

OVERTON PARK

notes

winter 2015

Making a plan to move Overton Park forward

Great things are happening in Overton Park every day. From the peals of laughter heard at Rainbow Lake Playground, to the packed lawn at Levitt Shell concerts, to the headline-grabbing new Zambezi River Camp exhibit at the Memphis Zoo, the park is truly undergoing a renaissance.

With the increased enjoyment of the park come challenges, however, and Overton Park Conservancy is leading an effort to make a plan that addresses those concerns. Last month, we issued a Request for Proposals for firms who will help us, our partner institutions, and the community develop a plan to improve mobility and relieve congestion in the park.

This plan relies heavily on your input. Beginning early in 2016, the selected firm will conduct an extensive public engagement process to hear your concerns about traffic, parking, access, and other mobility issues you face when visiting the park.

Specific items to be addressed include:

- Bike and pedestrian access to and within Overton Park
- Maximizing green space
- Connectivity between existing park amenities
- Vehicular traffic flow into and through the park
- Maximizing access to the growing network of bike/ped infrastructure connecting to the park
- Addressing areas in the park where motorists and cyclists/pedestrians conflict
- Parking infrastructure options, including optimization of existing surface parking, alternatives to increased surface parking area, shuttles, and off-site locations



In November, students from Memphis College of Art painted three temporary crosswalks in the park as part of a partnership with Levitt Shell. Location and configuration of crosswalks is one topic a mobility plan will address. *(Photo courtesy of Memphis College of Art)*

- Programming, signage and scheduling options to address peak park and parking use scenarios
- Access and connectivity to the neighborhoods surrounding the park

The plan, set for completion in spring 2016, will solicit feedback from the public and other stakeholders and identify potential solutions. Design concepts, cost estimates, and timelines will help us to make informed decisions about future planning.

We look forward to working together with you and all our partners to continue shaping a world-class park.



Watch our website at www.overtonpark.org and your mailbox for news about public meetings!



Overton Park occupies a neat rectangle right in the center of Memphis, but its reach extends far beyond. It's much more than a neighborhood park—it's a regional asset and part of the civic and cultural fabric of Memphis. Its continued renaissance is a result of the creativity and critical thinking of partners from all across the city.

You'll see many of those partnerships reflected in this newsletter, from our collaboration with Rhodes College to create programs such as the Urban Forestry Fellowship and Overton Park Community Farmers Market, to the broader public support of our work through volunteerism, membership, and crowd-funding of trail markers.

Our partner academic institutions provide a constant flood of eager, intelligent students who each bring a unique perspective to their work in the park. Dr. Tara Massad of Rhodes College is creating seed collection traps to study how well trees are regenerating in the Old Forest, and she'll bring her Conservation Ecology class into the field to conduct the research. At the University of Memphis, Dr. Michael Kennedy's students are researching the unique biology of short-tailed shrews in the Old Forest. All of this information contributes to a picture of the ecology of our unique forest—its status as an "island" in an urban area, the effect of human impact on its plants and animals, and how to make plans for keeping it healthy and diverse. We couldn't begin to learn all this information without our partners.

Finally, Cat Normoyle's Design System 3 students at Memphis College of Art were assigned the task of imagining hypothetical kiosks that might address a need within Overton Park. They presented ideas on everything from an interactive event calendar to a nature identification application to a kiosk encouraging active play. Their work was carefully planned and designed for integration into the park landscape. Best of all, their projects made us think creatively about the way people use the park.

Overton Park is a reservoir of ideas and inspiration, shaped by the people who visit, play, and learn here. We're fortunate to live in a city where the spirit of collaboration makes such a positive impact on our gathering spaces.

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Overton Park Community Farmers Market returns to East Parkway in April

If you've ever found yourself forced to choose between a walk in the woods, a trip to the playground, or a trip to pick up fresh vegetables for dinner, then the Overton Park Community Farmers Market--a collaboration between Rhodes College and Overton Park Conservancy--has made that choice a little easier.

In September 2015, the former Evergreen Community Farmers Market changed venues, moving to Overton Park's East Parkway Pavilion to increase visibility and community access. The pavilion offers an easy pickup point for the many neighborhoods that border the park--and it's a great excuse to combine healthy activity with healthy eating.

The market will return in April 2016 and run through October, every Thursday afternoon from 3:00 - 7:00. Dozens of vendors offer everything from fresh fruits and vegetables, locally sourced meats, breads and baked goods, flowers, artwork made on site, snacks and drinks, and handmade goods. Vendors accept SNAP and EBT benefits.

