

**TO: Urbana Park District Advisory Committee**

**FR: Timothy A. Bartlett, Superintendent of Planning and Operations**

**CC: Vicki Mayes, Executive Director of Parks and Recreation**

**DT: August 1, 2011**

**RE: Carle Park – Pavilion Rehabilitation**

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

According to the Urbana Park District’s book “A Century of Growth – The Urbana Park District’s First 100 Years” it was acknowledged that in 1909 Mrs. Margaret Carle Morris donated 8.3 acres to what is now known as Carle Park. In addition to the generous gift of land, Mrs. Morris donated \$10,000 for beautifying the park with a fountain, statuary and the stone pavilion. In 1919 a general landscape plan (master plan) was developed by Joseph Cullen Blair that featured a formal axis from the Pavilion to the new high school. Few of the master plan elements were ever implemented after the plan was approved. Some of the planned features—like the playground and active recreation elements—were changed over the years since the plan was developed. Today, the only features remaining of the original plan are the axis walkway, pavilion and fountain structure.

The pavilion in the park has become one of the cherished architectural elements in park and neighborhood. It draws many visitors to the park and is likely considered a local landmark used in wayfinding in Urbana. During the 1970s the restrooms installed in the “side wings” of the pavilion were removed at the neighborhood’s request due to vandalism concerns. In the 1980s, some rehabilitation work was underway to provide a metal roof covering on the “wings” and other repairs including lighting and landscape plantings were added to help improve the condition of the pavilion and improve the effects of vandalism. By this time the water fountain was drained and not maintained any longer as a working water feature due to vandalism in the park.

In 1993 Mrs. George Miller donated \$25,000 to restore the fountain area of the park as a lasting memorial to her late husband, Dr. George Miller, a long-time Carle Park neighbor. John Fraenhoffer, P.E. and Tim Bartlett, ASLA collaborated to re-create a garden setting out of the former fountain feature. It was believed by both that the garden element would help counterbalance the vandalism in the park particularly to the fountain feature by creating a destination in the park. The water feature was reconstructed into a garden with the fountain as the focal point. The new garden design was a success in that it salvaged the fountain structure, reinvigorated the park setting and created a lasting memory for the neighborhood and community.

However, at that time the adjacent pavilion was much worse for the wear and tear caused by aging and continued vandalism. In 1993 the Urbana Park District Advisory Committee’s Capital

Improvement Subcommittee recommended that the pavilion be torn down due to the high cost of rehabilitation, ever increasing list of District capital improvement needs and the on-going influence of vandalism to the pavilion. The subcommittee struggled with the high cost of rehabilitation and the uncertainty of protecting the structure in the future. After much board consideration, the UPD Board of Commissioners agreed to provide funds for a comprehensive rehabilitation of the pavilion. The hope was that the new Miller Garden and the rehabilitated pavilion would generate new visitors to the park and help “police” the area in a positive way to eliminate/greatly reduce vandalism.

In 1993 the UPD hired Mr. Vic Isaksen, Isaksen Matzdorff + Associates to prepare plans for the rehabilitation. Mr. Isaksen previously worked on the pavilion during the first known rehabilitation in the 1980s and had a great understanding of the problems and issues surrounding the pavilion. The 1993 rehabilitation plan included: salvage of the clay roof, clay ridge tiles, and ornamental caps; replacement of wood roof decking (lower level only); new gutters and downspouts, new wood soffit brackets, new aluminum fascia, steel plate roof installation; new metal doors/frames, replace spalling limestone, patching of damaged limestone, new lighting, painting of wood, accessible walks and general tuck pointing and repair of all mortar and stonework. The older, surrounding landscape plantings around the pavilion proper were removed as they created unsafe conditions and enhanced hiding places for criminal behaviors. The A/E fees and construction work cost approximately \$100,000. The rehabilitated pavilion was completed in the spring of 1994.

As part of the 1993 reinvestment, UPD staff agreed to apply graffiti barriers—a thin coating painted on the surface of the stone/mortar materials—in order to provide further protection from on-going vandalism. However, over the next 2 years the frequency of vandalism and the cost of labor and materials needed to apply, remove and re-apply the coated barriers inside and outside of the pavilion proved to exceed the capabilities of the UPD staff and budgets. It should be noted that in addition to the time and materials cost the application of chemical barriers and the chemical removers used to remove unwanted graffiti were being washed into the landscape beds and tree root zones. Staff became increasingly concerned about the long-term health of the adjacent trees—especially the historic English oaks located next to the pavilion. The larger of the two English oaks is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest English oak in the state of Illinois. Since that time the chemical use has been discontinued and the typical “sand blasting” or soda blasting for graffiti treatment has been employed as the best method to remove graffiti. Staff does understand that the long-term use of blasting is detrimental to the health and longevity of the stonework and mortar supporting the stone blocks. Ghosting of images/text can still be viewed however at a reduced impact. In addition, placing UPD staff in potentially hazardous work conditions using blasting continues to concern the administration.

### **CURRENT UPDATE**

The Carle Park pavilion is open at all times of day and night year round. The accessibility and proximity to the school campuses and the variety of vandals that frequent the park provide challenges to keep it safe and protected. In 2007/2008 the UPD embarked on a master plan update for the park. The UPD staff worked with neighborhood residents to review a variety of potential activities and features in the park. The master plan process considered three (3) main areas of concern: replacement of the old playground, protecting and enhancing the tree canopy

and landscape elements and the pavilion rehabilitation. The master plan was completed and approved by the Board of Commissioners in 2008. To date, the playground has been replaced with an age appropriate and unique play experience supported by a new access path. An urban forestry plan for managing the trees has been prepared and incorporated into the management strategy for the park. All of the known hazardous trees have been removed from the park. Most of the other park trees have been pruned to improve the overall health of the urban forest in Carle Park. Recent inspections of the park pavilion by staff and professional architects determined it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive rehabilitation plan for the structure to include measures to further protect the structure from destructive activities.

