

A Revitalized Pope Park is Important for Hartford



Over a century ago, Colonel Albert Pope donated the land for Pope Park to the city of Hartford for the use of his employees and for city residents to enjoy. Colonel Pope was the head of the Pope Manufacturing Company, which manufactured bicycles and automobiles, including the well-known Columbia bicycle.

The park was designed by the Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects in 1898, and originally consisted of 90.5 acres. Back then, the park had three separate sections. Its boundaries were defined by the southern branch of the Park River, which runs underground beneath the park today.

Pope Park was deeded to the City of Hartford by the Pope family “for park purposes only”, and was designed as an example of the best that a park can contribute to the neighborhood. Up to this day, the land is still being utilized for a public park. Pope Park has athletic fields, a recreation center, a pond, and other features that the surrounding community enjoys... features that bring people together to enjoy the outdoors and escape from the hectic pace and noise of the city.

Unfortunately, the last half century has seen a gradual decline of this valuable neighborhood resource. Preserving and restoring the park is an essential component to the area’s revitalization.

There is a plan to stop this decline and restore the park for our city’s residents today, and for future generations to come. The Pope Park Master Plan provides this vision.

The Pope Park Plan came about as a result of The Hartford Parks Master Plan, prepared in 1992 by the City of Hartford. This report addressed the need “for wise stewardship of all parks” and made recommendations for improvements in thirty-two city parks. In 2000, The Friends of Pope Park, a group of neighborhood residents concerned about the condition of the park, started working with Pope Hartford Designated Fund and Knox Parks Foundation to address the recommendations made in the Hartford Parks Master Plan. A specific plan for Pope Park was developed.



What needs to be done? Although the integrity of the Olmsted design is still visible in the Pope Park of today, many significant features from the original design have disappeared. Updates for modern uses have increased the volume of vehicular traffic and a lack of formal parking spaces has degraded the health of the lawn. Formal garden

plantings and stately trees have been lost. The health of the pond has declined and it is in jeopardy. Only a few remnants of the original pedestrian pathways can be seen – pathways that used to connect the sections of the park together, and connect the park to the surrounding neighborhood.



The Master Plan was developed by Carol R. Johnson and Associates and is the result of work by Friends of Pope Park, public meetings, user surveys and historic research. The Master Plan reflects a thorough examination of the existing conditions and historic elements. It also reflects the needs and desires of city residents, who gave their feedback as this report was being developed. Restoring Pope Park will expand on

the capital investments already made in this area of the city in terms of road improvements, public safety and the emergence of a more vibrant, livable city.

Major recommendations made in the Plan include:

- Providing safe road crossings and entries into park from surrounding residential areas for children and families
- Redesigning the intersection at Sigourney Street and Russ Street to regain lost park land and provide safe pedestrian connections to Pope Park North
- Creating safe connections to Pope Park from Dominick F. Burns School
- Recreating historic gardens and formal spaces on High Mall
- Developing historic path system to provide visitors with access to all areas of park and connections with adjoining neighborhoods
- Providing an amphitheater as a location for outdoor performances
- Creating interpretive play spaces and flush spray fountains for seasonal use and for both children and toddlers
- Providing new vehicular entry and expanded parking for Recreation Center and Park
- Incorporating a wet meadow as a natural filtration system for storm water
- Closing and removing Pope Park Drive to remove non-park vehicular traffic and to restore the integrity of the Park's open space
- Making a serious commitment to the maintenance of the restored park

The Master Plan Report describes the costs of the plan, the potential funding sources and the ability to construct the project over a 3 or 10 year time period. (A complete copy of the Master Plan is available at The Parisky Group offices, 30 Arbor Street, Hartford, CT, 06106.)

How much will it cost? The implementation of the Master Plan is projected to cost \$13.3 million in 2006. This goal reflects annual cost escalations since 2002 when the Master Plan cost estimates were prepared. The categories of the renovation work are shown on the following chart.



Site Preparation

Construction fencing, tree removal and protection, remove, stockpile or dispose of pavement



Earthwork

Grading, installation of granular bases, strip and stockpile loam, install loam

Erosion and Sedimentation Control

Silt fence, haybales, install, repair, remove



Site Drainage

New structures, relocate structures, new piping, excavate and grade wet meadow basin



Curbs and Paving

Concrete sidewalks, asphalt entry road and parking areas, pavers at entries, new curb, pavement markings

Site Improvements

Stairs, play equipment, athletic structures, amphitheater, fountain, furnishings, fencing



Lawns

Fine grading, aeriating, seeding, wet meadow seeding



Irrigation

Controller, piping, irrigation for active play area and special park areas



Planting

Shade, evergreen and flowering trees, shrubs, bark mulch



Site Lighting

New lights, control center, lighting practice soccer field, pedestrian crossing light

Where will we get the money? It is the intention of the Friends of Pope Park to seek funding at the city, state and federal levels to achieve the vision outlined in the Master Plan. However, the funding environment is tight and extremely competitive. It will take concerted effort to achieve these goals:

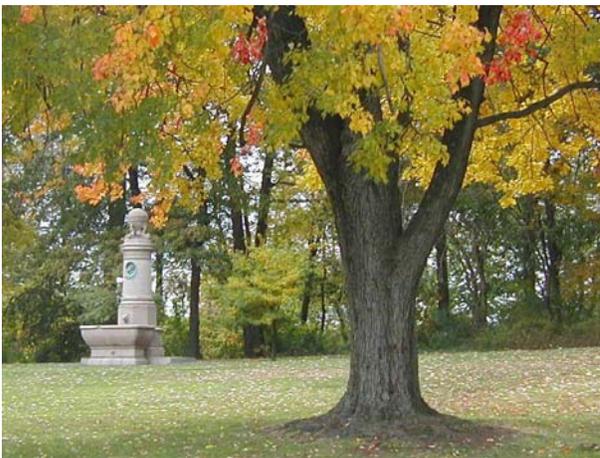
State of Connecticut:	\$4.8 million
City of Hartford Court of Common Council	\$1.5 million
Federal Government	\$5 million
Private/Foundation	\$2 million

That is where you can help. City residents and neighborhood organizations can play a vital role in demonstrating their support and advocating for a revitalized Pope Park. The Friends of Pope Park are seeking your active endorsement of this initiative. There are many ways you can get involved, including:

- Get your neighborhood or civic association to write a formal endorsement of the Pope Park Master Plan and our proposal for funding. A sample endorsement letter is included with this package.
- Display a poster or sign in your place of business demonstrating your support of the Plan.
- Advocate for the funding within your personal and professional networks and to your elected officials.

What is the timeline? *Time is of the essence if we are to achieve our funding goals. The Friends of Pope Park are seeking written endorsements by January 15, 2005 to submit with funding proposals in February.* Endorsement letters can be sent to: Steve Mirsky, 3 Mortson Street, Hartford, CT 06106.

Posters and other advocacy materials will be made available to the community in February 2005. If you would like to demonstrate your active support of this initiative by distributing these materials, please contact: Steve Mirsky at 757-6537.



Please support this important initiative for Hartford's future.
Endorse funding to implement the Pope Park Master Plan.
Thank you.

The Friends of Pope Park