

DRAFT 2

Minnesota Point

Franklin Park (12th - 13th Street & Minnesota Avenue)

Beach Parking Lot/ S-Curve Garden Modifications

This Project is a cooperative effort between the Park Point Community Club, Park Point Garden Club, the City of Duluth and the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners.

PROJECT CATALOG

A. Immediate & Cheap

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1. Low timber wall framing the parking lot. The wall only needs to be 3' high, but it'll need to be stout, perhaps double-thick in places. Vandals are actively damaging the sand dune across the south end of the lot. Also, snow plows and sand removal equipment need to use the wall as an edge. The City of Duluth has timbers available.

2. Boardwalks between the parking lot and the beach. Use of inexpensive boardwalks has been extremely successful in controlling foot traffic further out the Point, at the Barrens and Lafayette Square. We go in knowing they may not last long, but they're easy to replace, and most people happily go along with the idea. For some people, the boardwalks make the beach accessible. For others, they'll be walking by the trash barrels, and that's good.

3. Locally Obtained Ground-effect System (l.o.g.s.) These environmentally friendly erosion control devices shall be scattered across the main opening between the parking lot and the beach. They are not to be a wall, and should not impede the view of the lake from the parking lot (too much, anyway). They are intended to disrupt and change the wind and sand-migration patterns that pour into the parking lot from the beach. The logs, as big as we can find and move them, will obstruct vehicle traffic to the beach. That is good, but that also includes police ATV use. It may make sense to keep an emergency route through to the beach. Also, Lake Superior splashes into the parking lot in severe storms. These logs might get moved around, but their overall benefits make them necessary. They replace a natural process of driftwood deposition and dune regeneration that has been stopped by people overusing the area. They will also be popular benches, and will fit the natural surroundings far better than the jagged boulders the logs shall replace. Removal of the boulders is a part of this project.

4. Fencing & replanting around the battered natural areas. The beach grass alongside the parking lot stampede will bounce back from the drubbing it gets, if we give it just a short respite from all those trampling feet. We've learned that if the final result doesn't look like a cattle chute, most people are happy to go along. Others will smash at the fences because the fences are there, and must somehow deserve to be smashed.

5. Rebuilt gate and a framed lot entrance. Neighbors living right next to the parking lot have mixed feelings about having a gate. They are

concerned that slobbs denied access to the lot will vent against them, which has happened before. Like all other City of Duluth park properties, the gate should be closed and locked at 10 pm, with clear enforcement policies, some slack for the inept and no mercy to slobbs.

6. More trash cans and better trash removal. Simply put, this means more trash cans and better trash removal.

7. Natural landscaping along the green wedge. Traditional gardens have had tough sledding in the wedge between the parking lot and Minnesota Avenue. Some of the obstacles known well to the Garden Club: The site is directly in the path of lake winds; migrating sand has already buried a garden there. In summer, the site parches dry, and Lake Superior is a long water-bucket hike away. Still, this wedge is the gateway to the parks of Park Point, and an ideal place for the community to put out some semblance of a welcoming face. Members of the gardening community are working up plans to use natural landscaping in an eye-catching way. Success would eliminate the need for a plumbed-in water source, an expensive detail.

8. Rebuilt welcome sign and community bulletin board. Time, vandalism and the environment are taking a toll on the existing sign. A redesigned welcome sign would use self-storing seasonal panels featuring artwork done by local artists.

9. Traffic Counter. Neighbors have already volunteered to keep daily counts taken off a standard traffic counter set across the parking lot entrance. Electronic "people counters" exist too, and could be used in several high-traffic sites. The tally would be eye-opening for everyone but the neighbors.

B. More Expensive Projects

10. Permanent public toilet attached to the parking lot. This is a pressing need, both for this park and Lafayette Square. Both serve far more people than they are designed to accommodate; a fact easily proven since neither site has any permanent outdoor accommodations at all. (So where are the people... um... going?) The porta-john the city leases for the S-curve parking lot was called "the worst in the city" by the contract maintenance man. He didn't seem the squeamish type, either.

11. Coast Guard memorial sculpture. The green wedge along Minnesota Avenue is under the watchful eye of the new Coast Guard Cutter Alder; the bridge of the ship overlooks the neighborhood. The wedge is actually the historic site of Duluth's first Coast Guard rescue station. Local lore has it that the area also enclosed a Coast Guard cemetery, and before that an Ojibwa burial site, but these claims are unsubstantiated so far. Plans for a statue, memorial or sculpture have been around for awhile; this would tie in well with the overall project. Documenting the rich history of that small area would be a great offshoot project.

12. Improved lighting and security. Vandalism at this site occurs throughout the year. Any plan to add permanent public toilets must address lights and security for them. Routine maintenance is the answer, but why is it called "routine" when it happens so infrequently? Antique-style streetlights would look cool through the S-curve, wouldn't they?

C. A Forward Look Ahead

In the old days, the beach areas on Park Point had life rings, fire buckets, lifeguards in handlebar moustaches.... Today we need to build everything either vandal-proof or ridiculously cheap. There are a few things the area doesn't need. Neighbors get jumpy when city officials talk about major upheavals, even if they're just spitballin' ideas at the time; re-routing the S-curve or enlarging the parking lot, for example. If you're doing this, stop it. Just stop it. Another complaint: There are too many signs scattered throughout the area, and when there are so many, they lose their impact. Also, a major coastal-zone grant may be attainable, but it doesn't make my priority list. Too many strings, too many undesirable facets, and we aren't New Orleans.

Not much will help the overcrowding on hot days at the site. Perhaps we could put a guy there, with a folding chair and an orange cone, and collect a little cash while controlling the "event parking." After all, a hot day in Duluth is an event. Money earned subsidizes garbage removal.

The bargain-basement ideas outlined here shall improve the worst problems the parking lot and green wedge face. There may be other, costlier improvements, but we can get to them in the future, when our property taxes are low and our magnetic hovercrafts glide silently above the potholes.

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Please Note: This is a DRAFT. Scribble on it, change it. I don't dictate anything to anybody, and I resent any implication I'm a responsible person.

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