

Bluff Street Park

(aka Gas Works Bluff)

A community-led effort to seek designation of neglected open space as a park for a high density, diverse residential neighborhood, and to preserve the last remaining bluff as a riverfront natural area.



The Challenge: Riverfront Development Pressures:

Bluff Street Park is the last remaining large undeveloped open space area on the Mississippi in the West Bank neighborhood, a very densely populated area near the University of Minnesota. Acquired by the Minneapolis Park Board as part of a larger parcel needed for trail development, the site is known to the Park Board as the Gas Works Bluff site, has no master plan and is currently used for storage of heavy equipment such as concrete Jersey barriers and planters. The site is vulnerable to uses other than open space, such as further high rise housing development, despite its proximity to street/freeway bridges and its likely soil or groundwater contamination.

Project Features:

The West Bank Community Coalition organized a volunteer Bluff Street Park task force to pursue park development of the site. The task force:

- Received assistance from the University of Minnesota's Metropolitan Design Center to develop initial design concepts for future use of the site, and selected preferred options for near-term implementation with wider neighborhood input.
- Opposed a developer's proposal to purchase the site for highrise development.
- Negotiated an "Adopt-a-Park" agreement with the Park Board, which should permit additional improvements to go forward. An initial improvement project is being planned.
- Conducted an Earth Day 2006 neighborhood cleanup on the site involving neighborhood residents, youth from a nearby community center, Groundwork, and an Americorps NCCC team. On Earth Day 2007, 35 neighborhood residents and Groundwork held a second neighborhood cleanup.

Partners:

West Bank Community Coalition, Groundwork Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, University of Minnesota Metropolitan Design Center, and a Hennepin County Master Gardener. Groundwork has worked with the task force since its inception.

Next steps:

Negotiate further improvements with the Park Board, determine impact of soil contamination on those proposals, raise funds and implement an initial planting.

