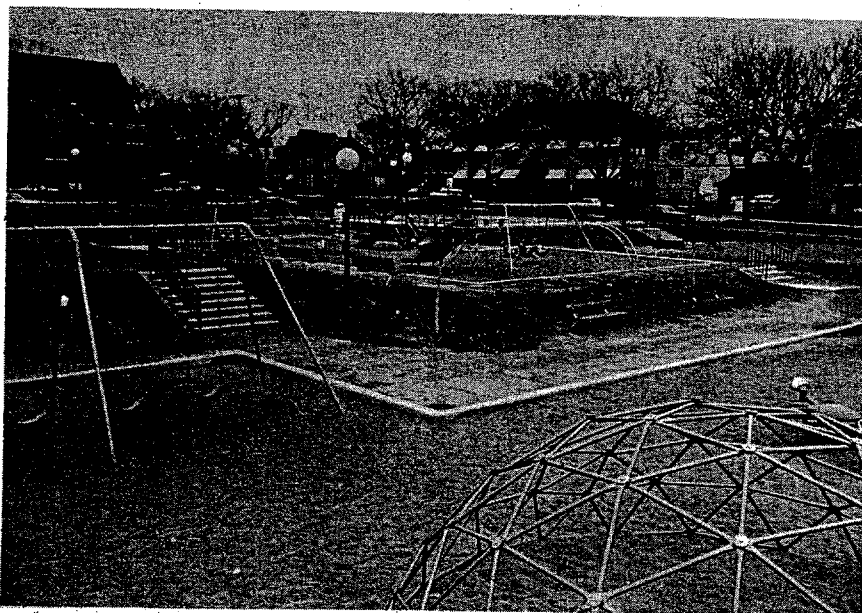
The Lyndale Neighborhood, enclosed by 35W, Lake Street, Lyndale Avenue and 36th Street, is composed of fairly well maintained older homes, a senior citizens' high rise, some two-story walk ups, middle-income people with lots of children. Ten years ago, prior to 35W's dissection of the community, we were part of a larger neighborhood served by the once active Lakewood Portland Association. This article describes the formation of a new neighborhood association concerned with the issue of locating a new park.

Land for Bryant Square at 31st and Bryant Avenue South was purchased by the Minneapolis Park Board in 1904. The park's original name, the 8th Ward Park, indicates the vast area this small park was intended to serve. In 1928 to 1929 Bryant Square facilities were improved under the Elwell Law, which allowed residents in an area to be benefited by park improvements by taxing themselves for said improvements. Even then Bryant Square was able to serve a fairly large portion of South Minneapolis because the population density was still relatively

low. Today, however, even though 35W has reduced the park's service to only two neighborhoods, Calhoun and Lyndale, the higher population density makes Bryant Square's services ridiculously insufficient. A look at these two neighborhoods on the map shows Bryant Square (A) just outside the northwest corner of the Lyndale neighborhood and close to the old Lyndale School site at 33rd and Lyndale (B). The old Lyndale Elementary School was razed three years ago and replaced by a new Lyndale School at 34th and Grand Avenue (C).

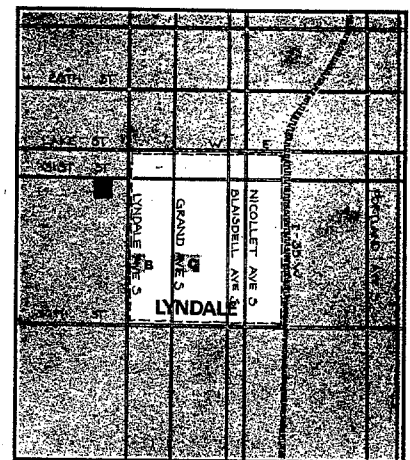
The Park Board has now designated our area "park deficient". This term applies to areas that are scheduled for major park improvements. With the classification of our neighborhood as "park deficient", a group of people living near the old school site saw an opportunity to have that site made into a park. They organized to pressure a reluctant School Board to sell the land to the Park Board.

Meanwhile rumors had been circulating for several weeks that a new park would involve condemning housing near the new Lyndale Elementary School, but nobody knew of any con-



Bryant Square after recent improvements.

MPB Photo



- A Bryant Square Park
- B Old Lyndale School site
- C New Lyndale School site

"Park Deficiency"

Park Board's recent decision to acquire the old Lyndale Elementary School site for a the Lyndale neighborhood remain current and provocative.

crete action. One afternoon in February a woman living near the new school received a phone call from a person who announced, "Your house will be bulldozed; come to a meeting tonight to find out why."

About forty neighbors living near Lyndale Elementary School, many of whom were quite upset, came to the meeting. It was convened by the group trying to get the old school site made into a park. They explained that the Park Board was considering construction of a park near the new school, which would require demolition of several homes. The way for us to save our area from destruction was to join them in working for the old school site park.

The balance of opinion at this meeting was that the old school site was too close to the Bryant Square Park and too far from the central and eastern parts of the neighborhood. Several people suggested options to the old school site and the undesirability of removing an entire block from the city tax roles. These comments were rudely dismissed by the conveners, thereby evoking considerable resentment against them. More discussion somewhat mollified those feelings.

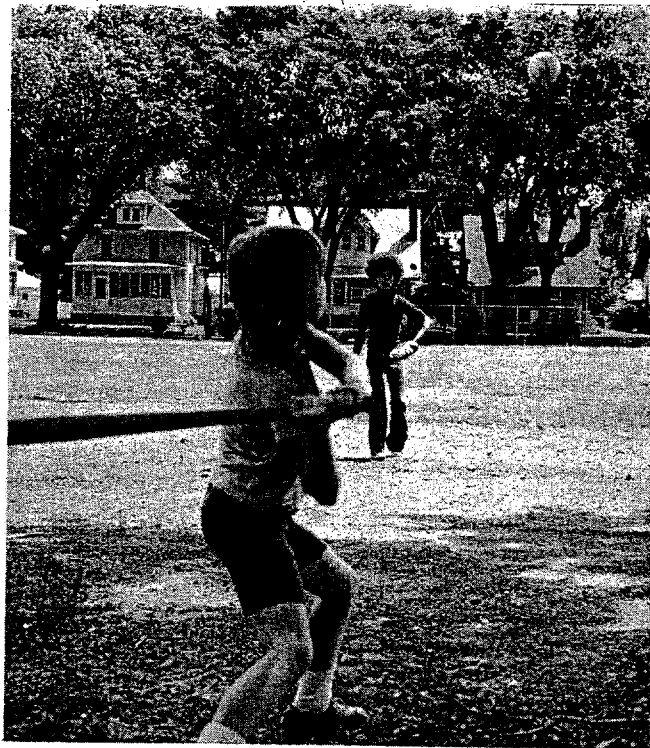
Conflicting Information — Confusing Issues

The meeting motivated me to go to the Mayor's open house with questions. The Mayor's open house is a good time. Free coffee. His Honor himself sees that those present get to air their concerns with him or one of his top assistants. I spoke with a Mr. Fulton who seemed genuinely opposed to the destruction of any homes but also unaware of anything the School Board or Park Board were up to. Neither the Park Board, School Board nor Mayor's office have any regular communications with each other. This would seem to make coordinated planning by these three groups extremely difficult.

Mr. Fulton called me back and said that a decision was months away on this issue and that I should not get upset. One week later a Model City's representative called on a home owner near the new school and said that the closing of her Model Cities subsidized mortgage and condemnation of her property for a park was virtually certain.

Aldermen, Park and School Board people from the "park deficient" areas together with some planning people had a meeting to discuss how to remedy the park deficient situations. I was unaware of this public meeting. A poll, funded by a small government grant, compiled by the make-the-old-site-a-park group was presented. The poll showed moderately strong support for use of the vacant school site as a park rather than, for example, a fast-food restaurant, junk yard, or housing. However, polling was limited to the immediate vicinity of the old school site, including some houses adjacent to Bryant Square Park, but ignored the more than 60% of the Lyndale neighborhood which is the furthest from any park.

Our most recent neighborhood meeting elected officers to what is now called the Lyndale Neighborhood Association. We were informed that our petition, the wording of which was decided at a poorly publicized meeting, was going well. Alderman Ford announced that any person that we nominated that night would serve on the subcommittee of CLIC, Capital Long-Range Improvement Council, which deals with park proposals.



The old Lyndale Elementary School site. KM

... citizens have no effective channel within government for expressing community concerns. Without grass-roots involvement, citizens are forced to be reactive to city development rather than creative of it.

CLIC determines budget priorities for city capital improvements such as parks. The members of the four standing subcommittees of CLIC are nominated by City Council. There was no public notice that this relatively important post was to be filled at this meeting except that the old site group was informed 6 hours prior to the meeting. One of them was elected to this post.

Sorting Out the Issues

Most citizens' groups form in their own self-interest. A few form in order to discuss and then determine what those specific interests are. After the goal is achieved, a group may redefine its interests and continue as an organized force; sometimes the group disbands when there is no longer a common interest.

Our Lyndale Association started as a group of neighbors living near the old school site who formed specifically to have that site made into a park. This group did not adequately consider the problems of becoming an organization.

First, they were late in involving the residents of the central and eastern portions of the Lyndale neighborhood who are ten blocks from the closest park and understandably indifferent, even hostile, to a new neighborhood park nine blocks away. A new park, however, will be the last for many years in this area. How best to remedy the 'park deficient' status of our neighborhood has not really been enough of an issue with the organization.

Second, by virtue of their earlier work, the initial group was able to function seemingly well enough without involving the entire neighborhood. Even after the Lyndale Association was tentatively created, important meetings and actions were not properly publicized. The fear of being railroaded and the current indifference of the eastern third of our neighborhood will have to be resolved as a unified neighborhood organization is formed. And these things can be resolved.

Third, it is inordinately difficult to get straight information from the city government about the status of planning, apparently because of the fragmentation within the bureaucracy. It is inexcusable that the Mayor's office should say that nothing is being planned, while Model Cities is at the same time talking about virtual condemnation.

The quality of life in the neighborhood should be the measure of the success of city government--that is, schools, parks, police, street repair, to name a few, should all serve the people in the neighborhoods. And, yet, city government is not organized in terms of neighborhoods, but in terms of functions (such as the School Board). Currently, these city-wide function groups have no way of planning together at the neighborhood level. The citizens have no effective channel within government for expressing community concerns. Without this grass-roots level of involvement, citizens are put in the position of being reactive to city development rather than creative of it.

One possible solution to this situation would be neighborhood councils, consisting of volunteers elected from all parts of a neighborhood. The function of such a board would be to submit and receive, as well as evaluate, plans for neighborhood development. This would provide a legitimate place for the city's function groups to meet together publicly with the people to coordinate planning. This board would have powers to coordinate planning.

The aim of city government should be to improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods, according to the needs seen by the people in the community. For this to be fulfilled, the city must provide a legitimate place for citizens' groups in the city government.

Steve Moore-Miles is a resident of the Lyndale neighborhood in Model Cities and is currently a medical student at the University of Minnesota.

Summit-University: Open Space for the People

by Kokayi Ampah, Pauline Eichten, Jeff Frank

Open space means something different to each individual, depending on where they live. To some people open space is a place to play ball or swim; to others it means a shady place to sit; and to others yet it is a vacant space between buildings. In the Summit-University community of St. Paul, open space isn't a well planned green space or a carefully preserved park. Instead, open space is a random pattern of vacant lots which figure into a cycle of exploitation by speculators, planners and real estate brokers.

These people view land as a commodity, something to be bought and sold in order to maximize profits, rather than a community where people

comes.

The recent history of Summit-University could be considered a classic example of profit oriented people using the land and then temporarily discarding it when it no longer serves their economic purposes. It's also an example of people's guerilla land use, reclaiming vacant land and returning it to communal use.

Exploiting the Land

In the post World War II period, housing was in short supply in St. Paul. Returning GI's and their families placed a demand that could not be met by construction alone. Because demand was so high, it became profitable for land owners to engage in speculative practices.

These practices included buying large tracts of land to resell at a profit; subdividing the large old homes that abound in Summit-University; and returning little or no money, in the form of maintenance, to the properties that they owned. These practices led to many properties deteriorating, while at the same time absentee landlords were making a large profit.

Discarding the Land

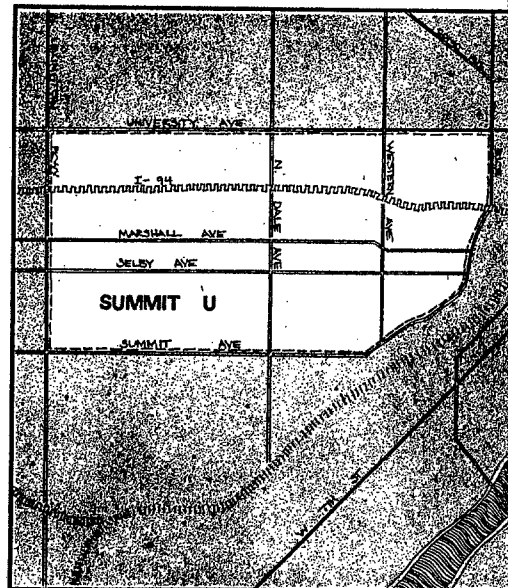
This type of land exploitation can't go on forever. Depreciation allowances, which allow a landlord to deduct building maintenance expenses from his/her income taxes, on-

ly last twenty years. After that point a landlord usually wants to dump the property back on the market. Because the property has usually been poorly maintained, there may not be a willing buyer. Then the government enters in.

In Summit-University, the first phase of government intervention was building the freeway. By 1964, I-94 was complete and had accomplished two purposes;

1. Destruction of the deteriorating Rondo Street area, and
2. Pushing more people into the rest of the community, creating increased demand on available housing. Thus an already low vacancy rate lowers even further, allowing landlords to raise rents and giving people little option but to put up with it. Almost 400 dwelling units were destroyed and over 1200 people displaced by the freeway alone.

But it took urban renewal to create the type of open space that exists in Summit-University now. Urban renewal, through its chief agent the Housing and Redevelopment Authority, had the distinct function of acquiring deteriorating property from



Summit-U's streets and alleys, not shown on this map, crisscross 40% of the neighborhood.

Summit-U is an example of people's guerilla land use, reclaiming vacant land and returning it to communal use.

absentee slumlords. One program alone, called hardship acquisition, bought 303 housing units 200 of them purchased from non-resident owners. Through this program and others, HRA managed to tear down some 1400 units of housing, units discarded by land profiteers, and displace an additional 6,000 people.

The open space created by urban renewal is slated for redevelopment by private developers, starting the land exploitation cycle anew. In the meantime, the people who live in this community have been using the land to meet their own needs. One of the main uses this land has been put to is urban farming.

The Urban Farmers Union

Borrowing an idea from the Black Muslims, who have been advocating "doing for self" for many years, Inner City Youth League started their first garden plot on the corner of Dayton and Victoria in 1969. Now in their fifth year of gardening, the third year at Selby and Dale, ICYL has been joined by an increasing number of community groups and individuals in reclaiming the land discarded by the exploiters. This type of guerilla land use has been growing and now includes the American Indian Movement, the Selby Food Coop, the Institute for African Education and the 4-H. These groups and many more individuals have formed an Urban Farmers Union to coordinate their activities.

It's necessary to negotiate with HRA, which owns the vacant land, to obtain the use of the land for gardening. HRA leases the land for a six month period from May 1 to October 31, for \$1 a month. There is also a \$15-\$25 damage deposit, which is refundable at the end of the six month period. Generally, HRA has been responsive to groups who want to use the land for gardening -- except when they have a private developer lined up to begin building on the land in question.