Some of the most destructive and frequent vandalism activities and negative behaviors within the pavilion area include: painting/permanent inking the walls, destroying the mortar between the stone blocks, open fires, wall fires (burning flammables on the walls), smashing lights/fixtures, tearing off downspouts/gutters, chiseling holes in the stone work/mortar/concrete walks, denting the roof and doors/frames, vandalizing adjacent trees, sexual intercourse, sexual solicitation, alcohol consumption, drug use/paraphernalia disposal, public urination/defecation. The Urbana Police Department continues to report that most of the negative activities are perpetrated by students and area youth that may not be attending school. The overall impact produces an “unwelcoming” feeling when visitors stop in or pass by the pavilion.

The pavilion has continued to be vandalized throughout the years since the 1993 rehabilitation in a way that makes appropriate operation and maintenance of the structure impossible given the current setting and use. The UPD continues to clean and keep up with the high level of vandalism. Some of the staff challenges include vandalism events that occur in the winter months when it is difficult to get water to the site for powerwashing and/or getting chemical removers to be effective during freeze periods. In addition, the UPD utilizes off-duty Urbana police to conduct special details to provide surveillance and protection of the park. The cost of this is supported by the “Police Fund” the District collects from property taxes. The cost for police patrols is approximately \$60/hour with a 2 hour minimum. Limited use of special patrols is confined to the fall/spring (warm seasons) when students return to the high school/middle school campuses due to the high cost, need for patrols in other parks or areas of the city, other police details for on-going community events and the lack of benefits the patrols generate. Over the many years very few, if any, vandals have been caught and prosecuted.

### **DESIGN AND REHABILITATION CONSIDERATIONS**

During the 2008 master plan process UPD staff identified several options to help keep the pavilion in a safe condition. The following is a listing of these options and considerations:

#### **Gates/Fencing:**

Urbana Police Department recommended that the pavilion be gated (enclosed) in order to keep vandals out of the shelter. The gating concept intended to incorporate architecturally attractive gates over the doors/upper openings/end caps to screen in the interior spaces thus keeping people out of the hidden shelter area. It was also intended that the gates appear as if they were original to the structure and not “tacked on” in appearance.

**Security Cameras:**

The Urbana Police Department also recommended installing security cameras to help identify and prosecute criminal activity in the pavilion. Recently the Urbana School District has installed cameras to most of their campus facilities and plan to add more for added security. MTD is also adding security cameras to bus shelters and other MTD facilities.

**“Classical Music”:**

Businesses and units of government have added piped in classical music to problem locations as a way to make the spaces less attractive/conducive for young people by playing music that is not of interest to youth. This approach has been noted to be successful in some locations and has failed in others due to vandals becoming used to the setting.

**Site Fencing:**

Fencing could be added around the entire pavilion and Miller Garden as a way to keep vandals out of the area. It should be noted that many vandals would jump fences to get into areas. Without other measures in place, the fencing could prove to be ineffective as well as unattractive to the setting.

**The “Mosquito”:**

High frequency sounds are piped into problem areas that emit painful/irritating levels of noise especially in younger adolescents. Older adults are not able to hear the high frequency due to aging. The planned result is that young people leave the area due to discomfort. This has limited use and can drive away other intended visitors. The high frequency can emit beyond the site and affect adjacent neighbors depending on the wind direction, proximity and sensitivity of one’s hearing.

**Neighborhood Watch:**

This type of program can be effective in reducing the amount/frequency of vandalism events. It is wholly dependent on the number of participants and relies on long term commitment to participate. Due to time passing, lack of vandals prosecuted, transient neighbors/neighborhood leaders and/or work schedules may provide limited results. The UPD staff recommends this measure with any of the other options listed as it also can be a great way to improve the social connections within a neighborhood. UPD recommended the use of the IAPD model program “Eagle Eye”—a neighborhood watch program developed by park and recreation professionals in Illinois. UPD staff recommended this program during the 2007/2008 master plan process. No action was initiated by the neighborhood.

**Security Staff:**

The UPD could consider hiring a private security company to manage the pavilion on a full time basis however, the cost of this type of service would likely be unsustainable for the District. Use of off-duty Urbana Police officers can still be used to help supplement the safety of the site however; current budgets and limited police staff would make it impossible to manage the site in a way that would be cost effective or sustainable. UPD staff included discussions with the Urbana Police and the Urbana School District’s School Resource Officer to determine if any shared use/duties could be arranged. Unfortunately, the school resource officer is working full

time at the Urbana school campus and would not be able to share any time with the UPD. Any additional efforts by USD would include hiring more help to manage the issues on the campus.

### **CONCLUSION**

Improving the situation at Carle Park is imperative given the current state of the pavilion. UPD staff has obtained a proposal from IGW to provide A/E services to rehab the pavilion. The estimated cost for professional services is approximately \$46,000 + reimbursable expenses. In addition, staff will be meeting with IPARKS—the District’s risk provider—to determine if the current condition will allow the pavilion to remain open. Staff will also seek out the option of having the damages covered by insurance however; the condition has been caused by continual vandalism over a number of years. It is unlikely that any/all of the damages would be covered under our current insurance.

Staff recommends that appropriate solutions allow for the rehabilitation of the Carle Park pavilion in a way that will preserve it for future generations and improve the overall appeal of Carle Park to all visitors.