And thanks to the AARP Fre\$h Savings / Double Green\$ program, SNAP recipients receive double dollars to spend on fruits and vegetables at the market! The program matches \$10 of SNAP/EBT purchases with an additional \$10 worth of Fre\$h Savings/Double Green\$ tokens which can be used to purchase fresh fruit and veggies.

While we had a fantastic two-month kickoff this fall, expect to see and hear a lot more of the market next year. In October, the USDA announced that the Overton Park Community Farmers Market would



Marla's Garden and dozens of other vendors offer fresh produce and flowers.

receive \$100,000 in Farmers Market Promotion funding. It's part of USDA's effort to strengthen local and regional food systems, make affordable healthy food available to a wider population, and create connections between neighbors through community markets. The grant will enable additional distribution of fresh produce through Bring It Food Hub, which hosts weekly Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) dropoffs at the market and will add additional dropoffs at Binghampton's Caritas Village. Plus, Caritas and GrowMemphis will join Rhodes College and Overton Park Conservancy in reaching out to bring customers to the market.

Memphis is one of the hungriest cities in the United States, but also one of the most obese. Hosting a farmers market within a park addresses both of those issues, by making healthy food accessible and by bringing people into a location where opportunities for physical activity are free and abundant.

The market strives to be an inclusive location along a local food corridor, connecting to Midtown and beyond via the Shelby Farms Greenline. "We envision a local food system that is accessible to all Memphians from which all can benefit," says Dr. Kimberly Kasper, market director and professor at Rhodes College. "Our goal is to provide a platform for our community members to support a local food economy."



Visit www.overtonparkcfm.org to learn about vendors, activities, and how to get involved.



New park signs and markers point the way

It's getting easier and easier to find your way around Overton Park.

In October, we installed six directional signs throughout the park that point the way toward key attractions. Designed locally by Combustion and produced by Option Signs, these colorful panels provide quick visual cues that help reduce confusion and congestion.

Elsewhere, in the Old Forest, 35 new trail markers are in production for the Old Forest Loop. Thanks to YOUR generosity during our ioby matching gift campaign in the springtime, we were able to fully fund production of these markers. We'll also need your help to remove the weather-beaten old markers and install the new ones, so keep your eyes on our website to learn about the upcoming volunteer installation!



Artists Yvonne Bobo, Ben Butler, and Tylur French are working to finalize designs for new welcome gateways at three entrances to the Old Forest. Together with engineering firm A2H, they are determining how best to integrate these artistic installations into the landscape with minimal disruption.

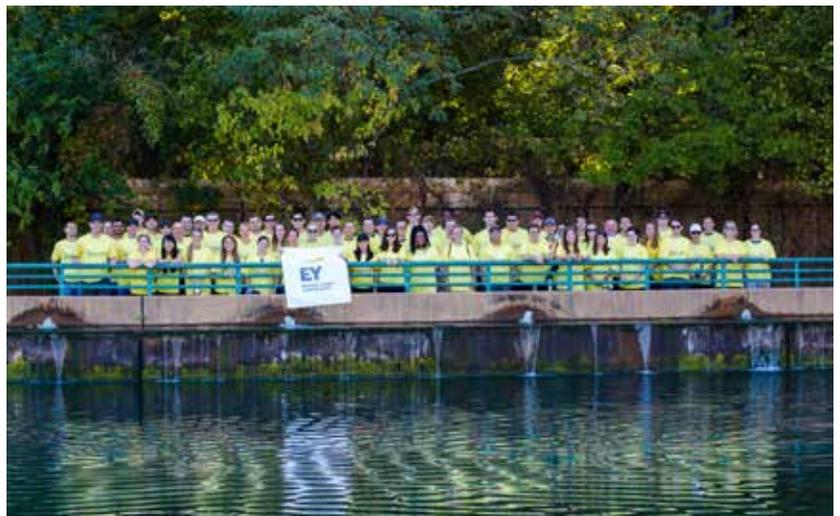
The gateways will be installed one at a time over the course of 2016. We'll be documenting the process on our blog at www.overtonpark.org.

Left: "Growth," by Ben Butler, will be installed at the East Parkway entrance to the Old Forest.