Composition of the soil on this land is of poor quality. After the lots are levelled, the city covers them with fill. This means hauling topsoil and manure; otherwise it takes around three years to rebuild the land in order to grow food on it. The Urban

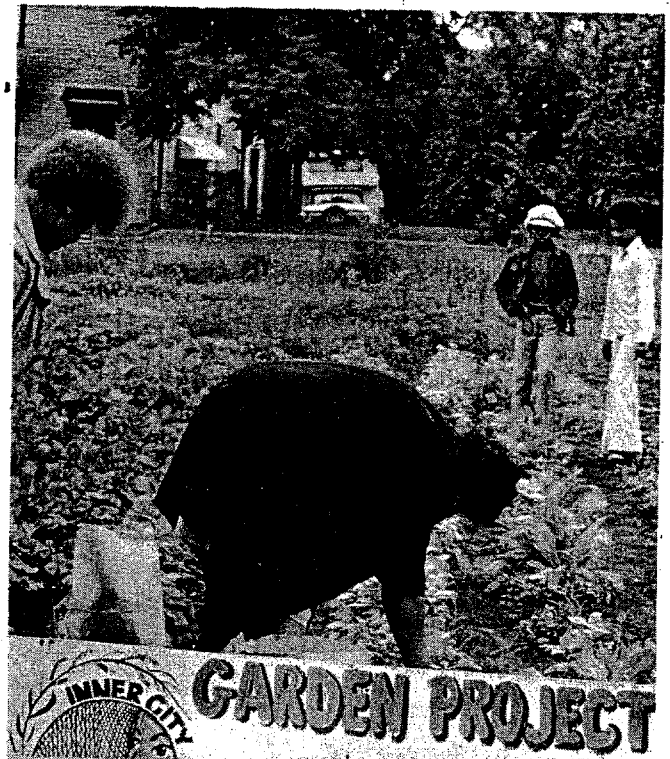
Farmers Union has cooperated in trucking in the necessary topsoil or compost for the scattered garden sites.

There have been a number of donations to the urban farmers. Northrup King has donated all the seed for the last 3-4 years. St. Paul Rent-All, on Rice Street, donated the use of a tractor for one day to turn the soil on the gardens. This tractor ordinarily rents for \$40 a day. Other organizations, including Sears and Wards, have made small donations to help the urban farming effort.

Urban Farmers Union hopes to start an Urban Farmers Market in the community as an outlet for their produce in the future. They are also in the process of forming alliances with farmers outside the city, who would also supply the Urban Farmers Market.

Diversity and Common Ground

The makeup of the people living in Summit-University has been important to the growth of the urban farming movement. There is a diversity of people in this community, Blacks, Native Americans, Chicanos and Euro-Americans, yet underlying that diversity is



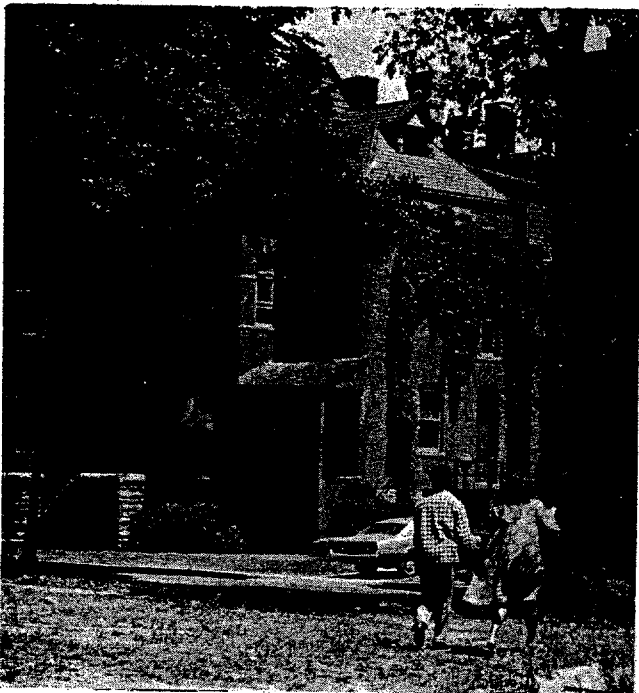
... the people who live in this community have been using the land to meet their own needs. One of the main uses has been urban gardening.

a common agricultural background. Many are first and second generation migrants from rural areas who came to the city looking for better jobs, education, etc. Each of these groups has become increasingly urbanized and alienated from their agricultural roots.

Primarily a low to moderate income area, over 60% of the population of Summit-University are tenants, or land poor. Because of their "failure" to inherit or amass enough capital, they are punished by having to pay more for their basic human needs, like housing, food and health care, and getting poorer quality.

Through the Urban Farmers Union, groups which ordinarily wouldn't have gotten together have begun to recognize their common ground. With the present vacant land in Summit-University, it could be possible to feed half this community. Through a communal gardening project it is possible to reweave the fiber of community togetherness between urban dwellers. The seed has been planted.

Beyond gardening, there are many other needs for people's open space in this community. Children's play areas, green areas



Summit-U residents pass through a vacant lot on Selby Avenue. The Photo Collective

for sitting and communing with nature, community gathering spots for music, dancing and visiting are sadly lacking in Summit-University. Over 40% of the land area in this community is used for streets and allies. Reclaiming some of this land for use as open space would still allow for using the larger tracts of vacant land to construct housing, another basic need which is not being met by the planners. But before we can move on to create such uses in our community, we must consolidate and gain control over what we have created so far.

We no longer have to worry about how to use open space; the people have developed and are developing uses that meet their needs. Instead, we must address ourselves to the questions of who controls the land, how it is used and to benefit whom. We must recognize guerilla land use as an interim step, ultimately leading to community control and ownership of land.

The road to community control is not an easy one. Governmental power and decision making are presently centralized downtown. To redistribute that power to a system of neighborhood governments, controlled by the residents of our neighborhoods, will take a coalition of neighborhood interests working together over a long period of time.

One of the present means we have in Summit-University for beginning such a working coalition, beyond the coalitions already forming around guerrilla land use, is the Project Area Committee (PAC). This is the group designated to oversee such matters as land use and housing. There is a chance that this group could become the basis for a true neighborhood council.

By ensuring that the people on the PAC are representative of the neighborhood and responsive to guerrilla land use and community control of land, the residents of Summit-University can begin the process of decentralizing city government and instituting local control.

Kokayi Ampah, Pauline Eichten, and Jeff Franck all live and work in the Summit-University area of St. Paul. Kokayi works with the Inner City Youth League, Pauline with the Summit-University Free Press and Jeff with the St. Paul Tenants Union.

Phillips: Pay Your Taxes

Although a new park may be developed in the Phillips neighborhood, the Stewart Field

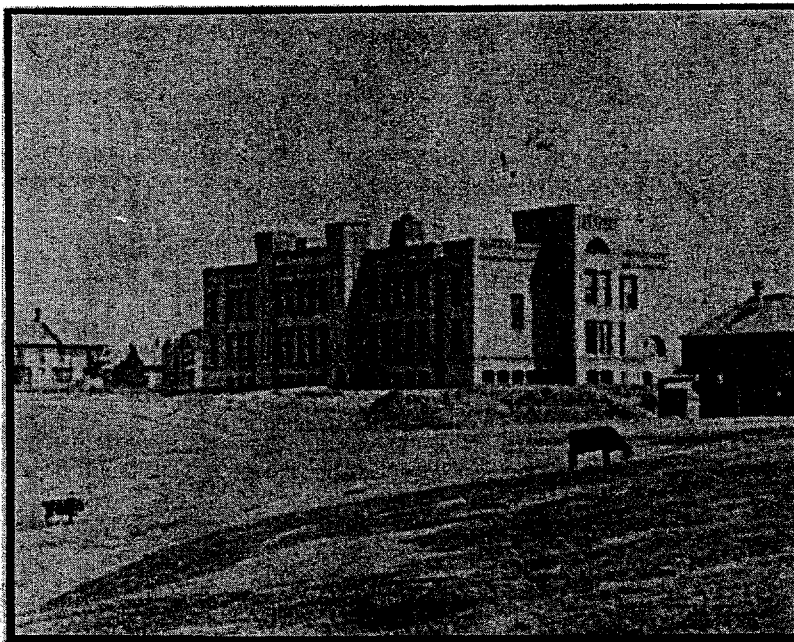
by Lynn Hinkle and Marcy Shapiro

Throughout the weekend of June 22, thousands of Indian and low to middle-income Black, and White residents of the Phillips neighborhood flooded Stewart Field for the Second Annual "Phillips Neighborhood Festival". The event, sponsored by several Phillips neighborhood organizations, featured a real carnival atmosphere complete with dizzying rides, refreshments and the temptations of barkers' hoarse variations of "pay your money -- take a chance", plus Alive and Trucking Theater Co. and an Indian Pow-Wow. The festivities seemed like an appropriate way for the Phillips neighborhood, and particularly the Stewart Field Activities Council (SFAC), to celebrate development of the most active park program in Minneapolis. However, the festivities seemed to conceal the gloomier events that may accompany construction of the new North-of-Lake School Complex on Stewart Field's southern boundary.

On the brighter side, the development of an extremely successful recreational pro-

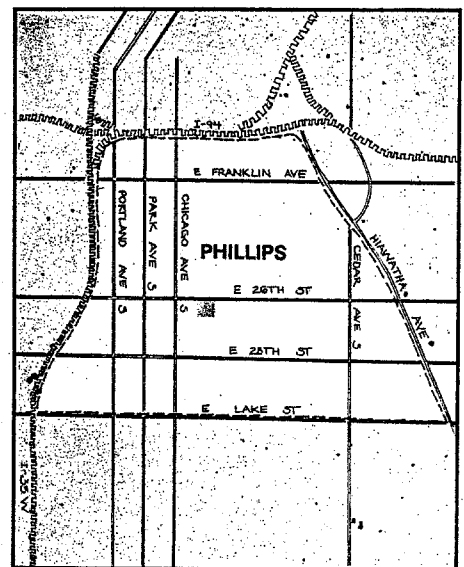
gram at Stewart Field is both heartening and unique. It is heartening in that residents in a neighborhood lacking any other park facility succeeded where the park board failed at vastly increasing park use. Not only have the number of park teams grown from a couple in 1970 to 25, including girls' teams, but other activities such as crafts, field trips, Saturday morning movies, etc., have been developed as well. It is unique in that the non-professional park staff of neighborhood residents, originally hired with Model Cities money to increase park activity, were retained by the Park Board after M.C. monies ran out. SFAC's support was influential in convincing Park Commissioner Ruhe to hire the first park para-professional in over 20 years.

On the gloomier side, overuse seems almost certain if the Complex's 1,000+ pupils use Stewart Field at its current size, along with a pre-school, the AIM Survival School, and the 25 teams that currently use the park. Overuse originally seemed like a remote possibility since the School Board had agreed to attach the park building to the new



Greeley Elementary School 1910.

M.H.S. Photo



and Take a Chance

Activities Council's experiences with the Park and School Boards is still informative.

school's gym, make school facilities more accessible and donate the old Greeley school site to the Park Board. But, residents soon discovered that the park size would remain the same since the School Board also insisted on slicing 30 feet from Stewart Field for the new complex site. Although overuse of Stewart Field once seemed unlikely, it now seems like a probability.

This is not to say that the SFAC successes have been completely negated by the School Board. It may suggest, however, that strategies used effectively with the Park Board should not be abandoned when confronting another bureaucracy like the School Board. SFAC's success in the park is largely due to its cohesion; SFAC's problems with the School Board may have developed when SFAC members started working with the School Board as individuals rather than as a group. Since the School Board has implemented its desegregation plans calling for construction of school complexes, like the North-of-Lake Complex, its concerns have become more regional and less neighborhood in scope. Given this trend away

from neighborhood concerns, it's more important than ever that neighbors consolidate organizations in order to influence the processes of change in their neighborhood.

At the "Phillips Neighborhood Festival" you could pay your money and take a chance on winning a plastic troll with day-glow hair or losing a few cents. Without developing a more comprehensive neighborhood strategy, Phillips residents may pay their taxes and take a chance on winning some school buildings and losing the only park in their neighborhood.

A resident of the Phillips neighborhood in South Minneapolis, Marcy Shapiro has been active in a number of southside organizations and is currently working as program director with United Seniors.

A board member of Southside Community Enterprises, Lynn Hinkle lives near Powderhorn Park and works with New Vocations Project.



Phillips Neighborhood Festival 1974 with Greeley School in background. The Photo Collective

Whittier: Neighbors Struggle for a Park

by Lou Larson

Neighbors in the Whittier area of South Minneapolis have a long-standing interest in developing a park for their neighborhood. This interest dates back to a Whittier School PTA meeting of January 24, 1912 where it's recorded that, "a committee of 3 was appointed to confer with the Park Board, relative to the purchase of public play grounds for the children of the district." Sixty-two years after the PTA committee was set up, the Park Board has finally agreed to construct a park for the Whittier neighborhood on the block bounded by 26th and 27th Streets on the north and south and Grand and Harriet Avenues on the east and west.

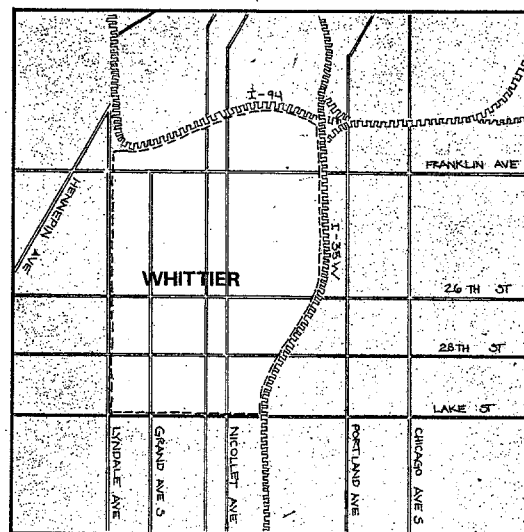
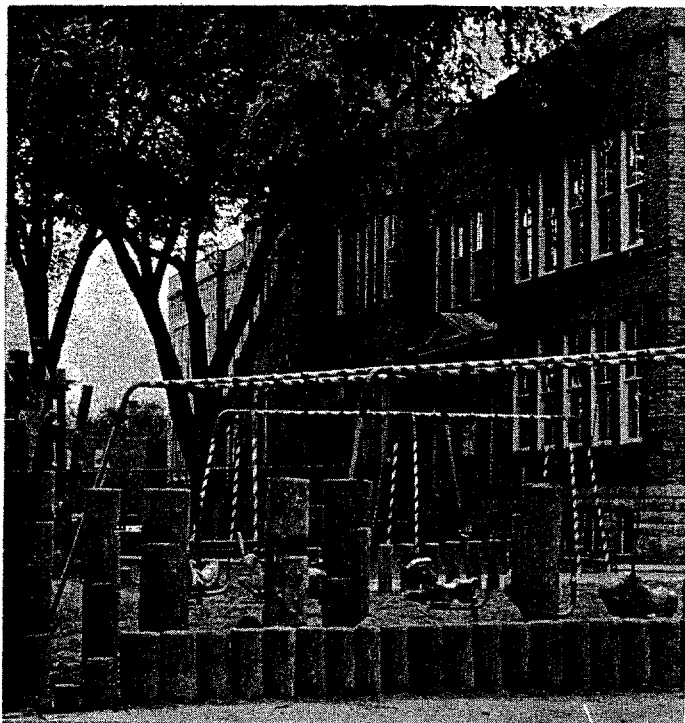
Park construction can't begin until the old Whittier School building is demolished and the school demolition cannot happen until the new North-of-Lake School Complex (south of Stewart Field) is completed. Whittier and several other neighborhood elementary schools will then be torn down as part of the Minneapolis school system's desegregation scheme. When Whittier School goes, the small play area on the school lot used by neighborhood children will also go.

