

OVERTON PARK

notes

spring 2014

Spring Roll welcomes cyclists into Bike Gate

It's been a colorful rainbow against the monochromatic landscape this winter. But now that spring is here, it's time for Overton Park's new Bike Gate to really shine--and to officially welcome its first visitors.

On **Saturday, April 19**, Overton Park Conservancy invites you to join us at the Spring Roll, an event that celebrates the official opening of the

new bicycle and pedestrian plaza. It's your first chance to ride your bike from the Old Forest trails into the plaza and then onto the first section of the new Hampline trail.

The Spring Roll will begin at 1:00pm with music and entertainment, and at 1:30 we'll have remarks from Mayor A C Wharton, Jr., First Tennessee Executive Vice President Bruce Hopkins, and others. At 2:00, cyclists are invited to take a victory lap around the park.

The bicycle arch was installed in February by artist Tylur French and the team from Youngblood Studios. ANF Architects designed a plaza whose different shades of pervious concrete mimic the shapes of wheels and spokes. A new paved trail, funded by a grant from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, leads cyclists and pedestrians from the plaza onto the Old Forest trail system.



One thing is missing at Bike Gate: you! Celebrate with us at April 19's Spring Roll.

Primary funding for the Bike Gate and plaza was generously provided by the First Tennessee Foundation. But our park visitors chipped in as well: we can't wait for you to spend some time in the plaza reading the messages on the 129 sponsored pavers that ring the path. They pay tribute to everyone from cycling buddies to beloved pets to the original Citizens to

Preserve Overton Park group who ensured that this section of the park wasn't demolished to make way for Interstate 40 in the 1970s.

It's this last fact that makes the plaza particularly special. For over a decade, it looked like the Old Forest, with its majestic trees and winding paths, would be sacrificed to the growth of the city's infrastructure. If not for the efforts of the brave men and women who took the case all the way to the Supreme Court, Overton Park as we know it would not exist today.

So it seems appropriate that on this land that people fought so hard to protect, a new movement is taking root in Memphis--one that allows us to get where we need to go, but to stop and enjoy the scenery along the way. We're humbled to be able to continue the work of the visionaries who understood that Overton Park is a jewel worth saving for future generations.



There are many things that make Overton Park such an interesting place: its rich cultural history; world-class amenities like the Memphis Zoo, Brooks Museum of Art, and Levitt Shell; a 126-acre virgin forest; and well-loved features like Rainbow Lake Playground and Overton Bark, which draw in crowds that reflect the diversity of our city. It's the perfect combination to support our vision of fostering a beautiful, welcoming, and safe park that encourages our community to explore, learn, create, socialize, and play.

While it would be easy to concentrate solely on all of the things to do inside the park's boundaries, we would be much less significant without our connections to the larger community. It often feels like Overton Park is at the epicenter of revitalization efforts happening across the heart of our urban core. As improvements unfold

in Overton Square, Crosstown, Broad Avenue, and Binghampton, new opportunities are emerging to connect Overton Park to this thriving, bustling, fascinating, arts-rich city.

How people move from place to place is also evolving, fueling a demand for connectivity throughout our region. Organizations across the Mid-South are collaborating on the Mid-South Regional Greenprint & Sustainability Plan, which is "establishing a unified vision for a region-wide network of greenspace areas"* and touches on issues from transportation to neighborhood planning to social justice.

Taken in this context, improving Overton Park's entrances to make them safer and more welcoming to cyclists, pedestrians, and persons in wheelchairs is about more than simply connecting to neighborhoods adjacent to the park. It's about viewing the park as a hub in an interconnected network of "parks, greenways, bike trails and walking paths"* stretching from West Memphis to Piperton, and from Millington to Hernando.

We ask that you participate in this effort by attending one of two public meetings we're holding next month to plan enhancements to several of those park entrances (see story on page 3). As we learned from our Speak Up surveys (see results beginning on page 4), there's nothing more valuable than the input of people who love the park and use it regularly. We know we can count on you to give us your thoughtful feedback.