Spirit of service keeps Overton Park beautiful

Community support is the lifeblood of Overton Park, and this fall we were overwhelmed with amazing volunteers making visible changes in the park.

Our largest volunteer event was Ernst & Young's EY Connect Day, a global event that sends employees into their communities for a day of service. Our crew was so large that they got three big tasks done: a trail cleanup, repainting all the chipped railings around Rainbow Lake, and a battle against kudzu deep within the Old Forest. Afterwards, they celebrated with pizza at Rainbow Lake Pavilion and reflected on a job well done.



Volunteers from Ernst & Young painted railings at Rainbow Lake and removed kudzu in the Old Forest.

Put down Roots with new member program

If you love both Overton Park and the people you meet there, we've got an exciting new program for you.

Overton Park Conservancy is pleased to announce the launch of Overton Park Roots, a dynamic and growing group of engaged Memphians for whom Overton Park is a symbol of community, an active lifestyle, and a place to bring art, culture, and fun to the public. Members support Overton Park while socializing with other active, community-driven Memphians in a fun, leisurely environment.

Roots membership replaces the Patron level in our membership program. For a \$240 annual gift, members receive:

- Exclusive invitations to two events, such as these held in 2015:
 - Spring: Pints for the Park, a family-friendly picnic in the formal gardens with libations provided by our Official Roots Beer Sponsor, Memphis Made Brewing
 - Fall: Cocktails & Conversation, an evening social at the Abe Goodman Golf Clubhouse
- Roundtable discussions with Conservancy leadership
- Recognition in Conservancy communications, including newsletters, reports, and website
- Two Overton Park Conservancy t-shirts, membership Perks business discounts, and four park postcards
- 25% discount on facility rentals at Overton Park

Roots is the perfect way to get to know people you recognize from your morning runs and evening concerts, while coming together to ensure a bright future for the park.

Charter Members

You can still become a charter member! Visit www.overtonpark.org/roots to join, or select the Roots membership level in the provided envelope. Thanks to those who have already become a part of the program:

Julie & Bryce Ashby
 Sydney & Andy Ashby
 Paula & Cliff Barnes
 Susannah & Kevin Barton
 Thaler & Tom Beasley
 Kathleen & Schorr Behnke
 Alice & George Burruss
 Aimée Christian & Benton Wheeler
 Meg & Scott Crosby
 Melissa Duong & Yuki Namba
 Laura & Josh Gettys
 Joy & Frank Gilliam
 Jennifer & Paul Hagerman
 Eleanor & William Halliday
 Sutton & Kerry Hayes

Mia & Paul Henley
 Meredith Hennessy & Louis Stifter
 Carolyn & Scott Heppel
 Anna & Tod Holtzclaw
 Sally & John Humphrey
 Amanda & Stanley Johnson
 Frances & Jake Lawhead
 Bob Loeb
 Peggy & Laverne Lovell
 Lisa & Jim Maddox
 Amy Daniel & Cameron Mann
 Julia & Michael Matthews
 Margaret & Alec McLean
 Katie & Tom Midgley
 Brittany Pace

Olivia Wilmot & Tommy Pacello
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 Emily Shortridge & Vishant Shah
 Glenda & Gary Shorb
 Teresa Sloyan
 Molly & Russell Smith
 Katie & Chris Spencer
 Tina & Pete Sullivan
 Lauren & Justin Taylor
 Emily & Chris Taylor
 Curtis Thomas
 Paige & Scott Walkup
 Susanna & Neil Weston
 Melanie & Frank White
 Danielle & JC Youngblood



Above: Shannon Williams, Kate & Jane Joyce, Beni Moghul, and Steve Reid attended Pints for the Park this summer. (Photo: Rachel Warren)

Below: Co-chairs Katie Midgley and Julie Ashby attended the fall event at the Golf Clubhouse.

Making magic in the formal gardens



From the crisp fall weather to the delicate string lights that made the formal gardens sparkle, 2015's A Magical Night at Overton Park was stunning. Clear-topped tents let in the moonlight, the Marcella Simien Trio provided sultry sounds, and bold autumn-inspired linens surrounded custom wood furniture to create a festive atmosphere for 400 park lovers.

As always, this party had an important purpose: raising needed funds for park operations. Guests contributed to the park through ticket purchases, silent auction bids, and donations at the Overton Park Conservancy fundraising tree (built by Memphis

College of Art students). The dollars raised in one evening will help sustain the park in the coming months, as we continue our work to maintain and improve our community's treasured gathering space.