"I, for one, will believe it when the park building is built!" exclaimed Marcella Birulkin -- co-chair with Ina Rodenborn of the Whittier Coalition, a community group that fought for a park. This is not to say that Marcella is not optimistic, but since she has lived in the neighborhood nearly all her life and knows the opposition very well, she is wise to the fact that plans have been made, changed and destroyed -- time after time.

Recent History

The history of the acquisition of park land for the Whittier neighborhood includes long-term internal hassles with neighbors about the park's location and even the validity of using neighborhood space for a park.

Opposition has been heavy -- some residents felt that land generating property tax revenue for the city should not be taken for park purposes. Others felt that a park was essential for the area because of its high density and large populations of young people and senior citizens.



The soon-to-be demolished Whittier Elementary School.
Photo by Ken Meter

... Whittier Area Association made an attempt to destroy the park plans and instead turn the area into a housing complex.

Opposition to the park took on a number of different forms including petitions and counter-proposals. At one point, a petition was submitted to the Park Board by homeowners in the selected site stating their unwillingness to be displaced by a park. One of the counter-proposals suggested that a park be built over freeway 35W, but a study found that the pollution from cars was too dangerous for children.

However, many people who were originally against the park now support the park because they can see that we really need it. This change has occurred in part through the influence of other residents like Dorit and Nariem Ansari. The Ansari's, homeowners residing within the site selected for the park, attended Park Board meetings in 1971 to express their interest in a park for our area, even though it meant that they would have to find another place to live. The Ansari's lived at 2625 Harriet Avenue -- and in their former back yard is a huge Linden tree. The tree, it is hoped by the Ansari's and others, will be saved for the park. (The Park Board has informed us they are interested in saving this tree.)

The Whittier Area Association

When the Park Board did in fact hire the architect to design the Whittier Park building on the agreed site, the Whittier Area Association (WAA) made an attempt to destroy the park plans and, instead, turn the neighborhood into a housing complex. This group sent a letter to park commissioner Leonard Nieman requesting a 560- to 620- vehicle parking lot underneath the park, as well as special tax breaks and more flexible zoning which would attract developers who could build a "high-density, planned housing complex" around the park.

This plan would either kill or stall Whittier Park because the park had already been budgeted at \$275,000 and approved from of federal revenue sharing monies. Additional plans could complicate the park because they would require time-consuming re-approval, which might extend beyond HUD's time limitation for using the funds allocated for the open space program.

Another park commissioner, William Holbrook, felt that "the purpose of the letter is to kill the project because its proposals make the park so expensive that its approval would be indefinitely postponed." Nieman, on the other hand, said that the WAA recommendations "made sense" since they call attention to the possibility that money could be made from use of the land but added that "there's not going to be any underground parking, I can tell you that" since the board does not have money for it.

The Whittier Coalition A Force for Neighborhood Stability

The successful campaign for Whittier Park is due in large part to the formation of the Whittier Coalition in 1973. Names had been collected from those persons interested in helping plan the park and community, and church groups were invited to join the coalition. Cornelia Einswiler of the Minneapolis Park Planning staff presented the following steps necessary in planning a park to the newly formed coalition:

- A. Initial Phase.
 1. The need for a park is determined after many studies.
 2. C.L.I.C.--This group sets priorities on all capital long-range improvements.
 3. City Council approval.
 4. Board of Estimate and Taxation approval.
 5. Park Board approval.
 6. Formation of residents' council representing all segments of the community.
- B. Schematic Design.
 1. "Park on paper" done by planning staff or some other group of residents.
 2. Approval from residents' council.
- C. Design Development.
 1. Details worked out.
 2. Residents' council approval
- D. Construction.

... apartments leave little, if any, space for a backyard, and rare is the apartment with a place for children to play.

The neighborhood meetings for park planning have never lacked participation. At one meeting, Clyde Gould of the WAA informed us of his letter to Mr. Nieman. Gould began his speech by stating, "I do not now have, ever have had, or plan to have any children; and I do not care about children-- I only care about houses."

At another meeting, Mary Daniels, a long-term Whittier resident, stated concern for the designing of the toilets in the planned park. She said that she felt that toilets in public facilities were designed with large cracks so that one could be peeked at, that she in fact had not used the restroom facilities in the school buildings she attended all the time she was a child.

The park planning people have assisted us in different ways, including distribution of a questionnaire to people attending the meetings asking what we wanted to see in our park. Cornelia Einswiler is one of the most helpful. She is extremely honest in telling us what can be done and giving financial reasons why something cannot be planned for the park. When questioned about something she doesn't know, she'll find out for us.

She was careful to let us know when the Park Board had Whittier Park on the agenda so we could attend the meetings.

The Changing Neighborhood

Whittier Park has grown out of a neighborhood that has changed greatly over the past ten years.

As one homeowner put it, "You can't park in front of your house anymore." High density living quarters are taking up much of the area. Even though the law requires one parking space per apartment unit, when three or four people share a unit and have their own cars, on-the-street parking becomes difficult for residents. In addition, these apartments leave little, if any, space for a backyard, and rare is the apartment with a place for children to play.

Who lives in Whittier? According to the 1970 census, there are 13,450 persons -- 52% are under 24 years old, 12% are under 10 years old, and 10.35% are over 65. The influx of young people and the inundation of new apartment buildings has changed the



Children in the Whittier School play-yard.

Photo by Ken Meter

Real negotiations with the Park Board happen only when the neighborhood has established the why's, where's, and what's of a park for itself.

political character of the neighborhood, a have the problems with national politics (Watergate, etc.). The area once was Republican, but homewoners who were primarily GOP have been outnumbered by tenants in apartment buildings; in addition, many old homes once owned by conservatives have been made into rooming houses. This political change can be seen in the election of a DFL congressman and alderperson.

The area was once planned for redevelopment. This area, "Whittier One", was a proposed area for Model Cities funding. The WAA had this plan removed from Model Cities. They used scare tactics, such as telling homeowners that the whole area was to be scheduled for "urban renewal" and "Your home will probably be torn down and you'll have no say about it."

In fact, though, the opposite was true. Redevelopment does not necessarily mean removal. At any rate the "Whittier One" section was removed from Model Cities by petition. 3% loans and grants up to \$3500 could no longer be allocated for the area to bring homes up to code. Zoning stayed at R6, the highest residential density rat-



The Ansari's Linden Tree

ing. Apartment buildings are now springing up all over and high rises could develop since R6 zoning permits their development as well.

I overheard someone say, "It's kind of funny, the very thing the Whittier Area Association people have done -- bringing in all the new apartments -- has just loused up their say in the neighborhood. One vote is one vote after all -- tenant or homeowner, it counts the same."

Suggestions for Developing a Park

From our experience with the Whittier Coalition, these are some suggestions for convincing the Park Board to develop a park in your neighborhood:

- Attend Park Board meetings.
- Get to know your commissioner, park planners, alderperson and legislator.
- Search out what your neighbors think by talking with neighborhood organizations, PTA's, community centers, churches, some local businesses, and, most important, just plain people!
- Talk to other neighborhood groups.
- Send representatives to the Southside Coalition for assistance and "People Power".
- Always check up on apposition. Something you hear may not be true. It's always better to deal with facts rather than rumor.
- Never forget to work closely with your neighbors. By compromising with your neighbors, the best interests of the neighborhood are more likely to be represented. Even though you may really want a swimming pool for your park; there might be more immediate needs of the people in the area. Remember that real negotiations with the Park Board happen only when the neighborhood has established the why's, where's and what's of a park for itself.

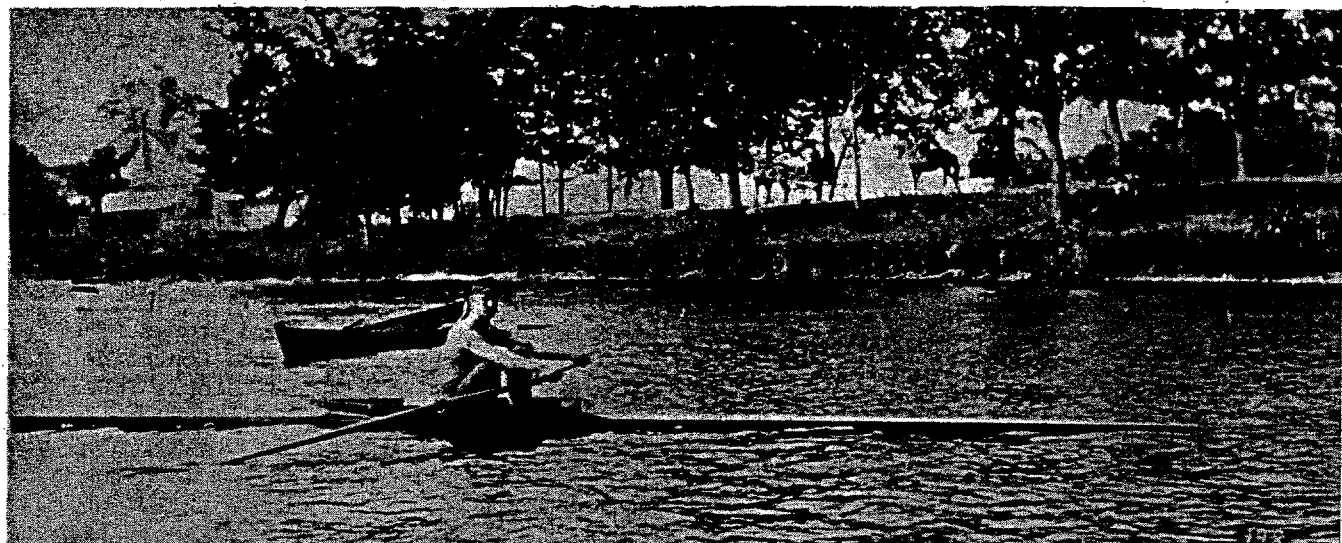
Someday soon, I hope to meet you under the Linden Tree for a picnic lunch at Whittier Park.

Lou Larson and her family are long-term residents of the Whittier neighborhood. Lou works with the American Red Cross, is chairperson on the board of Loring-Nicollet-Bethlehem Center and a member of the Southside Coalition.



left: Girls' Softball Team, Mpls (MHS). right: Boys at Logan Park, Mpls (MPB).

THE CITIES' BACKYARD



above: Chauncey Wheeler on Lake Calhoun, 1890. (MHS). Below: (left) Sleeping in the park, heat wave of 1936, St. Paul (MHS). (right) Toboggan slide at L. Harriet, 1914 (MPB).

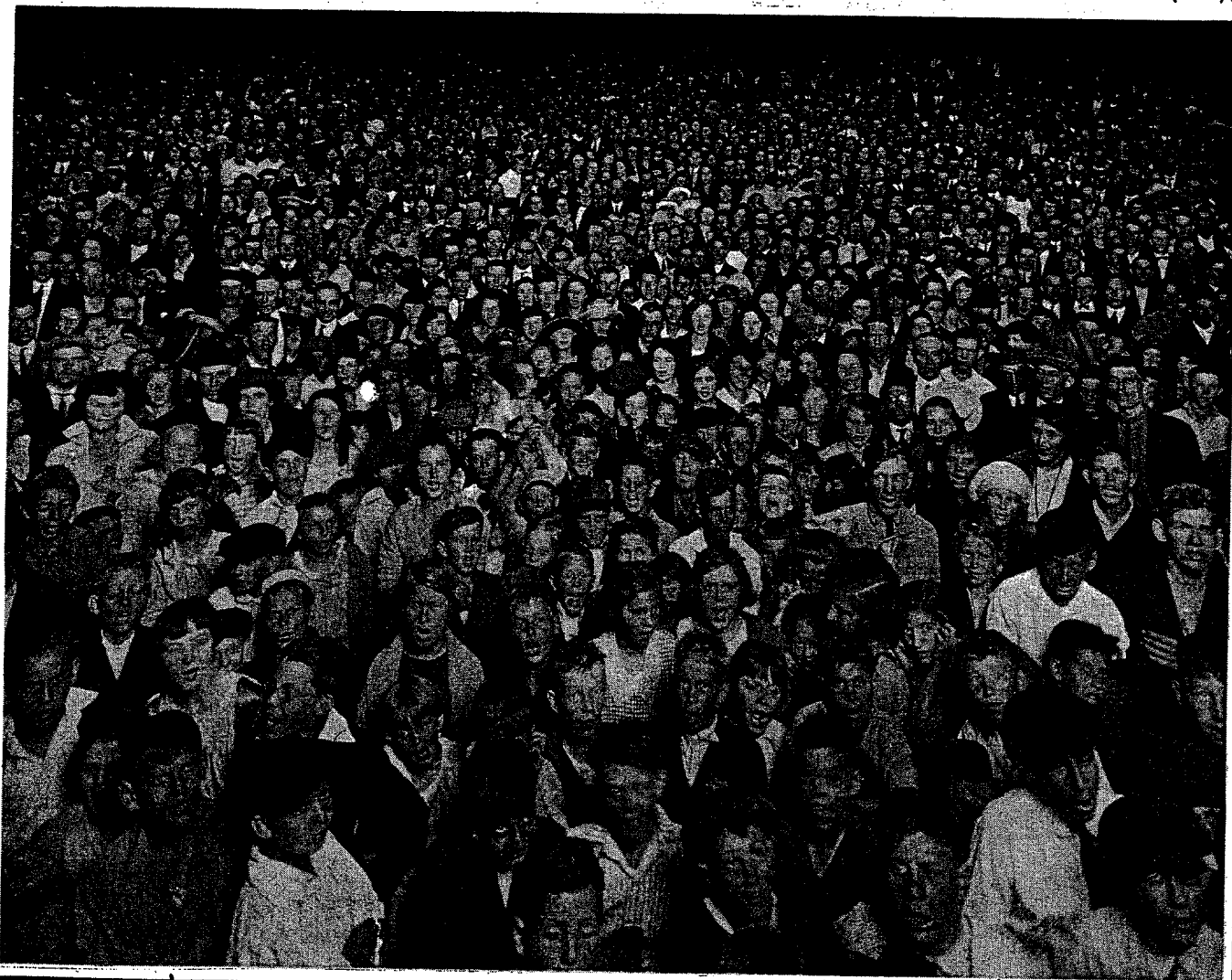




above: Cherokee Hghts. Tourist Park, St. Paul (MHS); below: Community sing, Powderhorn (MPB).

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS: SEVEN HISTORICAL VIEWS

Photographs from the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) and the Minneapolis Park Board (MPB).



a neighborhood history:

THE CITIES' BACKYARD

Learning How To Exercise Power

by Al Wroblewski

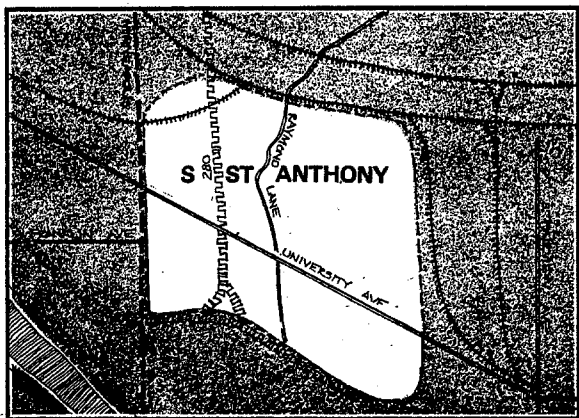
The playground in South St. Anthony Park has long been a catalyst for neighborhood organization. Future progress toward self-sufficiency, however, depends on the results of more political struggles.

There is only one place where a story about the playground in South Saint Anthony Park can rightfully begin. And that place is 973 Bayless, St. Paul, home of Elizabeth J. Clark.