* source: www.midsouthgreenprint.org

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Help us improve park entrances and trails

We all know that parking for a big event in Overton Park can be quite a challenge. Maybe you've tried to make it easier on yourself and leave the car at home, instead walking or biking to the park. But when you reached the end of Cooper St., you found only a worn patch of grass at the park entrance, with no connection to the trails. Or when you walked across Poplar at Tucker St., you had to dodge cars because there are no sidewalks to use.

The park reaches a critical mass for cars around 50 times every year. Because there are so many great events in the park--a concert at the Levitt Shell, a new exhibit at the Memphis Zoo, the Brooks Museum's Chalk Art Festival, to name just a few--a long-term solution for the lack of parking requires a great deal of strategy and collaboration. It's not an issue that can be solved overnight, and all the institutions in the park are working together to determine the best options.

What we *can* do now is work to overcome some of the barriers facing cyclists and pedestrians. Because everyone who visits the park without a vehicle is helping to alleviate the parking problems, it shouldn't be a challenge to use alternate methods of transport.

So how do we go about making it easier for you to walk or bike to the park? And once you're here, how can we make it safer for you to move around?

You tell us!

On May 29 and 31, we'll be hosting two public meetings to talk with you about how to improve these five areas of connection in the park:

- The entrance at Poplar and Cooper
- The entrance at Poplar and Tucker
- The entrance on N. Parkway near Rhodes College
- A perimeter trail that rings the entire park
- Improvements to pedestrian areas in the park



A new gateway into the park will be created at Poplar and Cooper, connecting to a new perimeter trail.

Thanks to a Mid-South Regional Greenprint Subplanning Award, the Conservancy is working with Ritchie Smith Associates to prepare design concepts, site plans, and budgets for enhancements to these areas of the park. The team from RSA conducted several site visits this winter and is developing preliminary design concepts.

At the meetings, we'd like you to take a look at the design concepts and tell us what you think. Come prepared to share your experiences with these areas of the park, and what would help make them easier or more convenient to use.

Thursday's meeting will be held in the park at Callicott Auditorium in Memphis College of Art's Rust Hall; Saturday's meeting will be held at the Playhouse on the Square Café, 2188 Union Avenue (at Cooper Street).

Planning for these projects will be completed in October of this year. Construction funds for two of the five projects have already been raised: the Poplar/Cooper entrance and the perimeter path projects will be funded by the Tennessee Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The City of Memphis will manage these two projects based on the designs and plans submitted by RSA, and construction will take place in 2015 and 2016.

Funds for the Poplar/Tucker and N. Parkway entrances and other pedestrian improvements will be sought following the completion of the planning process.

We hope you'll take time to have an impact on the future of your park!

Share your opinion at one of our public meetings!

Thursday, May 29, 6:00pm
Callicott Auditorium
Memphis College of Art

Saturday, May 31, 10:00am
Playhouse on the Square Café

When we want to know how Overton Park is progressing, we know who to ask. Last year, we launched the second edition of the Speak Up survey, where you give us your thoughts on the park: what's working, what needs attention, and how you envision the future for certain park amenities. Here are some things we noticed when comparing 2013's results to 2011's:

1) **You have very kind things to say about Overton Bark and Rainbow Lake Playground.**

Those two projects were in direct response to what you asked for in the 2011 survey, so we're so glad to see you're enjoying them.

2) **Safety was the top concern in both 2011 and 2013.** Park maintenance is no longer a major problem, but you had a *lot* to say about parking.

3) We asked about two specific areas of the park in this survey. **There was an overwhelming consensus about Rainbow Lake:** that it should remain a water feature of some kind. As one of you put it, "All great city parks have water."

4) There was less agreement about how to enhance the East Parkway side of the park, with many different suggestions offered. One thread that ran through the comments was that **it isn't visually inviting from the street**, so that gives us a starting point as we contemplate potential changes.



**SPEAK UP!
FOR OUR PARK**

For the full survey results, visit www.overtonpark.org/speak. Thanks to everyone who shared their opinions!