Thanks so much to the following companies and people who helped create an unforgettable night:

Our sponsors: BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee, Echo Systems, Mahaffey Tent & Event Rental, Woodland Tree Service, A2H, Breakaway Running, The Commercial Appeal, Dr. James & Laura Eason, Hollywood Feed, Hyde Family Foundations, inbalance FITNESS, Independent Bank, Lexus of Memphis, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Regional One Health, Special Event Service & Rental, SunTrust Bank, Wagner General Contractors, West Cancer Center, and West Tennessee Crown Distributing Company

Our host committee: Belinda & Calvin Anderson, Julie & Bryce Ashby, Nicole & Ekundayo Bande, Bena & George Cates, Congressman Steve Cohen, Jan & Ron Coleman, Elizabeth Crosby & Eric Barnes, Kate Duignan & Chris Peck, Sally & Danny Graflund, Claudia & Bill Haltom, Adam Hohenberg, Mary-Ellen Kelly, Deidre & Dr. Pat Malone, Katie & Tom Midgley, Glenda & Gary Shorb, Molly & Jason Wexler, Monica & Andre Wharton, Melanie & Dr. Frank White, Juliet Wischmeyer, Denise Wood, and Mindy Wurzburg & Blair Parker



Nan and James Morgan, Memphis Mayor-Elect Jim Strickland, and Conservancy Event Committee Chair Belinda Anderson. (Photos by Phillip Van Zandt Photography)



Is your company interested in sponsoring an event? Our Day of Merrymaking Family Festival returns June 4. For sponsorship info, visit www.overtonpark.org/event-sponsors.

What the trees are teaching us

Many of us remember looking at tree rings when we were children, counting the grooves to figure out the age of a tree. But as this year's Urban Forestry Fellows at Rhodes College are learning, tree rings can tell us about so much more than time.

Emily Cerrito and Danielle Smith have been conducting tree coring surveys in the Old Forest State Natural Area this semester. To take their samples, Emily and Danielle use a tool called an increment borer, which they crank into the bark of a tree until reaching the center. The tool extracts a cylindrical sample of 4.3mm (about the size of the hole a yellow-bellied sapsucker drills). The students put the sample under a microscope to study it, sometimes adding dye if the wood is too light to show clear distinctions.

Occasionally a living tree is cored, but most of the work is focused on fallen trees. They're easier to sample, particularly for large trees where the borer can't reach the center. In a fallen tree, a slice can be cut and studied. Even the thinnest of slices can weigh about 80 pounds, so the increment borer is always used when possible. It's tough to get an 80-pound tree cookie under a microscope!

The students can also determine the "decay class" of a fallen tree, which helps them understand the end of that tree's life. Fallen trees' stories continue even after they come down, of course, as they become habitat for birds and small mammals, enrich the soil, and give fungus an optimal place to grow.

The cores are compared to each other to form a more complete picture of forest dynamics. "We cored a white ash that was 114 years old when it fell," Emily shares. "Most of the other large trees we've cored have been closer to 180 years old, and the younger



Danielle Smith and Emily Cerrito take a sample from a fallen old-growth tree.

generation is around 80 years old. So this was a different age class than we've been seeing, which means there was some minor regeneration happening between those two major time periods. That suggests greater diversity in the forest than we thought."

The number of tree rings indicates age, but the size can tell some fascinating stories. Rings that are closer together (indicating slow growth) may indicate a drought period. Widely spaced rings in a tree's early life may show that it was in an open, sunny location--possibly due to the loss of other large canopy trees--and therefore grew rapidly. If multiple trees in one part of the forest exhibit similar rings from the same time period, this might point to some interesting historical moment—a weather event, or a change in the way humans interacted with the forest.

The study of dendrochronology compares data like this to historical records. For example, the older generation of trees in the forest began growing around 1835. This time period coincides with the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which forced thousands of Choctaws out of this area. Could a significant change in the management and use of the forest have occurred around that time? We can't know for sure, but the research may offer some clues. Understanding how the forest might have been managed in the past can offer a path toward keeping it healthy in the future.

"The purpose of our research is to figure out how the forest got where it is today, so we can figure out where it will go in the future," says Eric Bridges, Conservancy Director of Operations. "Understanding how humans have impacted the forest over time helps us determine how we might intervene in the future."



Danielle examines a core sample from a sycamore tree.



OVERTON PARK
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