Heading over to Mrs. Clark's modest white home facing onto Green Grass park, I knew I was in for a morning of charming wit laced with tidbits of wisdom acquired over years of battling in behalf of the neighborhood. Upon arrival, Mrs. Clark warmly greeted me and ushered me into her living room. She then handed me three pages of her recollections on the playground's history.

Mrs. Clark's written introduction to the history of the playground describes the neighborhood in which the small patch of open field rests. Her remarks begin, "South Saint Anthony Park is the hidden residential gem of the West Midway district. Its people-closeness to both the St. Paul campus and the Minneapolis campus and to all major points in the Twin Cities is phenomenal. Six years ago we were picked as a renewal candidate and while we were told we had a choice, the bulldozers were already humming our requiem. And now that our heart has started beating again, let's just sit down and chat about some of the things that make an old neighborhood beautiful and worth saving."

For Mrs. Clark, keeping the playground alive and saving the neighborhood are nearly one and the same. To a large extent, the story of the playground is the story of the South Saint Anthony Park neighborhood. And make no mistake, we're talking about South Saint Anthony Park, that tidy cluster of 1,500 people lodged between industrial giants like the Fisher Nut Company, Hoerner-Waldorf Paper, and Bob Short's Admiral Merchants Trucking. To the south I-94 borders the community, to the north is a wide expanse of railroad trackage. Highway 280 chops the area to the west and industry buffers the neighborhood from more railroad tracks to the east.



“Six years ago we were picked as a renewal candidate — while we were told we had a choice, the bulldozers were already humming our requiem.”

Local Pressure Helps Build The First Playground

Lying in the shadows of heavy industry, the neighborhood needed a refuge for children and rallying point for adults. Mrs. Clark recalls the early days, "Before the playground, vacant lots were put to use by the children. During the winter they would bank an area with snow and the firemen would flood it for skating. The space next to St. Cecilia Catholic Church was also popular (the Reverend Father bit was dropped when the children played over at 'Papa Doyle's place')."

"In the middle 1920's a playground was built in South Saint Anthony Park. Houses were cleared on the Bayless and Cromwell site. The playground would have taken in

the whole western part of Hunt Street but one owner on Hunt held up the process by not giving his consent.

"Rumor had it that the City Purchasing Agent wanted to dispose of his house situated on the proposed playground site. So he was influential in getting the deal closed quickly so as to go ahead with the new playground and dispose of his property."

According to Otto Crossfield, businessmen put the pressure on the City Council to approve the playground. The fact that nearby Baker School and St. Cecilia's School lacked adequate outdoor play area probably added weight in favor of a playground.

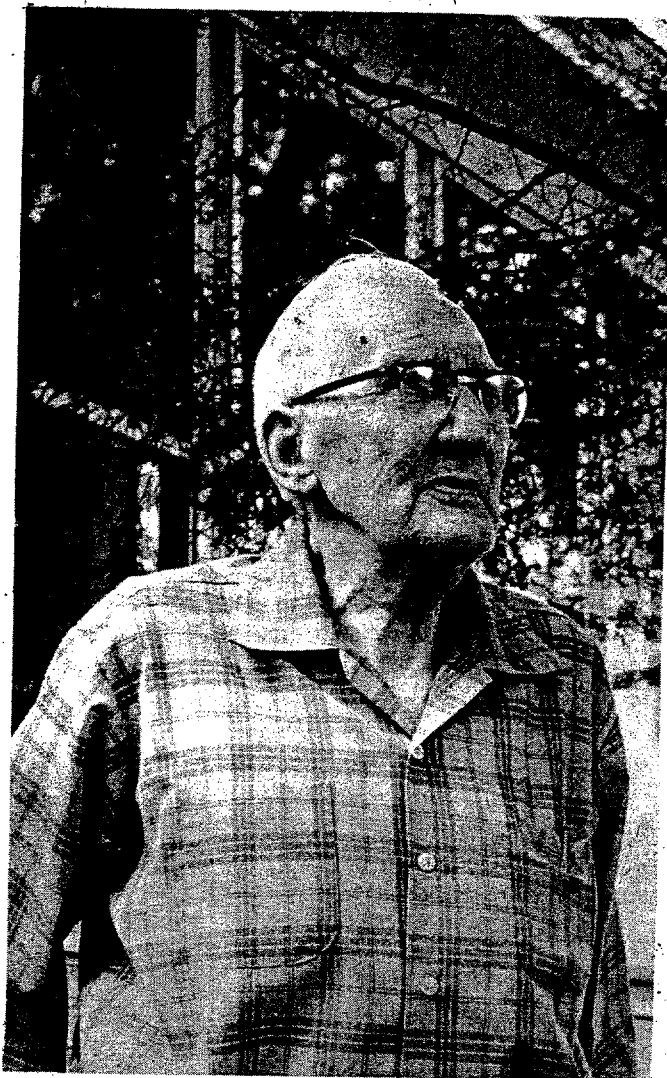
The new playground was adorned with a small warming house for skating and that was about it. Connie Sylvester was the playground's first director.

Elizabeth Clark

photos for this article by Ken Meter



THE CITIES' BACKYARD



Charles Purdy

The Booster Club Builds an Organization

In 1930, Director of Recreation for St. Paul, Frank Drassel, helped organize a neighborhood Booster Club. Mr. Drassel said the Club was an organization consisting of neighborhood men and women which met once a month to conduct playground improvements and help

carry out programs. "We (the St. Paul Recreation Dept.) would set up new programs and present them to their meeting."

First Club President was Charles Purdy, who, with his wife, Marie, still resides a block from the playground. Mr. Purdy recounts the first years, "The field and equipment were nothing. We wanted to give the children more.

"The Club grew rapidly and was so well organized with 150 to 175 members that in 1935, we got one of the three new field houses in the City built by the Works Progress Administration. During the Depression we rented a little place next to the present South Saint Anthony Park Association office on Hampden Avenue for \$15 a month. The office was used for oil storage before we rented it. We cleaned it up, did some carpentry work, and were in business. For fund-raising we gave penny lunches. It's hard to believe we made money on these but we did!"

"In the good old summertime," Mrs. Clark recalls, "the annual Miniature Neighborhood Mardi Gras was the big event with decorated doll buggies, wagons, bikes and costumes. A little miss stopped at the local plumbing shop on Raymond Avenue and asked the young lady working there if she would help trim her doll buggy. Since it was a slack afternoon the young lady and the little miss sat down on the floor and before long the dolly was propped up on a cushion of crepe paper flowers and the buggy was decked out with paper ribbons, ruffles and flowers. The next day the plumbing shop was aglow with fruit jars of lovely garden flowers -- the little girl won first prize and her grateful mother had emptied her garden as a 'Thank You.'"

The Mardi Gras and the multitude of other Booster Club events didn't happen by magic. Time, money, energy, ideas and vitality contributed by Herman and Tillie Stewart, Martha Noll, Emily Swanson, Martin and Tena Irverson and Ed Olson, to mention a few, made things jump. "We had such a combination of people, of just ordinary people," remembers Mrs. Clark. "Down to earth kind of people. There were so many people I worked with over the years with the Booster Club who were just marvelous people."

"We had a combination of people, of just ordinary people. Down to earth kind of people. There were so many people I worked with over the years with the Booster Club who were just marvelous people."

The War Disrupts

The advent of World War II brought new people into the Booster Club replacing those who left for overseas. It also brought staff changes. "Our first war-time director was non-professional," says Mrs. Clark. "She was a housewife who perhaps lacked some of the recreational skills but made up for it in her concern for the children of the area and her open friendliness. She had a way of drawing people out -- she had the coffee pot and we supplied the coffee and goodies. We brought the family and visited. The children had fun and the weary parents went home refreshed.

After the War, returning GI's swung into action. Through the local chapter of the American Legion, Tjernlund Post 451 on Territorial Road, new enthusiasm for the playground emerged. Residents remember renewed vigor in the athletic programs and loads of crafts like sewing, woodcarving, and cooking. The traditional Ice Cream Social capped the year's programs.

The burden of fundraising tested the ingenuity of Club members. Otto Crossfield, Club member and proprietor of Crossfield's Grocery (a long-time neighborhood institution, with its pot-bellied stove heating plant, but which is now demolished) remembers discussing money problems back in '46--cash was needed for baseball uniforms. At that time Otto was head of the St. Paul Amateur Players and suggested putting on a play in the neighborhood to raise funds. Since the proposed play had been performed throughout the City, some Club members pooh-poohed the idea; but Otto persisted and got the green light. The play was publicized as a three-act farce comedy entitled, "Always in Trouble," modestly assessed by Otto as "a very good play." Otto himself took the part of a grouchy millionaire. No one need have worried about it succeeding; the audience jammed the hall, standing room only. 25¢ admission fees and revenue from the ad book netted \$800.

Through the Fifties and into the Sixties, Clarice Mattson, a neighborhood resident, served as playground director. Mrs. Mattson notes, "Friday nights were teen nights with dances and movies. A Junior Leader Corps developed where older children would supervise activities for the younger ones."

In 1959, Vern Hanson volunteered for sports duty at the playground after working with the Cub Scouts. "If there was a kid who didn't want to play baseball I'd go talk to the parent and recruit the youngster. And the parents would back me up. The kids wouldn't miss practice. I was involved with the kids and I knew them. They had respect for me and I felt close to them. I would go down to the Police station and keep them out of trouble.

Otto Crossfield



THE CITIES' BACKYARD

The Neighborhood Subsidizes the City

Despite solid involvement of neighborhood parents, there never seemed to be enough money for adequate programs. Vern Hanson claims only a single baseball would be issued to the playground at the beginning of the season. Naturally, dozens more would have to be purchased by the Booster Club. Same thing for softball and football. The playground would have to scrounge up its own hockey equipment and even provide its own telephone. Some resentment is expressed toward the City's policy of skimping on equipment. Playgrounds in well-to-do areas could better afford additional purchases and have better programs. Mrs. Clark seconds the criticism, "We didn't have a lot to say over what went into the playground, but we did have a lot of bills to pay for entry fees and supplies. In some of the sports like football and baseball the stuff the Recreation Department sent out was poor. Kids would get out on the field for a couple of days and a bat would go or the insides would come out of a ball. So we were constantly giving money to buy more equipment."

"Too Damn Many Things to Fight"

Even the hassles with the Recreation Department or squeezing contributions out of neighborhood residents did not measure up to other headaches which surfaced in the early Sixties. Attendance at the Booster Club fell. Parents' attitudes seemed to change. "The parents didn't give a damn," noted Vern Hanson. "There was a handful that cared. But most didn't care if their kids went down to the playground. The kids got hold of liquor and dope and that other crap and they went into a house someplace and boozed it up. They thought the playground was only for babies."

Some long-time residents felt a new breed of youngster inhabited the neighborhood.

Steve Flink, active participant in the new South Saint Anthony Park Association, remarked, "Vern was the guy who always had to be the babysitter for the neighborhood. There were a lot of kids from families with troubles. Then too a group of younger men were around for the last few years and kind of terrorized some people. That was a factor in the decline in interest in the playground. Unfortunately, there weren't a lot of people around to stop that. And Vern couldn't do it himself."

Whether the disinterest in the playground grew from changing values or life-styles, the aimless searching for new kicks outside the area, the distracting boob tube, the influx of part-time residents or whatever, it presents a challenge for the neighborhood folks to overcome. Carol Jensen, currently attempting to rebuild the Club, recognizes the discouraging state of the organization and admits renewed interest is difficult to find. At a point when every advantage is needed, Mrs. Jensen believes, "Maintenance of the playground is very poor. If you aren't pushing the City to do it, they won't. Because the Booster Club is weak right now, we aren't getting what we need. At least the City could let us purchase supplies through them at wholesale prices." She does not agree that the playground is unsafe or a haven for delinquents..

Urban renewal receives part of the blame for the playground's plight. Mrs. Clark comments, "When renewal came in we had nobody interested in keeping going over there (in the Booster Club) so we had to fold. We tried to get a group of younger people interested and take over on a committee basis. We do not have the involvement of the parents. Not around here. They don't understand how important it is. How you can ever get that message to them, I don't know."

When one's home is threatened it is hard to keep attention focused on recreation; many residents viewed the situation this way. Highway 280 chewed up scores of homes. Baker School was scheduled for demolition. Talk was going around that the firehouse would be torn down. Box-like walk-up apartments are replacing grand old single-family dwellings on Cromwell and Manvil. Industries

"Only a single baseball would be issued to the playground at the beginning of the season."



Jim Paul and Mike Braun in the South Saint playground gym.

and offices expanded parking lots by buying up adjacent houses and knocking them down. Long-time residents sold and escaped to the dreams of suburbia. All this painted a rather bleak picture.

Even the downtown planners picked up the trend. The City Planning Department's 1966 report entitled "Midway Between Two Cities," recommended, "The existing non-conforming uses, primarily residential in the western part of the district, should be removed in stages -- first, the areas of greatest mixture, and eventually the more solidly residential South Saint Anthony area as the industrial market can use the land." The squeeze play was on.

Residents Draw Their Own Plans

Ignoring the signs of doom, the remnants of the Booster Club along with other residents, banded together in 1969 to stage a last ditch effort at preservation. Feeling the "Midway Between Two Cities" study didn't give residents a fair shake, the residents drew up their own analysis: "Battle Plan for Survival!" It reflected a renewed spirit to take on whatever Goliaths might try to invade the neighborhood and tread on its turf.

The residents' plan opened with a poignant battle cry phrased by Mrs. Clark, "Let's beat the industrial bulldozer -- the neighborhood strangler! This is a battle for survival; but it is also a commitment for the future. There is really no point of return (we can never go back to the good old days because each year industry moves a little closer and closer). The image of the bulldozer is very real -- it's job is to gradually take over and to phase us out (translated into ordinary talk it means, 'wipe out')."

The thought of rumbling bulldozers flattening the neighborhood shifted people's attention rather suddenly and dramatically to urban renewal and the St. Paul Housing & Redevelopment Authority. In response, the South Saint Anthony Park Association formed and moved immediately to the front lines.

Skirmishes occurred over residential expansion versus residential containment, housing versus industry, full say in plans versus tokenism, adequate funding versus chicken feed. The struggle taxed the energies of the residents as it spread out to dozens of issues. "There are just too damn many things to fight," exclaims Steve Flink. "I've had the experience where I've been involved in three, four, five things at the same time and it's hard to decide into which one one's energies should go. Although, you can't give up if it's something you really want." And, indeed, the people have not.

South Saint Anthony's most avid supporter, Mrs. Clark, echoes Steve's feelings, "The

THE CITIES' BACKYARD

obstacle course is always rough. But we Southsiders have a lot going for us; we don't know the meaning of the word 'quit'."

In the wake of this community revival lies a promising future for the playground. Plans for renovation and expansion have been drawn up. A multi-purpose center might even be included. From the City's Capital Improvement Budget as much as \$134,000 might go to the playground. The playground has seen little improvement to its barren field, swings, tennis courts, climbing equipment, and antiquated field house.

The plans require acquisition of houses on Territorial Road and enlargement of the playground. This decision to substitute open space for housing was a tough one for the Association. However, the practicalities of the great expense involved in updating the housing, and the lack of funds for doing so, swung the pendulum in favor of the playground. No final approval has been given the proposal.

Throughout the many years in which the neighborhood has endured changes to its physical well-being and social stability, it has managed to fend off pressures and schemes designed to seal its coffin. Still, the addition of new housing, a new co-op, and a functioning organization, do not guarantee that the people in the community will sustain their tenuous grasp on survival.

The playground in South Saint Anthony Park is not the drawing card it once was. It is not the catalyst for bringing together families. It is a link to past efforts bonding a community together. Its role has been assumed by the co-op and the Association. These new inventions of the neighborhood lack the rich tradition of the playground and Booster Club, yet possess the potential to create new opportunities within the neighborhood for people to have fun together, to be together, and to struggle against the odds, together.