SURVEYS COMPLETED 344

RACE/ETHNICITY

African American: 7.27%

Asian or Pacific Islander: 1.16%

Multi-Race/Other: 1.74%

No answer: 4.94%

American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.29%

Hispanic/Latino: 2.03%

Non-Hispanic/White: 82.56%

GENDER

Male: 39.83%

Female: 59.88%

No answer: 0.29%

AGE	Under 18	4.94%	18-24	3.78%	25-34	22.09%	35-44	23.26%
	45-54	18.60%	55-64	17.44%	65+	9.30%	No Answer	0.58%

NEIGHBORHOOD

Evergreen 14.53% Central Gardens 3.78% VECA 8.14% Cooper-Young 7.85%

Midtown 7.85% East Memphis 2.91% East End 2.62% Lea's Woods 2.62% Other 43.90%

HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT OVERTON PARK?

14.83%

Every day

38.95%

Once a week

23.55%

2 to 3 times
a month

11.05%

Once a month

11.63%

Less than once
a month

I VISIT OVERTON PARK...

62.50%

By myself

61.05%

With my spouse
or partner

62.50%

With friends

38.66%

With children

44.48%

With my dog

"I love that Overton Park offers a clean and serene environment for me and my loved ones to visit. I love that it's a place where you can cook hotdogs in the summer and build snowmen in the winter. I love that I can walk through a forest that was there before Columbus, then visit an art gallery with Renaissance and Post Modern paintings, then visit the statues of Boss Crump and the memorials to our veterans. I love that it invites the entire city to come hear music on a stage that has been graced by Elvis and Johnny Cash. I love that on any given day black, white, Latino, and Asian children can all be found playing together. I love that it gives people with dogs a place to play and socialize. I love that it gives people a place to exercise, to play football, baseball, soccer, golf, badminton, volleyball, or frisbee. I love that it gives artists a place to create--to draw, or paint, or write; that it gives daydreamers a place to lay in the sun and stare at the clouds. I love that it gives us a place to take a walk any time of the year. I just love that it's there."

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT OVERTON PARK?

Levitt Shell	31.10%
Trails	28.49%
Rainbow Lake Playground	27.33%
Old Forest	23.84%
Overton Bark	23.55%
Great location	23.55%
Memphis Zoo	20.64%
Greensward/Open green spaces	19.48%
Brooks Museum	15.12%
Place to walk, run, and play	12.50%

Nature/trees, Sense of community and diversity, Golf course and clubhouse, Memphis College of Art, Cultural events, Rainbow Lake, Cleanliness, History (civic and personal), Quiet place to relax, Everything, Gathering place, Veterans Plaza, Conservancy's restorations, Family activities, Safety, Large size, Beauty, Picnic areas, Formal gardens, Free, Public art, Food trucks, Little Free Libraries, Volunteer events

MY IDEAL OVERTON PARK...

Offers more cultural and community events	23.55%
Has no parking & traffic issues	18.31%
Is safe	13.37%
Is clean and well-maintained	11.92%
Is exactly like it is now	11.34%
Has improved connections to neighborhoods and trails	9.30%
Offers more food options	9.30%
Is safer for pedestrians	9.30%
Has more recreational and/or sports facilities	7.85%
Has more trails/improved trails	6.98%

Protects nature and the Old Forest, Has more wayfinding and interpretive signage, Has more public art, Is quiet and relaxing, Is family-friendly, Has more gardens and landscaping, Has great play spaces, Has a renovated Rainbow Lake, Contains more lighting, Has more benches and picnic tables, Has security officers and cameras, Has a disc golf course, Offers fitness amenities and classes, Upgrades the golf course, Is a community gathering place, Has no off-leash dogs, Increases programming.

WHAT PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

Safety/security	34.88%
Parking	33.43%
Littering and/or ignoring park rules	10.47%
Pedestrian and cyclist safety/accessibility	9.01%
Illegal or illicit activity	6.40%
Traffic	6.10%
Off-leash dogs	4.94%
Zoo encroachment into the park	4.94%
Rainbow Lake's condition	4.65%
Owners not picking up after dogs	3.94%

No major problems, Loud music, Not enough restrooms, Negative perception of the park, Not enough benches and picnic tables, Lack of lighting, Not enough navigational signage, City's General Services Area, Not enough trash cans, Condition of the golf course, Having to pay to rent pavilions, Lack of disc golf course, East Parkway side needs renovation, Invasive plants, Lack of food options, Lack of skate park, Poison ivy, Not enough people using the park.

