

A More Colorful Downtown Belvidere

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By Matt Johnson

Downtown Belvidere is about to become a little more colorful.

The Parks and Conservation Foundation recently announced that they were teaming up with the Belvidere Park District for the development of the Meadow Street Park Project. They want to develop part of downtown Belvidere into a neighborhood park area for children of all ages.

The area the Foundation wants to develop is located in one of the less glamorous areas of downtown Belvidere – seven city lots surrounded by Meadow Street, Locust Street, Warren Avenue, and Nebraska Avenue.

“The Park District purchased the land when it became available,” said Mary Marquardt, a member of the Foundation. “We’re working on a development plan.”

Meadow Street Park is described by the Foundation as a “unique neighborhood park area.” Tentative blueprints for the area include two small playground areas – one for younger children and one for older – a large grassy area, and a colorfully designed blacktop area which features two basketball hoops, “but not in such a manner that one could play a full court basketball game.”

Further development of the area in the future could have construction of a small shelter area with restroom facilities and a drinking fountain.

The area has a slight drop in elevation, but the Foundation promises to compensate for this by installing a series of small berms to provide “definition” for the inner spaces of the park.

The Meadow Street Park Project came about when Bob Howells, a member of the Foundation, suggested the Foundation buy the land when it became available.

“He was instrumental in helping us acquire the land,” said Mark Luthin, chairman of the Foundation and one of the men spearheading the project. “Bob was always very good at suggesting parcels of land to look at.”

Meadow Street atop the Park District’s lists of projects to complete and that is where the Conservation Foundation’s involvement comes in. The Foundation wants the area to become “a nice little family-centered park,” says Luthin.

One factor leading to the decision where the new park should be located was the surrounding area. According to

Luthin, “The neighborhood has no place for children to play or have fun, which oftentimes finds them playing in the streets. More neighborhoods need more parks and this one is desperate,” said Luthin

The project will cost almost \$150,000 to complete – which includes installation – and to reach that goal, the Foundation is reaching out to the community. The Foundation will solicit \$100,000 in donations.

Donations are accepted in any amount and are tax deductible. “It’s a big project,” commented Luthin. “Hopefully we can pull it off.”

While no firm date is set, the Foundation wants to sponsor a kickoff event to introduce the neighborhood citizens to the plan and invite them to get involved. Those interested in donating funds or helping can contact Dan Roddewig at the Park District office at 547-5711.

As for when the Meadow Street Park Project will actually be completed, it’s anyone’s guess. Dan Roddewig says he hopes it won’t take more than a year, but that’s really up to fundraising efforts. “Sometimes it takes a long, long time,” he says. “And sometimes it comes along rather quickly.”

Neighborhood meeting about park is Saturday

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BELVIDERE — The Parks and Conservation Foundation will host a neighborhood meeting of the Meadow Street Park Neighborhood to share plans and hear comments on a proposed neighborhood park. The park is bounded by Meadow and Locust streets and Nebraska and Warren avenues.

The Foundation will serve lunch and meeting neighbors and interested parties from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday.

For information, call Dan Roddewig at 815-547-5711.