Comment on South Saint Anthony Park and Its Playground

To have endured for half a century, the City Recreation Department's policy of under-equipping South Saint Anthony Park playground required tolerance on the part of residents. The Booster Club tolerated raising their own funds to operate playground programs, organizing their own community events, and filling in the recreation gaps created by the Department. It is a wonder that the accumulated disappointment with the City did not boil over into open rebellion.

Repeatedly, neighborhoods like South Saint Anthony Park are asked to shore up weak City programs. Cities and other central authorities extort cooperation by appealing to people's respect for authority (after all, who are mere citizens to challenge the wise ones?). Sometimes the appeals are geared toward residents' feelings of sympathy for the poor City trying its best but not quite making it. Even if citizens can cut through these arguments, they end up feeling powerless to have any effect.

Residents often receive the short end of the stick while asked to carry more than their share of the burden. The South Saint Anthony Park people carried a double load: they paid for their recreation through their property tax and through contributions to the Booster Club. If part of a City's job is to guarantee adequate recreation to everyone, especially those unable to afford it themselves, then it fell short by underproviding for the South Saint Anthony Park area (not quite an in-town sister to the Gold Coast suburbs). Adding insult to injury, the residents paid part of their tax dollar to support the administrative bureaucracy which cannot meet the needs of the neighborhood!

The policy of under-equipping playgrounds (if justifiable) should be related to the particular community's ability to support its own program with private funds. It is unfair to expect a less than affluent neighborhood to pay its own way and help finance other city-wide programs.

"Maintenance of the playground is very poor. If you aren't pushing the city to do it, they won't."

What is it in people which allows them to stand for such nonsense year after year? A big part rests with people's feelings toward their playground. People feel the City owns it; it belongs to the public as a whole. This is a misconception. True we have been taught, told and instructed that public property is not our personal property; however, when a particular playground is used and supported 90% or more by the local community in which it sits, that community has every right to control its playground.

Many people believe in home ownership and bewail the evils of renting, yet this same bias is not applied to community playgrounds versus City playgrounds. What is the virtue

South Saint Anthony Park playground



in having an absentee landlord (the City) rule the playground if local control, local ownership is preferable? The Booster Club might have demanded from the City (1) all property taxes raised from South Saint Anthony Park earmarked for use by the Recreation Department, (2) whatever additional tax money is necessary to operate the playground at its present level, and (3) an amount equal to the funds currently raised by the Booster Club. With these resources the Club would run the playground. With power, authority, and resources, participation in the Club might have increased. The community would be in a position to determine programs and policies best suited to the specific needs of its people and would no longer be double taxed for recreation. Staff at the playground would be accountable to the residents he or she served. City-wide programs could be run on a federation basis which respected the autonomy of local playgrounds.

In many respects neighborhoods are colonies supporting powerful, outside interests which lust for expanded empires. Throughout the country, when neighborhood groups have come to realize that they need not tolerate outsiders running their communities, conflicts occurred. Conflicts resulting from those in power bucking the idea of giving up their power to those who rightfully should have it.

The renowned empire builder, the St. Paul Housing & Redevelopment Authority, ironically was instrumental in founding the South Saint Anthony Park Association. The Housing Authority needed the Association to fulfill federal citizen participation requirements. Through some remarkable victories, the Association grabbed some power from the Authority (I always thought that was a fitting name for them) and took steps toward correcting the subservient status of the neighborhood to outsider interests. It was a while before the Association got over its defensiveness and initiated plans and programs of its own. As time went on, outsiders had a harder and harder time coming into the neighborhood to make loads of money and walk away. The Association's work has increased the community's self-sufficiency.

Self-sufficiency can result from a growing

"The Association got over its defensiveness and (began to) initiate plans and programs of its own."

and developing community organization. Often the steps involved are (1) support of outside interests by playing a role defined by these interests, (2) negotiation with outside interests to use their resources in the neighborhood the way residents want them used, and (3) expulsion of outside interests from the neighborhood and neighborhood control over neighborhood resources. The Booster Club was trapped into taking only the first step. The nature of its involvement in neighborhood recreation was largely determined by the City. Any criticism it leveled against the City could be deflected without too much trouble since the Club was in the awkward position of biting the hand that feeds. This is not to say the Club did not make an invaluable contribution to the social vitality of the neighborhood.

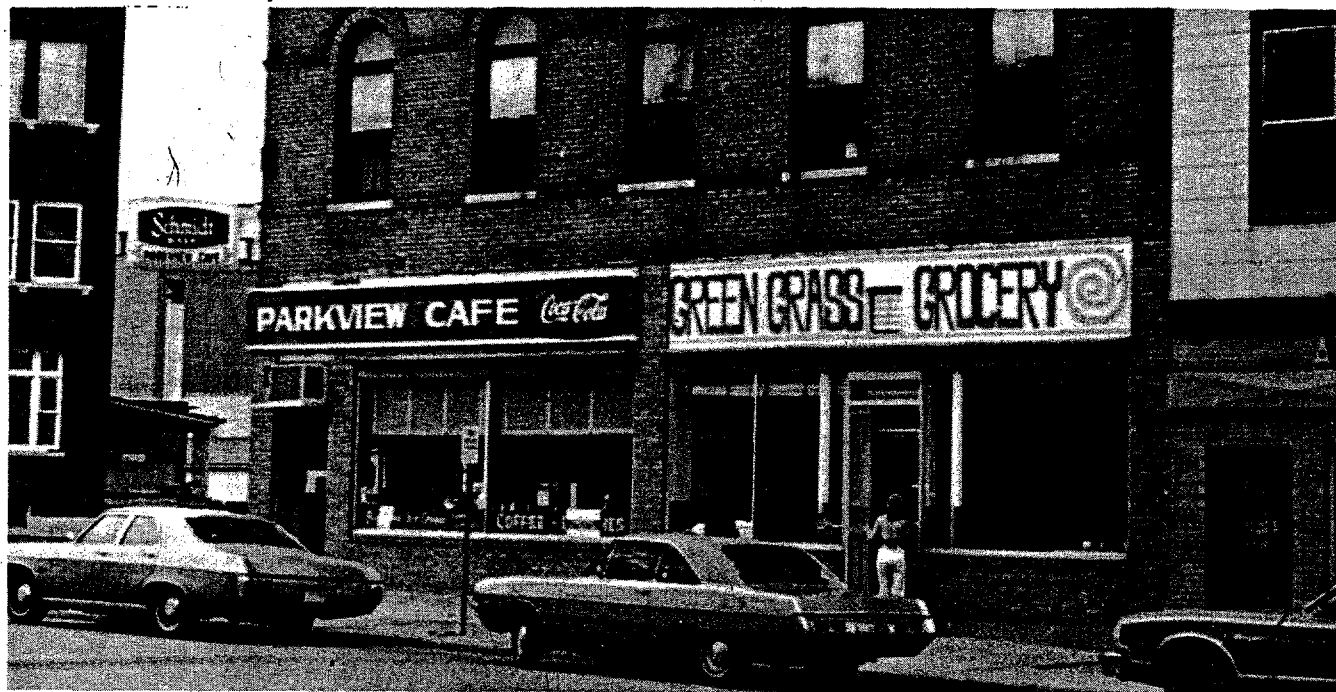
The Association started out like the Booster Club. It was told by the Housing Authority what it should do and what it should approve. After a time, the residents started challenging the Housing Authority and grew to become hard negotiators over most phases of redevelopment. Through the Association-inspired food co-operative, the neighborhood is taking on some characteristics of self-sufficiency. Without the many years of frus-

tration endured by the Booster Club, it is doubtful whether the Association would have been able to move beyond a token role in deciding the neighborhood's future. Whether or not it survives and maintains a firm stance depends on its ability to adopt a practical and complete strategy for self-sufficiency.

Reaching toward self-sufficiency requires a long range strategy spanning ten, fifteen years. It requires clear, accurate assessment of the forces at work in the community, particularly those working to pull it apart for economic or political gain. Most of all, it requires an openness to new options which can confront the distorted and self-serving relationship outside interests have traditionally had with neighborhoods, a relationship which milks the vitality and wealth from the neighborhood while leaving nothing but disappointment and shattered dreams for the people.

Al Wroblewski, founder and "free-lance" editor of the Minnesota Leader, worked as a VISTA volunteer for the South Saint Anthony Park Association, 1970-1972. He claims to be a card-carrying populist.

Green Grass Grocery



A Tour of Three Minneapolis Parks

by Lanny Kuester

Perhaps it's because I grew up on a farm, but ever since I moved into the city, parks have been a necessary part of my life. I visit parks often, either by bike or on foot, and thoroughly enjoy wandering along the paths, eating a picnic lunch on a grassy, open knoll or splashing around in a city lake. Recently, however, I began to question just why other people use parks. To find some answers, I decided to take a close look at three South Minneapolis parks--Washburn Fair Oaks, Loring, and Lake Nokomis.

Washburn Fair Oaks



MPB photo

Washburn Fair Oaks is a small, inner-city, neighborhood park filled with trees, benches and small rolling hills located just off Third Avenue and Twenty-second Street across from the Minneapolis Art Institute. It is only two square blocks, but it provides a patch of green and open space in a neighborhood crowded with apartments and old wooden frame houses. Between these buildings, an



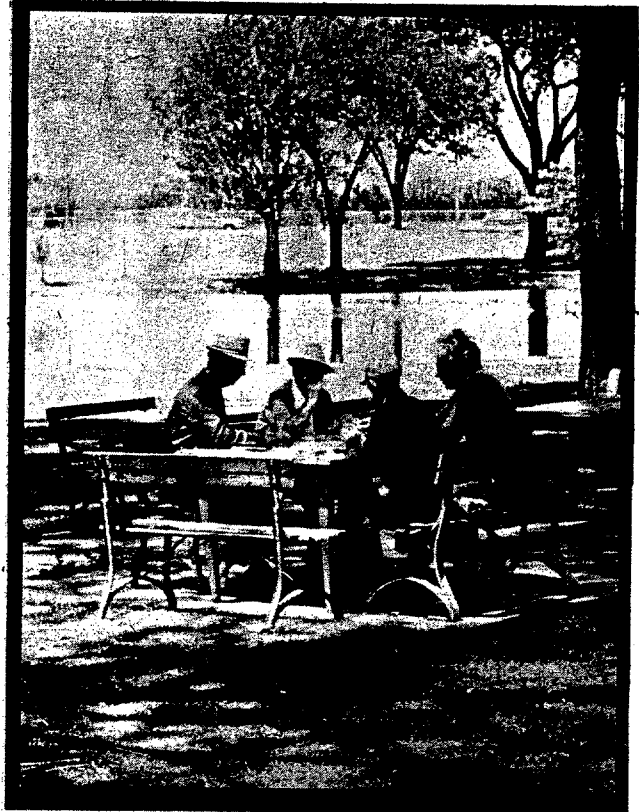
... he lives in a small apartment nearby and likes to come here often "to keep from climbing the walls." Without a lawn or backyard of his own, he seems to regard the park as an extension of his own apartment.

occasional stone mansion or large well-preserved wooden house attests to the fact that this was once a prosperous and wealthy neighborhood. But the large signs in front of these buildings indicate that the wealthy class that once occupied this area has been replaced by organizations such as the Minneapolis Hearing Society, the Children's Theatre and the Hennépin County Museum.

The pace is slow and there are few cars to break into the quiet. A grey-haired woman, around seventy, walks slowly along one of the sidewalks that curves diagonally

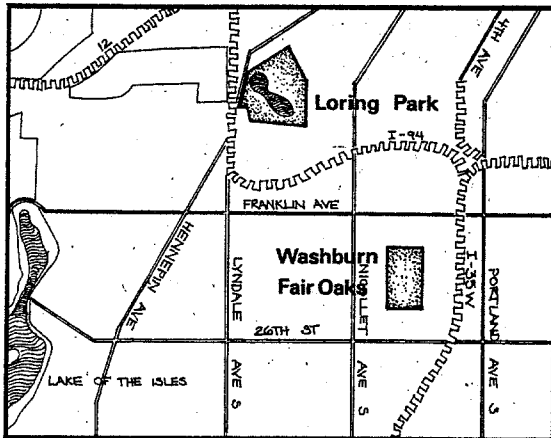
across the park. She wears a blue, knee-length, flowered jacket and carries a scarf in one hand. About half way across, she is passed by a black man on a three-speed bike wearing a short Afro. A few minutes later an Indian couple, about 35, cross the park with two children -- a boy and his younger sister. The boy asks questions in a loud, ten-year-old voice, the father answering quietly. They stop and sit on a bench at one end of the park. The two kids use the time to practice tumbling down the hill.

An older man, near seventy, wearing a dark, faded sports jacket and a brown cap, takes a seat near the statue of George Washington on one of the cement and wooden benches scattered around the park. He looks about, one arm draped across the back of the bench. He seems to welcome a chance to talk with someone and informs me that he worked as a custodian in Morris for a number of years, but moved to Minneapolis after retiring so he could be with relatives. Like many of the people in the area, he lives in a small apartment nearby and likes to come here often "to keep from climbing the walls." Without a lawn or back yard of his own, he seems to regard the park as an extension of his own apartment.



photos by The Photo Collective - SC

Loring



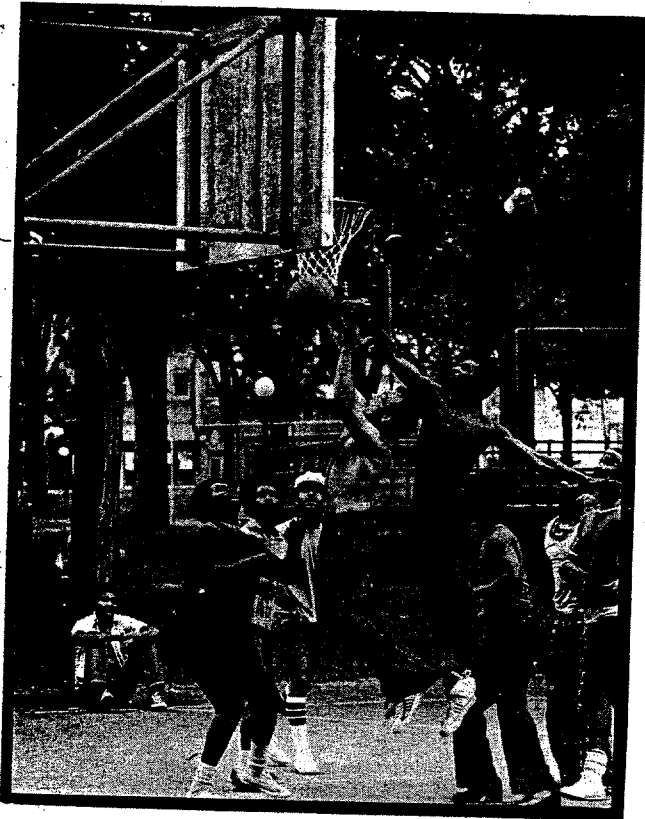
About three times the size of Washburn Fair Oaks, Loring park is a welcome blend of trees, grass and water just off from Harmon Place and the downtown loop area. If you stand at the south end of the park, you'll find yourself at the edge of a shallow pond of water that's about a city block across and the home for a score of mallard ducks. From this point, you can see most of the



thirty-five acres of grass and trees that slope upward from the water's edge. Across the pond and to the left, a wooden bridge crosses a narrow channel of water that leads to a second, smaller pond of water. From here you can also see the IDS tower well above the tall elms, its silver image reflected in the water. The acceleration of cars passing on Hennepin and Lyndale is an-

other ever-present reminder that you are still in the city.