"Parking. A big one and a tough one. I could get behind a garage in the McLean parking lot area if it were sensitively done. OR maybe shuttle buses to a nearby lot would be the way to go for 'big' days or nights."

"The East Parkway playground needs a full renovation. The picnic area is heavily utilized but trash disposal is a major issue over in that area. Maybe more picnic areas for large groups and more trash cans."

HOW CAN WE ENHANCE THE EAST PARKWAY SIDE OF THE PARK?

No opinion/I never visit that side of the park	22.38%
Upgrade the playground	11.05%
Add/improve picnic areas, including permanent grills	9.88%
Add/improve bike and pedestrian trails	8.43%
Reduce litter/add trash cans	7.85%
Enhance security	5.23%
Add landscaping that buffers street noise	4.65%
Add restrooms*	3.78%
Relocate City of Memphis General Services Area**	3.78%
Add a splash park	3.49%

Add skateboard facilities, Add or improve signage, Improve connection to Broad Ave., Add athletic courts or fields, Add entertainment events, Prevent cars from parking on the grass, OK as is, Add parking, Add a disc golf course, Strengthen connection to west side of the park, Bring in more food trucks, Add a restaurant or beer garden, Install a fitness circuit, Add lighting, Add public art, Add recycling cans, Offer bike rental, Install swing benches.

* Permanent restrooms were installed in Fall 2013.

** The City is beginning the process this summer of moving the General Services Area to a location outside the park.



Many of you suggested upgrading the playground facilities on the East Parkway side of the park.



Although specific suggestions varied, the vast majority of you value Rainbow Lake as a water feature of some kind.

HOW DO YOU ENVISION THE BEST POSSIBLE FUTURE FOR RAINBOW LAKE?

It should be cleaned up and remain a lake	37.50%
It should be converted into a splash park	16.57%
It should be naturalized (converted to aquatic habitat)	8.72%
No opinion	8.43%
It should remain a lake, but...	
With more benches and picnic tables	6.40%
With a fountain	5.81%
Enlarged to support more activities	4.94%
Redesigned as a Japanese garden with a bridge	4.36%
With more trees and landscaping	3.49%
Stocked with fish	2.91%

Expand the walking paths around it, Turn it into a skatepark, Make it swimmable, Turn it into a dog swimming pool, Make it shallow enough to wade in, Turn it into an ice skating rink, Convert it into athletic fields, Add public art installations, Add infrastructure to have events there, Connect it more strongly with the Zoo, Replace it with a restaurant or coffee shop, Make it a community garden, Add a nature-education component.

"I love the idea of the pond, but as it is it seems lifeless. The chemical algaecides make the water look like tidy bowl. There is no life. I would like to see some serious natural filters installed in the back. Multiple levels of algae mats and sand filters could clean up the water. This could become a living and learning science demonstration of water conservation. Let's make the pond a good home for wildlife such as frogs, koi, turtles, aquatic birds."

"It should remain a lake and have lights, expand to have a water feature in the center... perhaps a light show at night...that would bring evening crowds that could bring dinner and enjoy pleasant evenings listening to local entertainment at the top of the lake."

Dos and don'ts for a great day at the dog park



Our Overton Bark regulars are some of our most loyal visitors--in the heat of the summer or the icy winter, they're running, jumping, and playing in their corner of the park. We want the dogs to have as much fun as possible, so we asked our friends at Hollywood Feed for some tips on creating the best experience for you, your dog, and your fellow visitors.

DO make sure your dog is healthy, up-to-date on vaccinations, and spayed or neutered before visiting.

DON'T bring dogs under 4 months of age.

DO make sure that you close the first door behind you when you enter, and that you remove your dog's leash before opening the second door into the dog park.

DON'T allow dogs to form loose packs. Chases can be fun, but they should be limited to two dogs at a time.

DO supervise your dog and know the signs that things are getting too rough: if two dogs wrestle and one pins the other for more than five seconds, it's a sign that one dog has too much control over the situation. If your dog begins rolling all the way over, he may be overstimulated and need a break. If your dog yelps, tucks his tail between his legs, or tries to hide behind you, it may be time to leave the dog park for the day.

DON'T be afraid to interrupt. Periodically making physical contact with your dog lets her know you're there and keeps her calm.

DO clean up after your dog. Hollywood Feed provides waste bags at Overton Bark to make this easy.

Most importantly, **DO** know your dog. He may be great with people, but not other dogs. If you try out the dog park and he's uncomfortable around other dogs or bullies them, don't feel pressure to "fix" him. There may simply be other, better ways for him to get the recreation he needs.

For more great tips, giveaways, and fun, visit one of Hollywood Feed's monthly parties in the park, usually held on the second Saturday morning of each month. Check www.overtonpark.org/events for details.

Birds of the Old Forest



Red-shouldered hawk
(*Buteo lineatus*)

Common in deciduous forests, this medium-sized hawk hunts mice, frogs, and reptiles. Its chest is a barred reddish-orange, and its tail is black with narrow white bands. It calls with a whistled "kee-rah."



Golden-crowned kinglet
(*Regulus satrapa*)

These tiny birds, with a soft high-pitched chirp, are almost constantly in motion. They use their short, thin bills to pluck small insects. Resident in the far north and mountain west, they visit our area in winter.



Carolina wren
(*Thryothorus ludovicianus*)

You're more likely to hear this bird than see it. For its small size, it is often the loudest in the forest, singing constantly to defend its territory. It creeps up tree trunks looking for insects and fruit.



Downy woodpecker
(*Picoides pubescens*)

The smallest woodpecker in the Old Forest, this bird is an acrobatic feeder. They make little noise when they eat; their drumming on wood serves the same function as singing does for other birds.

Everything adds up for our new Operations Director

“I learned early in life that there were two things I loved: math, and being outside. Forestry is the perfect combination of those two things.”

Eric Bridges brings a lifelong love of forestry into his new role as the Conservancy’s Director of Operations and Capital Improvements. He began his career performing forest inventories with the U.S. Forest Service in Colorado, and he spent the last 12 years as the Natural Resources Director with the City of Lakeland. The opportunity to manage an old-growth forest in the middle of the city led him to join the Conservancy in December.

We asked Eric to share some of the things that excite him about working in the Old Forest State Natural Area.

There’s so much data to be gathered. In forest management, Eric says, you must determine the condition you ultimately want the forest to be in, and then determine the condition it’s in now. From there, you can create a long-term management plan. Eric is beginning to assemble the teams who will perform those initial inventories, from species counts, composition of plotted areas of the woods, tree sizes and growth rates, instances of disease and insects, and evidence of regeneration. “We’re going to create a snapshot of how this forest looks at this particular time.”



Part of managing the forest is dealing with tree death. This 130-year-old Southern red oak fell during the March 3 ice storm. We cut through the part of the trunk that was blocking a trail, and the rest will be left as-is. Dead trees are an outstanding habitat source for birds and small mammals, and the gap they create in the canopy allows new trees to receive sunlight.

The forest is a huge educational resource.

Much of the inventory will be performed by local college students (past studies have focused on things like mushrooms and snakes). Eventually we’ll use these data to educate people about ecology and natural history, and truly take advantage of having an environment as rich as the Old Forest in our backyard.



We can make a real difference. The Old Forest is a manageable size, so making a significant improvement in its ecological health is possible. Often, a lack of funding or community interest makes it difficult to do meaningful forestry work. That’s not the case with the community’s support of Overton Park. “I owe a lot to my predecessor at the Conservancy, Naomi Van Tol, and to the park volunteers,” Eric says. “We’re not starting from scratch here.”

While collecting the data needed to form a long-term plan will take a while, Eric says there are things we can do now. The first step is continuing to remove invasive species. He’s been working with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation on an Invasive Top Ten that includes Chinese privet, kudzu, and English ivy. The Conservancy has removed several tons of privet over the last two winters, but fighting re-sprouts will be necessary for a few years.

Another current task is renewing the Old Forest’s arboretum certification. As part of this process, Eric envisions greater labeling of some of the trees and herbaceous plants that occur in the woods.

“Forestry is not about immediate gratification,” Eric says. It can take 50 to 100 years to see the effects of today’s work. “Our goal is to keep the forest healthy and resilient, which means a high diversity of species, minimal exotic invasives, and the ability to absorb environmental impacts and recover from them.”