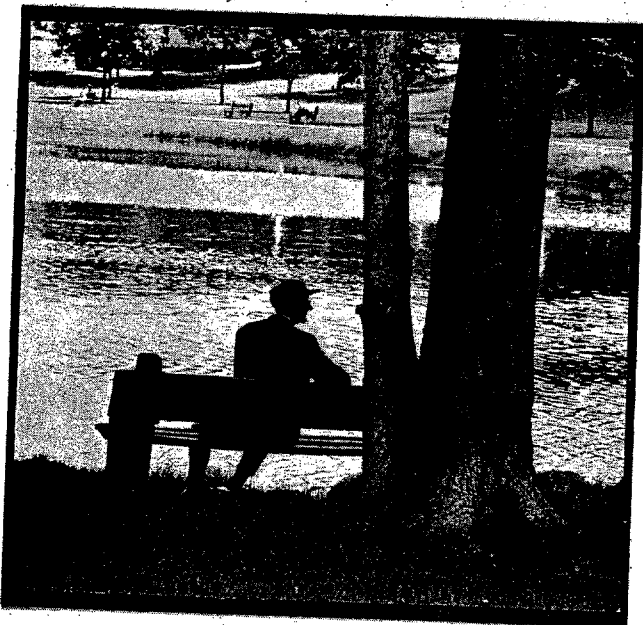
Like the area around Washburn Fair Oaks, most of the Loring Park neighborhood is dense with three-to five-story brick apartments, commercial buildings and a sprinkling of wooden frame houses. There is, however, a much wealthier array of large stone and wood-frame homes in the area, particularly in the Walker-Guthrie area to the west of Loring Park.



Though located in a somewhat similar neighborhood, the mood of Loring is quite different from that of Washburn Fair Oaks. Here, the scene is noisier, younger and more active. A middle-aged couple, seated on one of the benches around the pond, lean forward and feed popcorn to several splashing ducks. Nearby, four tanned workmen tend the flower beds as two counselors and a dozen retarded children, enthralled by the sights of the park, walk past them on the sidewalk that encircles the pond. They are followed by a young couple strolling arm-in-arm and by two older men wearing white shirts and ties, engrossed in an animated conversation in Polish.

A number of people have been drawn to Loring Park because of the facilities available here. Across the pond, seven men play a noisy game of basketball near the outdoor stage which is used on various occasions for concerts or speakers. Behind them, two couples compete in a tennis game on one of the cement courts available at the park. Nearby, a dozen or so people set up a net between two large elms and begin a lively game of volleyball. Near the wooden bridge, two middle-aged men play horseshoes on one of the dozen well-tended clay courts. They explain that they just can't afford to get out of the city by buying a snowmobile or a camper or a house in the suburbs but have discovered that playing horseshoes at Loring is a low-cost alternative within the city that they can enjoy. For many of these people, Loring Park is a convenient place to have fun playing games and taking part in activities. For others who can't afford recreation outside of the city or more costly activities within the city, a city park can provide an enjoyable alternative.

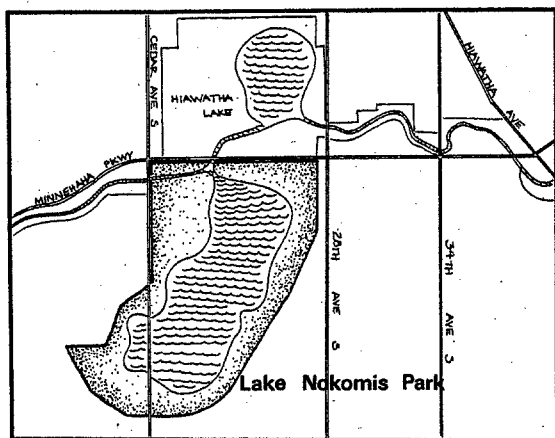
But not everyone at Loring is here to be active. A young woman--about eighteen years old--sits next to her bike looking out over the pond. When I ask her why she came to Loring she replies that "it's a lot nicer here than riding on a street in front of my house and dodging cars." She pauses a mom-



... Loring Park is a convenient place to have fun playing games and taking part in activities. For others who can't afford recreation outside of the city or more costly activities within the city, a city park can provide an enjoyable alternative.

ent, then continues, "The thing is, I want to get out of the city. It's noisy and crowded and dirty. There's so many buildings and people crowded in here that I just want to get out -- sometimes I almost feel like I've got claustrophobia. But the thing is, I've got to put up with it for now and this park helps me to do it. I'd rather be in the country and this is the next best thing." To this young woman and to many other people, a park represents a place they can come to get away from the pressures of the city for a little while.

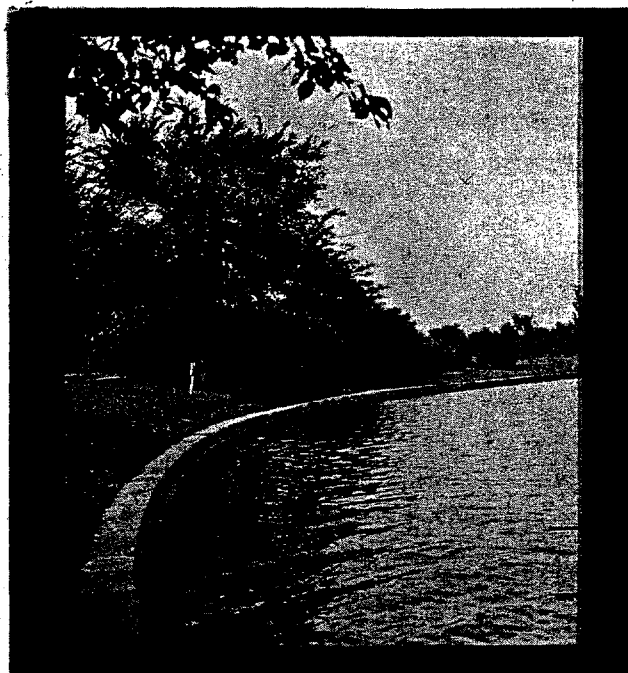
Nokomis



As I drove around the parkway that circles Lake Nokomis, I was struck by the contrast between this suburban, residential neighborhood and the downtown neighborhoods near Loring and Fair Oak parks. Lake Nokomis is a medium-sized city lake composed of 201 acres of water and 2.7 miles of lakeshore. It is located in a quiet, prosperous neighborhood with neat bungalow homes and large, well kept lawns. Unlike the other two parks, there are very few apartments, commercial buildings or factories in the neighborhood. The area around the lake appears wide and spacious for, although the lake is surrounded by houses, these homes are kept well back from the lakeshore by a wide buffer zone of grass, trees and the parkway that circles the lake. The only thing that disturbs the serenity of the neighborhood is the roar of jets that pass over the area every few minutes to take off or land at the nearby International Airport.

Like Loring Park, Lake Nokomis attracts a number of people from outside of the immediate neighborhood. Cedar Avenue, which crosses one corner of the lake, and the

Crosstown Highway (#62), which passes within a few blocks of Nokomis, bring in people from all over South Minneapolis, Richfield and Bloomington. This easy access seems partly responsible for the grassy shoreline that is lined with dozens of young sunbathers either lying out on blankets or stretched out on lawn chairs. Both local residents and others from the surrounding area join to give the lakeshore the mood of a resort area. A young man, about twenty, lies on a blanket near the water, one knee moving back and forth to the tune of the transistor radio next to him. His reasons for coming out here are to "relax, get some fresh air and to catch a few rays before I have to go to work tonight."



M.P.B. photo of W.P.A.'s Nokomis Park improvements -- taken in the 1939's

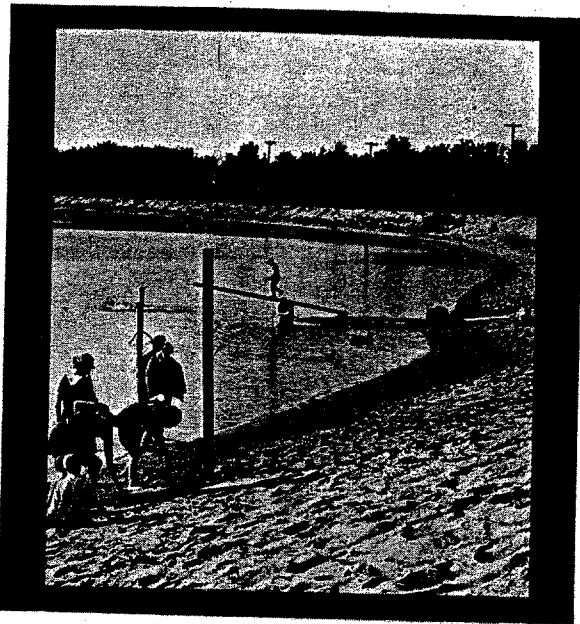
To this young woman and to many other people, a park represents a place they can come to get away from the pressures of the city for a little while.

Others around the lake are more active. Two uniformed teams, some umpires and a dozen fans participate in a slow-pitch game on one of the several softball diamonds located near the lake. A young couple toss a frisbee back and forth and two sailboats cut across the choppy waves on the lake. A retired man with grey hair, a yellow sport shirt and a golf cap explains that it's too windy for him to play golf, so he's here to

try his luck fishing. But he explains his lack of luck with "it's probably too windy for the fish too."

While most people on Nokomis are either sunbathing or participating in some activi-

At a playground on the beach, several young mothers sit on benches and chat with one another while keeping one eye on their youngsters playing.



M.P.B. photo -- South Shore of Nokomis taken in 1917

ty, others seem to view the lake as a part of their work-day world. A mailman parks his delivery truck next to the lake, but remains inside to eat his noon meal and to watch people passing by--a girl on a bike, a couple strolling past and a jogger wearing cut-offs and a loose, grey sweatshirt. He explains that he stops off here once or twice a week because "it's a lot nicer than parking by some street somewhere with nothing to look at."

At a playground on the beach, several young mothers sit on benches and chat with one another while keeping one eye on their youngsters playing. They too seem to feel that the time spent at Nokomis is a welcome break in their housework and child-raising routines. One woman elaborates, "It's a chance for me to get away from the house for

a few minutes. And Darren, my three-year-old over there, seems to enjoy it as much as I do." For these people, like many others, a park gives them a place to come to when they need to get away from their daily routines for a few minutes and to enjoy some natural scenery.

Having completed my tour of these three South Minneapolis parks, I've concluded that although the mood, the faces and the activities of these parks are often quite different, the reasons people come to parks are often the same. Individuals come to a park to get away from the routines of home and work, to get away from the crowds, the traffic and the concrete of the city, to get close to the natural beauty of the park, and to have fun and recreation. In other words, there seems to be something about the nature of living and working in a city that pro-

Individuals come to a park to get away from the routines of home and work, to get away from the crowds, the traffic and the concrete of the city, to get close to the natural beauty of the park, and to have fun and recreation.

duces a basic need to escape -- if only for a few minutes -- from the pressures of home, job and city life. For those who choose to live in the city or for those who can't afford camping, moving to the suburbs or buying a small farm in the country, a city park is one of the most important community resources available until some of the pressures of the urban environment are changed.

---Lanny Kuester

Lanny Kuester is a resident of the Seward East neighborhood of Minneapolis. Lanny has worked as an ombudsman for the city of Richfield, a mechanic, and a night school teacher at South High. Lanny's interest in open space developed early on his family's farm in rural Minnesota.



COMMUNITY GARDENING

by Kevin Iungerman

Rebirth of Gardening

Americans are reawakening to the vast benefits of gardening. You may have experienced this gardening resurgence as new green in our increasingly concretized neighborhoods or perhaps at the Farmers' Market. There, as at retail and wholesale nursery outlets throughout the Twin Cities, gardening has become a brisk business. Thousands of local residents have discovered one or two green thumbs among their ten fingers. The ranks of experienced gardeners have been dramatically swollen by "first-timers", by "second-season enthusiasts" -- and significantly -- by those who possess no land of their own.

Certainly there are many reasons for this returning to gardening: high food prices, a desire for fresh vegetables, a personal sense of environment, the growth of leisure time. Regardless of the motivation, though, the outcome is the same: gardening activity, and interest, is intense and wide-spread. People of all ages and backgrounds are choosing gardening as essential recreation from a host of possible recreational activities available in the Twin Cities area.

One thing prevents gardening from assuming a place among the recreational repertoire of Minneapolis -- the failure to realize that gardening can be recreational! There is no reason why a community garden program should not have as much claim upon the City budget for support where residents initiate the programs as do other activities, among them: concerts, sports pro-

grams, bicycle paths, hiking trails, swimming, boating. Garden enthusiasts need to develop a consciousness of gardening as a community recreation program. Starting with this, they can then reach out to the community-at-large to develop a more comprehensive gardening awareness. What this entails is some degree of organization.

Organizing Community Gardens

Recreational programs and funding for them in the city budget, reflect the extent to which recipients of such services have been able to demonstrate needs, and then to exert some influence in satisfying those needs. It is crucial then to get residents involved in community gardening to approach organizing on a local level, be it neighborhood, project, school, club, or high rise. As a preliminary, a few interested individuals could place prominent notices about the community, distribute a mail questionnaire, take a door-to-door survey, or place an ad in a newsletter (create one?). Essentially, these procedures would espouse the need for a community gardening program and invite feedback and participants to organize one. It is essential to discern just what degree of support exists, and whether it is hard or soft; i.e. are you identifying participants?, or those people who merely think the idea is good? Both groups are necessary. Those interested may provide needed future support, and at least will not be an opposition. It is the coming together of participants which will determine whether a plan of action will evolve.

1. Once activists are identified, the newly formed coalition must determine in June or



Garden enthusiasts need to develop a consciousness of gardening as a community recreation program.

July the year prior to planting if there is land available either in the locality, or at least close by. A tentative listing of sites could be put together to be subject to review afterwards in the light of other criteria, such as:

- A. Is the land suitable for growing gardens, and to what extent? Is it excellent, good, fair, poor? Such judgment would hinge upon a soil sample (in lieu of past experience), accessibility, sun-shade factors, slope, availability of water (and how the water is available), and how well the site is defined from its surroundings.
- B. Are scattered sites to be preferred to a few large sites? This is something the gardeners should decide as a preliminary. Of course, availability of land will be a somewhat inflexible determinant.
- C. Who owns the land? Will the owner rent or provide the property for the purpose of community gardening? Just what restrictions will be required of the gardeners if the land is acquired? i.e. the responsibility to see that the site is kept clear of rubbish; that gardeners keep up their plots; that unacceptable behavior while on the land be clearly known; that a terminal date for land clearance in the autumn also be known.
- D. How many growing seasons may a site be expected to be available for gardening? Most vacant land, by nature of zoning, prior plans, and fluctuating whims of the owner, is not likely to be available for other than limited use. However, it is often reasonable to assume some land will remain vacant several years, thus allowing for perennials. An example: Urban

Renewal land lies dormant for an average of five years. This could be a point for a concerted effort to persuade the city to provide some sites for ongoing community gardens in the manner of many European cities, and some American cities as well. (Fenwick Gardens in Boston is one example.)

2. Preparation of the land. Once sites are identified and released by the owner, the gardening group must have the land turned over in the Fall before the first frost -- this is especially true when the land has lain fallow for considerable time and is thus greatly compacted. A schedule for a rototiller or tractor to work the land should be worked out. This will save time and money. It will be necessary to utilize this equipment again in the Spring for tilling and planting. Spring will also be the time for fertilizing on the basis of already obtained soil samples. Over the Fall and Winter sources of fertilizer and organic matter should be located. Municipal sludge and compost from county extension services (among other sources) should be utilized. Perhaps, where practical, compost piles could be begun on the actual garden sites. It seems probable that a group discount could be arranged from an area nursery. The nursery might also make a deal on seedlings as well, should the gardeners prefer this arrangement. However, this might lessen the personal interaction so important for a community garden.