A Magical Night raises valuable funds



Calvin and Belinda Anderson



Illuminated formal gardens



Kyle and Carrie Wagenschutz

More than 400 park supporters were welcomed into a spectacularly lit formal garden in November 2013 for A Magical Night at Overton Park. The vintage decor, smooth sounds of jazz, and delicious treats provided a backdrop for a celebration that raised operating funds for Overton Park.

A million thanks to our sponsors: FedEx, Classic Party Rentals, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee, Echo Systems, Ernst & Young, inbalance FITNESS, Independent Bank, Memphis Zoo, SunTrust Bank, and Wunderlich Securities. This year's third annual Magical Night will be held on November 1, 2014.

Photos by Nathan Berry

our donors

Overton Park Conservancy gratefully acknowledges the individuals and organizations who made gifts, pledges, and in-kind donations between July 1, 2013 and December 31, 2013. If we have inadvertently omitted the name of one of our supporters, we sincerely apologize. Please correct any errors by contacting us at 901.214.5450.

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Make merry on June 7

Welcome summer with us on the Greensward as our free family festival, A Day of Merrymaking, returns! We'll have music, activities, food trucks, fun for kids and dogs, and much more from 10:00 to 3:00 on Saturday, June 7. For more details, visit www.overtonpark.org/merrymaking.



New membership shirts!

Our signature Overton Park shirts, included with all Conservancy memberships, are designed by a different local artist each year. This year's design is by Lauren Rae Holtermann. Get yours today by filling out the enclosed envelope or visiting www.overtonpark.org/membership.

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Teresa & Bill Bullock
Janie & Rip Carloss
Carson Claybrook
Linda Cochran

Scarlett Cook
Lisa Crenshaw
Marilu Davis
Louise Anne & Drew
Dawkins
Vonnie Drown
Melissa Dunn & James Brooks
Shelley Durfee & William
Chandler
Eric Ellis
Astrid & Tylur French
Rod Gary
Nannette & Jack Gills
DiAne Gordon
Rebekah Hammond
Terri & Flanders Harris
Jane & Thomas Heineke
Mary & David Hinson
Emily Holmes & Dr. Paul Haught
Ellen & Jon Hornyak
Michael Jacewicz
Candace & Charles Jefferies
Sandra & Richard Jenkins
Zach Johnston
Danielle Jones
Patrick Jones
Cynthia Jones
Emelyn & John Joyner
Gail Karr & Tony Stafford
Cheryl Kent
Carrie & James Kerley

Tricia & Charles Kerwin
Sally Kesselman
Kate & Chris Lareau
Sherry Lear-Park
Michael Lemm
Alice & Michael Leslie
Stinson Liles
Leanne Logan & Alan Johnson
Angie Lusk
Kelsey Ann Lyons
Cameron Mann
Mary & Frank Markus
Tom Marsh
Jim Marshall
Brian Martinelli
Ann McEachran
Derek McKinnon
Page McMullen
Cynthia Middleton
Katherine Morris
Gina & Pat Neely
Molly & Joe Opferman
Deanie Parker
Sue & Douglas Perkins
Elle Perry
Vandana & Daniel Peterson
Kate & John Phillips
Jimmy Powell
Janice & Charles Raiteri
Ellen Roberds
Claude & Bob Rogers

Brian Roper
Judith Rutschman
Leigh Savage & Donna Blackard
Dale Schaefer
Michael Scott
Leslee Sears
Kenneth Shaw
Ann Smith
Sunshine Snyder
Taryn & Jim Spake
Baylor & Howard Stovall
Marlene Tate
Emily & Chris Taylor
Lauren Taylor
Melissa Taylor
Phillip Taylor
Hailey Thomas
Marilou & Paul Thompson
Diana Threadgill
Teresa & Raymond Tilton
Louise & Calvin Turley
Betty & William Turner
Jay Walker
Katie Wassmer
Catherine & Joseph
Weingarten
Christine Weinreich
Cynthia Wilson Lewis
Houston Winbigler
Melissa & Shawn Wolowicz
Sadettin Yuksel