3. Plans should be made to start seedlings indoors in February or March, particularly those plants needing a long growing season. Arrangements might be made to divide this work, different members growing different kinds and varieties of plants, for



Gardening helps new alignments and loyalties form, increasing the possibility of cooperation extending into other areas of community concern.

parcelling out to everyone after the Spring thaw. In concert with others, efforts should be gotten underway to have the city proclaim a "Spring Festival Day" or "Community Gardening Day" or something of this sort. A plant fair could be held at this time for the bartering and exchange of seedlings.

4. Preparation for the Gardener. The group should put together a basic bibliography pertaining to gardening. This could be admirably worked out with the public library. Such a listing could cover topics such as: plants peculiarly suited to Minnesota, plant propagation, cultivation, fertilization (chemical and organic), use of pesticides. Concerning the last--the use of pesticides--it would be invaluable to critically review alternative ways of pest control, such as natural predators, resistant hybrid strains, inter-cropping with noxious plants, or the use of decoy plants. Pesticides themselves should be examined for their breakdown time and the relative safety to those using the garden not merely the particular plot. It would seem a good idea to establish agreement on policy prior to planting.

5. To build interest, to increase expertise, and to provide a framework for the sharing of information and resources, it would be a good idea to arrange brief, one-session seminars and lectures, in conjunction with other interested community garden groups. Speakers might be enlisted from the university, the county extension service, the organic growers and buyers assoc., garden clubs, and other interested sources of technical information. Likely places for getting together, would be public library branches, school auditoriums, community centers, park recreation centers, and even area banks (already done by one downtown bank).

Other Benefits of Community Gardens

Gardening enables participants to see direct consequences of their endeavors; to share in the endeavors of those gardening around them. It is a subtle learning process. On an abstract level, there is a blend of technical expertise and information: entomology, genetics, and soil science. On the personal level, different cultural or otherwise antagonistic divisions can often be brought together. New alignments and loyalties form which could increase the possibility of cooperation extending into other areas of community concern. Functionally, community gardens can utilize open space that is not now contributing to the visual esthetics of Minneapolis. Indeed, much land is given over to weeds and refuse. Gardening also provides benefits of emotional relaxation, mental stimulation, and physical exercise. All of these factors can serve to build a healthier community, one which is more self-actualizing. Community gardens are not simple amenities; they are necessities. They can be part of the educational process of living together in the City, of re-establishing human relationships in neighborhoods, and in re-establishing neighborhood identities.

Kevin Iungerman, who lives near Powderhorn Park, is involved in creating a community gardening program at the Community Design Center, 26th and Stevens, in Minneapolis - 827-2608. Kevin has more information and contacts on community gardens and is anxious to share that information with individuals or neighborhood groups interested in urban gardening.

THE P N NEIGH ED OPEN

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

*all monthly unless indicated
all free unless noted*

MINNEAPOLIS:

Echo News (East Calhoun Homeowners' Association), 3508 Humboldt Ave S, Mpls 55408; c/o Marge Thurin; \$3.00/yr; (825-6408)

Lake Street Gazette, 2941 Blaisdell Ave. S., Mpls 55408; Liz Weiner, ed.; weekly; (823-5666)

Loring Park Community Crier, 116 W. Grant St., Apt. 2, Mpls 55403; Marybeth Buchele, ed; (332-2674)

Many Corners (Cedar-Riverside Associates), 1503 Washington Ave S, Mpls 55404; Barry Casselman, ed; \$3.00/yr; (335-0031)

NECO Newsletter, 1929 2nd St NE, Mpls 55418; (789-7218)

The Paper, Model Cities Communications Center, 3010 4th Ave. S., Mpls 55404; John Hollenhorst, ed.; every 2 wks; (823-8247)

Seward West News, 2227 E. Franklin, Mpls 55404; Jerry Ravenhorst, ed (332-5557)

The Southside Alligator, 24 E. 31st St, Mpls 55408; Glen Sampson, ed.; irregular; donations suggested; (823-2118)

The Wedge, 2634 Bryant Ave S., Mpls 55408, Lorraine Scott, ed.; \$2/year, (374-2693)

ST. PAUL:

Capitol Area News, 124 E. Arch, StP 55101; Contact: Herb Swenson; (222-1781)

Communique (Roosevelt Housing Area), 1575 Ames Ave, StP 55106; Roger Hughes, ed.; (774-9647)

Eastsider (Phalen Area Community Council), 1075 Arcade, StP 55106; Coordinator: Karen Jasinski; \$1.50/yr; (771-8816)

Grand Avenue Gazette, 867 Grand Ave, StP 55105; Roger Swardson, ed.; \$3.60/yr; (227-1621)

Hamline-Lexington Eavesdropper, 1277 Dayton Ave, StP 55104; Contact: Iimmie Treichel; (645-3044)

Highland Villager, 790 Cleveland Ave S, StP 55116; Maurice Mishke, publisher; every 2 wks; \$4.50/yr; (699-1462)

North End News (North End Community Assn), 429 Idaho, StP 55117; Don Effenberger, Tom Weyandt, eds.; every 2 mos; \$1.00-2.00 voluntary donation/yr; (227-8271)

Saint Anthony Bugle, 2239 Carter Ave, StP 55108; Roger Swardson, ed.; \$3.60/yr; (646-5415)

Shamrock (Jackson-Wheelock Service Center), 1544 Timberlake Rd, StP 55117; Katie Barron, ed.; \$1.80/yr (postage costs); (488-0243)

Summit-University Free Press, 100 N Oxford, StP 55104; Pauline Eichten, ed. coord; (224-4601)

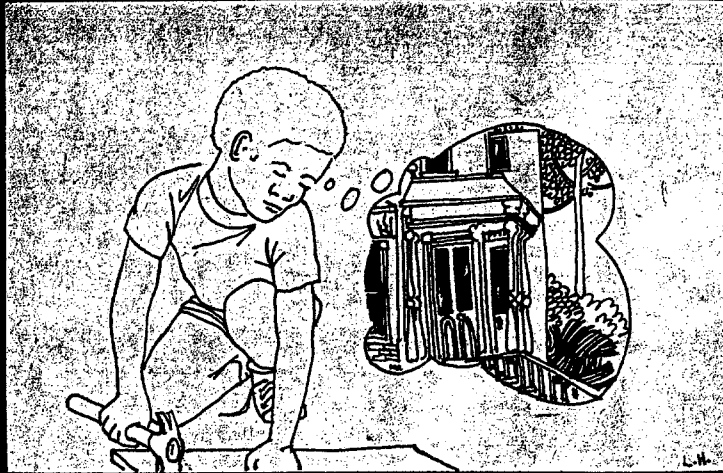
Target Area A Newsletter, 630 Laurel, StP 55104; Tia Dwyer, ed.; (222-7369)

Un-Wrapper (Ramsey Action Program), 509 Sibley, StP 55101; Polly Nyberg, ed; every 2 wk; (227-8954)

West Seventh News (W. 7th Community Assn), 305 Goodrich, StP 55102; Marlene Barrett, ed.

West Side Voice, 179 E Robie, StP 55107; Eileen McMahan, ed; \$2.40/yr; (227-9291)

This listing is the beginning of a continuing feature of Common Ground, in which we will list and review community-based newspapers and newsletters. Further listings of community, coop, and association newsletters will be found in future issues. Please contact us at 335-2424 if you would like to suggest a listing.



ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND

by Lynn Hinkle

What childhood play experiences do you remember with the most fondness? Certainly all of us, at one time or another, have slid down a slide feet first, clambered to the top of a jungle gym and swung as high as we could in a swing. But, if you're like me, you probably remember the times spent at a nearby vacant lot, field or wooded plot with greater fondness. It seems to me my play was most rewarding when I was able to construct and change my play environment. Adventure playgrounds are aimed at providing for this sort of memorable play.

The adventure playground, sometimes called "junk playground", is simply a recreational space where children are encouraged, with an adult supervisor to help maintain safety, to construct their own play environment. A vacant plot of land is designated a playground site, but left in an undeveloped state. Building materials such as planks, pipes, boxes, etc., and a variety of hand tools are provided for children to build their "houses", dig holes, or hang tire swings from trees. The recreational program, the equipment and the landscape are determined by the kids with minimal adult interference. An adventure playground could grow out of any neighborhood where the residents agree to support kids' use of a vacant lot, usually in great supply, for their own imaginative constructions.

Although the idea of an adventure playground may seem merely imaginative and not practical, it's interesting to note that the first adventure playground in the U.S. developed on a one and one-third acre lot adjoining the old Edith Cavell Grade School in Northeast Minneapolis. This experiment, undertaken in 1950, was supported enthusiastically by the school P.T.A., a neighborhood citizens committee, local unions, and numerous

boards, businesses and agencies. "The Yard", as it was called, successfully coalesced the neighborhood, involved parents, and drew throngs of children. However, The Yard successes were insufficient to keep it open past 1950, nor did it provide impetus for developing any other similar playgrounds until 1967 in Richmond, California.

It isn't clear from inquiries with the Minneapolis School and Park Boards why The Yard was discontinued even though it seemed to have had an incredible amount of community support. The failure of similar playgrounds to develop elsewhere is perhaps influenced by recreational planners' insistence on structured play and the playground equipment industry, which last year produced over \$40 million in slides, climbing bars, and swings alone.

Benefits of Adventure Playgrounds

An account of Minneapolis' early experience with The Yard may suggest the prime value of an adventure playground for children:

When The Yard first opened it was every child for himself. The initial stockpile of secondhand lumber disappeared like ice on a hot stove. Children helped themselves to all they could carry....Some hoarded tools and supplies in secret caches. Everybody wanted to build the biggest shack in the shortest time...Then came the bust. There wasn't a stick of lumber left. Highjacking raids were staged on half-finished shacks. Grumbling and bickering broke out...But on the second day of the great depression most of the youngsters banded together spontaneously for a salvage drive. Tools



Unlike traditional playgrounds which, at best, help build kids' muscles, adventure playgrounds, molded by children to fit their needs, may help build a kid's sense of community.

and nails came out of hiding... Rugged individualists who had insisted on building alone invited others to join in -- and bring their supplies along. ...New ideas popped up for joint projects. By the time a fresh supply of lumber arrived, a community had been born. [Footnoted, p. 14 of Clare Cooper's study; see below]

Unlike traditional playgrounds which, at best, help build kids' muscles, adventure playgrounds, molded by children to fit their needs, may help build a child's sense of community.

Just as The Yard helped children develop a sense of community, organizing an adventure playground may also help restore a sense of community among adults in a neighborhood. Developing a neighborhood park may be fragmenting if it involves clearing homes for a park site, or prevents construction of low-density housing on already vacant land. Adults in cases like this may instead want to turn a nearby vacant lot into a space where kids can exercise their imaginations constructively. In any event, planning, initiating, and running an adventure playground requires a group of residents who may find that together they can more effectively deal with other neighborhood concerns.

Creating Adventure Playgrounds

Neighborhood groups planning an adventure playground will probably want to determine: 1. Location 2. Insurance 3. Costs and 4. Accident probabilities fairly early in the planning process. In a highly readable booklet, The Adventure Playground: Creative Play in an Urban Setting and a Potential Focus for Community Involvement (published by the Institute

of Urban and Regional Development, University of California, Berkeley), Clare Cooper deals extensively with these and other practical problems.

1. Almost any vacant lot, preferably with trees, is a suitable location for an adventure playground. Since these playgrounds require minimal fixed equipment and no landscaping, residents may convince the owner of a vacant lot to lease his/her property.

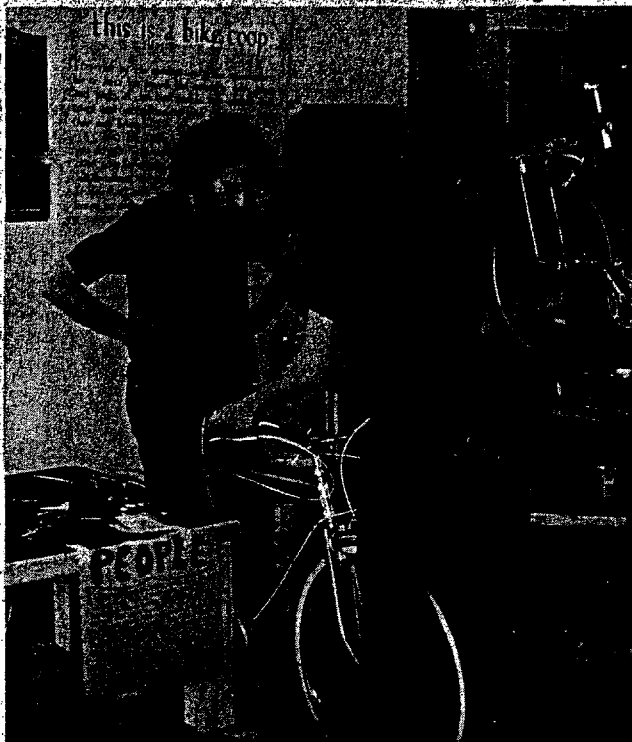
2. For information on how to get insurance companies to provide necessary accident insurance and persuade neighbors and city authorities to approve adventure playgrounds, write Lovie McIntosh, Director, People Pledged for Community Progress, 705 Bissell Avenue, Richmond, California 94801.

3. Costs can be kept at a minimum since the play equipment is essentially recycled construction materials. Although an adult supervisor will need to be paid, it is possible that residents could arrange for VISTA or the Neighborhood Youth Corps to hire someone from the neighborhood for the job.

4. An account of the Minneapolis adventure playground takes note of the concern over the probabilities of injury, stating that "...the safety record astonished everybody. After a year...injuries consisted of some banged thumbs, small cuts and bruises for the entire involvement of over 200 children. No child ever used a tool to hit another person."

Clearly, organizing a neighborhood adventure playground would require considerable time and energy. However, creation of an adventure playground may benefit children and adults alike by providing space for children to construct their own play-environment and a rallying point for neighborhood adults.

COMMUNITY BUILDING



Freewheel

Freewheel -- the bicycle coop -- an outlet for bicycles and supplies at people's prices, a workshop where members can come and work with their bicycles on a pay-as-you-can basis -- a reality at the intersection of 34th Ave. So. and E. 25th St. near West River Road in Minneapolis.

In January of 1974 about 20 people started meeting regularly to talk about the numerous aspects of opening a people's business. We started writing to bicycle distributors and parts wholesalers, and discussed coop policy and philosophy. Initial capital was generated through interest-free, short-term loans from the coop community. With this first \$3500 we finally found a location and ordered our first shipments of parts and bicycles; we opened in mid-April.

The People's Workshop is now established. There is room for four members at a time to work on their bicycles, using the specialized tools and experience available through the coop at a suggested rate of 75¢ to \$3.50 per hour, depending upon how much assistance is received and how much the person can afford. Parts and supplies are available on a cost plus ten percent basis to the coop community, cost plus thirty percent to others. Anything not on hand can be ordered on a prepaid basis from one of the five wholesalers with whom we do business.

Bicycles also are available. The big "boom" in bicycling has made bicycle purchasing a rather chaotic business. We are constantly seeking new suppliers, searching for the best bicycle we can get at a reasonable price or simply just trying to find something to replace a sold-out line that we can no longer get due to high demand. Presently we carry Sekai, Zeus, Dawes, Frejus, and Mercier 10-speeds, each with its own advantages and disadvantages, with prices ranging from \$100 to \$150. Professional models also are available. Rapido 3- and 5-speeds, made in Czechoslovakia, are sold, and cost \$65 and \$80 respectively.

As with most coops, responsibility has regrettably settled on the shoulders of a small number of persons--in our case, about six people delegate much of their time to running the coop, but we need several more people's help. We ask all members to contribute 4 hours of volunteer labor per month to any coop or community service, but it seems that few are working with us, for we are suffering from a lack of voluntary help. Please come by, even if you know nothing of bikes. We'll learn together.

A big problem we experience is explaining ourselves. Too often, it seems, we are regarded as a discount store -- where the merchandise counts more than the coop ideal. We try to clarify our position as an alternative instead of as a competitor.

Financially, things are quite good. Our steady workers can now receive a small wage if and when they need it. Our store stock is steadily growing. We can now fill many needs without special ordering. A fairly large selection of bicycles is on hand now, whereas before we had to sell on a pay-in-advance basis. We still solicit loans from the community, and are presently able to repay any loan up to \$500 with a week's notice. Winter presents a serious question. We hope to get by on cross-country skis, snowshoes, ice skates, etc. in typical bike shop fashion. However, we need experience! If you are familiar with any one of these winter sports fields and are willing to spend a good deal of volunteer or people's pay time, then Freewheel needs you as a winter activities coordinator.

Freewheel is new, but we feel we have established ourselves as a working cooperative, able to survive and continue our community venture. For Freewheel to remain a reality, we need your help.

---Bill Kempton

COMMUNITY BUILDING

SouthSide Community Enterprises Inc.

SouthSide Community Enterprises Inc. is a community-controlled corporation that just received a \$70,000 planning grant from the Minneapolis City Council to start up some community-owned businesses in South Minneapolis. During the next year, its resident planning board will be doing the research necessary to determine: 1) what kind of enterprise to initiate, 2) how many people can be employed and at what wages, 3) what kind of approaches are possible for involving the workers themselves in the operation of their shops, 4) where is money going to come from to start the businesses decided on by the corporation, and 5) how to develop and sustain active community involvement.

The best way to understand how a community development corporation could work is to imagine SouthSide Community Enterprises as it might be five years from now.

Structurally what we have is SouthSide Community Enterprises as a parent corporation with several "spinoff" organizations -- "subsidiaries" as the business people call them. The board of the corporation would be composed of residents of South Minneapolis and worker participants of each of the subsidiaries. Five years from now the board would be responsible for investment decisions like: do we start a training program, initiate a new business, direct a big portion of our profits into the struggling bicycle factory, raise the price of our drug products so we can expand that facility, grant an across-the-board pay raise to the people in the toy factory? The board will decide the basic priorities of the corporation, and attempt to strike a balance between business and expansion and providing needed community services; between the necessity of making sound investment decisions and taking the risks necessary to experiment with new forms of workplace organization, new products, etc.

The projects themselves, whether a cooperative child care operation for corporation employees or a toy manufacturing outfit will organize their own internal operation. Given the variables of size, nature of the task, expectations and desires of the workers in each project, different styles of organization will develop. Let's imagine further and take a look at each possibility.

1. Alternative Toys Inc.

Employs thirty people full time. It could specialize in durable, safe, and "critical" learning materials. Weekly shop meetings to discuss problems, an elected board to work with management to make shop decisions. Participation of workers is high.

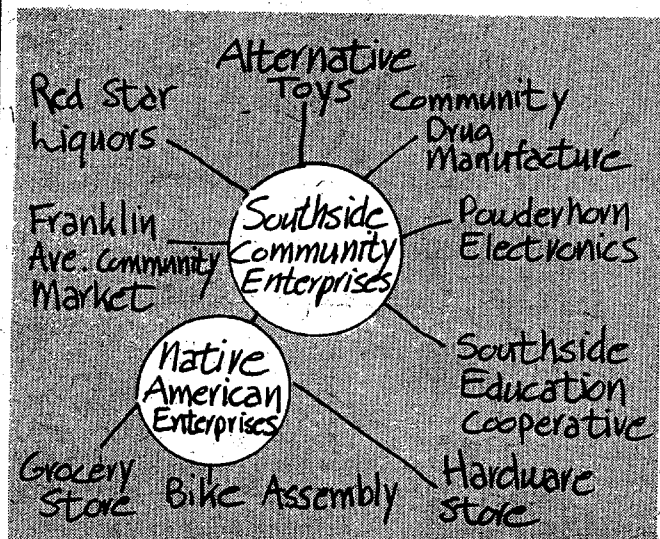
After a shaky initial year (it took time to establish a market), the company is operating in the black.

2. Community Drug Manufacture

Twenty full time employees produce antibiotics, aspirin, etc. (prescription and non-prescription) at prices well below those of the big ripoff companies. The big market is with senior citizens on the Southside and all over the metropolitan area. Routinization is higher in this shop than others--except for the lab. Participation in management is lower than in the toy company.

3. Powderhorn Electronics Corporation

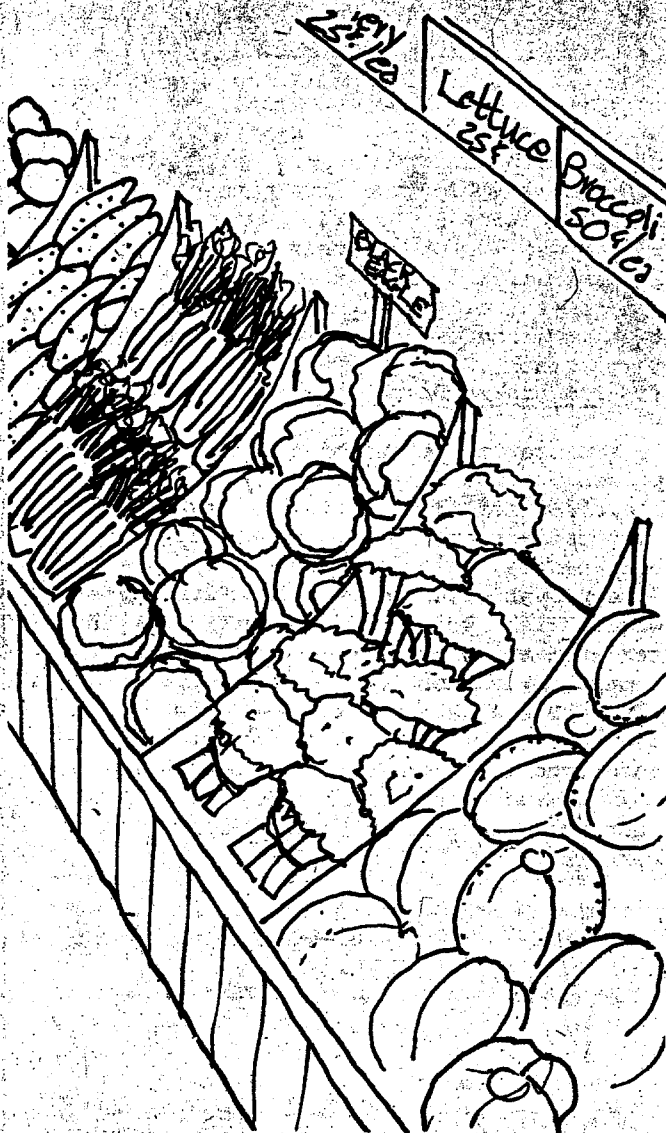
PEC started as one of two initial enterprises for the corporation. Workers assemble electrical components for several large corporations in the area. PEC employs seventy people, many of whom were considered "unemployable", at higher than average wages. Last year, a major controversy erupted when the management of PEC decided to contract with Honeywell. They were outvoted by the Board as a whole. PEC uses modern management methods with the workforce divided into teams which move from job to job over a year's period of time. The workers just voted to join the United Electrical Workers.



COMMUNITY BUILDING

4. Native American Enterprises Inc.

This consortium of Indian-owned and controlled enterprises includes a grocery store, a credit union, a hardware operation, and a bicycle assembling operation that employs fifty people. In the works is a community-owned housing development. While technically an entity of SouthSide Community Enterprises Inc., decisions are made by the Native American community itself.



5. Franklin Avenue Community Market

Modelled after the Hyde Park Cooperative, Chicago, this supermarket serves the Seward West Community and was developed as an alternative to Red Owl. The Community Market has been experimenting with ways to build in consumer and employee participation in a large-scale commercial operation.

6. Red Star Liquors

Two of the biggest money makers of the corporation as a whole are its Red Star Liquor stores. Profits go directly into the corporate budget to help fund staff. Opposition to the enterprise has been widespread, both among liquor store owners in the area who feared the competition and community people who felt that the last thing South Minneapolis needed was more liquor stores. Several board members resigned in protest over the final decision and pressure from certain Northside aldermen almost led to a cutoff of revenue sharing funds for the corporation as a whole.

7. Southside Education Cooperative

S.E.C. is the educational "wing" of the corporation. It operates three child care centers and the job training-education component of the operation. All employees of SouthSide Community Enterprises are required to take a two week training and orientation session at the S.E.C. center. Sessions include specific skills training for specific jobs, a general introduction to the underlying principles of the corporation, and plenty of time for free discussion. In addition to the orientation, courses are offered to corporation members, employees, and the community as a whole, in everything from "principles of cooperative management" to "how to start a non-profit rehab corporation." Emphasis of S.E.C. is on cooperative approaches to community problem solving.

Although the "corporate board" has not been together long enough to establish definite priorities, it is possible to speculate on some of the ways in which SouthSide Community Enterprises might challenge some of the basic tenets of business organization as we know it in America today -- the notion that companies are owned by private individuals (investors) who realize a profit in proportion to the magnitude of their holdings in the company; that companies are managed by white collar professionals whose primary responsibility is to effectively organize the human "factors of production"; that the chief criteria in choosing a product to manufacture is profit, often to the exclusion of all other considerations.

In place of these assumptions, the board of SouthSide Community Enterprises may decide to start some businesses where -- profits are treated as communal rather than pri-

REVIEWS.....REVIEWS

vate; decisions on the operation of the shop are, in part at least, made by all, or a group of in-shop workers rather than the sole prerogative of management; decisions on what is to be produced are based on community need, rather than profitability narrowly conceived.

All of this might seem unrealistic to the readers of Common Ground. And as SouthSide Community Enterprises begins its initial planning, it is too early to predict the strategy for economic development it will follow, although the ideas discussed earlier are certainly possibilities. Participants in the Corporation believe that the resources (financial and human) are available to build, on a significant scale, alternative models of business enterprise and community development, like those outlined above. It will take political struggle to win financial support from governmental sources. It will take cooperative planning to get people in South Minneapolis working together. But it can be done. People are beginning to do it.

---Tom O'Connell

If interested, contact: SouthSide Community Enterprises---335-8485.

2314 Elliot Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404

The Maryland Cafe

Can meat loaf and vegie burgers co-exist peacefully in one restaurant? Visit the Maryland Cafe and see for yourself. Healthy, inexpensive foods abound, but not to the exclusion of meat-and-potato folks. Add to this an atmosphere of caring and gentle people and you have not just an eating place, but a gathering spot for people of all ages and lifestyles.

In the heart of the Loring-Nicollet neighborhood, on Grant Street between LaSalle and Spruce Place, the cafe resides in the basement of the Maryland Hotel. Under new management since April, the three partners have changed the focus towards whole, not processed, foods. They prepare the foods for taste and nutrition, not for their convenience and profit.

"People have a choice, though," says Betsy, one of the three owners. "We don't just serve counter-culture foods. We offer a blend of different foods, yet we do want to provide alternatives to standard eating styles. We want people to try whole foods,

but we don't force them."

The specialties vary from cheese and mushroom omelettes to apple pie, lasagna to whole wheat french toast, fresh vegetables to cheese pie. The main feature is the lunch line, a long-time dream of Betsy and George, another partner.



"We are not a fast food resturant but you can get good food fast."

At noon, the soup-and-salad line offers a fast, healthy meal for between \$1 and \$1.50. George makes the soups and fresh-baked whole breads. The salads you serve yourself, adding the multitude of garnishes and your choice of three dressings. The food is mighty tasty as well as nutritious and fresh. The price is fair; you can get a meal for under \$2. Senior citizens get a 10% discount.

Good food alone does not make a restaurant. The air of friendliness and warmth makes the Maryland a comfortable place to eat. It's a community--people giving and sharing, which breaks down the isolation of our fast-paced society, especially in this high-density area.

There are many instances of community at the Maryland. The people who work there also live in the neighborhood, including the three who are partners. They bought the location intentionally in order to serve the area,

REVIEWS REVIEWS



although people from other neighborhoods are definitely welcome to dine.

One of the many services to the community is the winter catering. When senior residents are not able to leave their rooms, the Maryland crew brings them food. Yet, the seniors are not treated in a patronizing manner and robbed of their dignity. Many of them know they can return the service to the cafeteria. One older resident, Ray, comes in to help with dishes in exchange for his meals.

Within the cafe is a community of workers. The workers and owners work closely together to provide good food and a warm atmosphere for people who enter their doors; there are not sharp distinctions among the crew. The pay is relatively low but equitable for all. The aim is not profit for a few; the little that exceeds costs is recycled into the restaurant. Keeping prices low and the food healthy is a main goal.

Some of the workers help maintain the restaurant in exchange for meals and companionship. Others come in for a few hours a week to cook their favorite foods, like potato salad or peanut butter cookies.

The Maryland Cafe people do share in many other ways. Their space is available for groups such as a women's AA group, a men's support group, and community organizations. If you want to learn how to use whole foods or if you want a recipe, they will readily give you this information.

The Maryland is one good model of a community business. The people there can serve as a good resource for similar businesses in other communities. The spirit is one of

cooperation, not competition.

Drop in some time for a quick lunch or a long, relaxing meal. Maybe you will even end up trying one of Marvin's veggie burgers. In any case, you will leave a little healthier--and maybe happier--than when you came in.

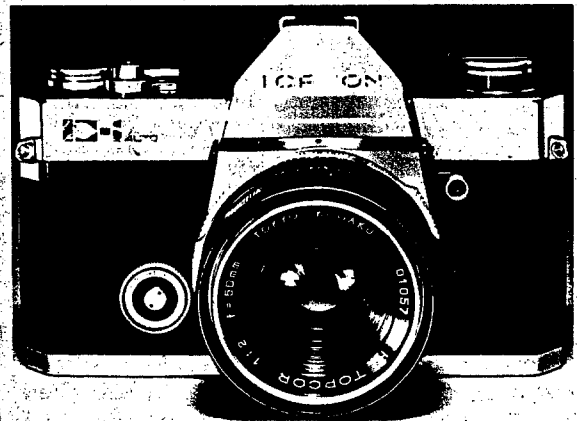
--Gayla Wadnizak

CAFE HOURS*	
<u>Weekdays</u>	
Breakfast...	6:00-11:00
Lunch.....	11:00-2:00
Dinner.....	5:00-7:30
<u>Saturday</u>	8:00-12:30
<u>Sunday</u>	8:00-2:30
*subject to expansion	
phone:338-4191	

The Photo Collective

The Photo Collective is a newly formed group of photographers, who offer a wide range of photographic services to community groups, political action and peoples' organizations. Examples of the collective's work can be seen throughout this issue of Common Ground.

The Photo Collective can be reached at 722-0741 or at 336-0541. Written correspondence should be sent to 1223 Washburn Avenue North, 55411.



This section of the magazine--the Community Building and Reviews section--will be a continuing feature in future issues of Common Ground. If you want to write about, or review a community project, play, eating place, book, etc., please do and send the article in to.....Common Ground

2314 Elliot Ave., Mpls. 55404

coming next:

Indian Cultural Center

A look at who was able to influence its building, and why.

Nicollet Island History

A history of the Island, with some proposals for new development, written by Island residents.

Near North Side History

A study of the development of the Black community in North Minneapolis.

Development of the Mpls Park System

Who was included, and who was excluded, from planning the Minneapolis parks?

Plus:

more COMMUNITY BUILDING, RESOURCES, AND REVIEWS

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"Group of Frogs"

Minneapolis Park Board Photo

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