

Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance

Newsletter

Midwestern University Plans New Parking Deck and Conservation Easement

Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance is a local non-profit organization that works to enhance appreciation and protection of our community's outstanding natural resources, such as the Lyman Woods Preserve. We applaud Midwestern University's efforts to be a good neighbor to the Preserve that adjoins the University to the west.

Since 1999 Midwestern University has been working with the co-owners of Lyman Woods Preserve to finalize an important restrictive covenant along its western boundary. This restrictive covenant (or conservation easement as it was originally called) was proposed in connection with the University's prior amended special use permit request that was approved by the Village of Downers Grove more than two years ago.

Our understanding of the goals for this agreement are that it should permit a permanent public trail alignment around the eastern edge of the Preserve together with appropriate management and appreciation of an unusual gravel kame. The agreement will also provide assurance of no future buildings within a buffer strip of University-owned land bordering the Preserve. As we have followed progress toward this agreement over the years, our impression is that University President Kathleen Goepfinger is doing everything she can to complete this promised gift to the public, but that dealing with several public agencies continues to be a challenge.

Several members of the Heritage Alliance have met with Midwestern University officials to discuss the current proposal to amend their special use permit to allow a new parking deck. We are primarily concerned with potential effects the new parking deck will have on the nearby Lyman Woods Preserve. Three primary areas of interest are changes in water quality, changes in light levels, and changes in view and activity. The University officials and their technical advisors have certainly given substantial attention to these issues and been very forthcoming in our discussions.

The overall approach of the University to this proposed new parking structure seems to be building for their long-term future in a way that improves not only the availability of parking but also improves other features for the campus and, if possible, for the University's neighbors, too. With this positive spirit in mind we made several comments at the March 27, 2002 Public Hearing before the Downers Grove Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) on the parking structure as it may affect the Lyman Woods Preserve and suggested some additional fine-tuning that could improve the project.

After University officials offered to work to resolve issues that were raised in the public hearing, the ZBA recommended approval of the proposed special use permit. Since then improvements of the landscaping plan have been proposed and substantial progress has been made toward finalizing the proposed restrictive covenant agreement. PDHA board members continue to participate in this process. The next step will be presentation of ZBA's recommendation to the Village Council, probably some time in May this year.

Gypsy Moths in Downers Grove

Gypsy moth infestations were identified in several areas of Downers Grove last year. Significant numbers of adult moths were found along Dunham Road near Maple Grove Forest Preserve and just north of 39th Street near the Lyman Woods Forest Preserve. The observed counts of adult gypsy moths with the identification of egg deposits were great enough to qualify the Village for participation in the "Slow the Spread" (STS) program of the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

The STS program includes two aerial sprayings in May of the *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT). BT attacks butterfly and moth larva that are feeding during the time of the spraying and for a few days following the spray application. BT rapidly decomposes in the environment so that its effects are short lived.

According to information distributed by the Village Forester, Kerstin G. Von der Heide, "The BT strain *kurstaki* or BTK, is effective against Lepidoptera (Moths and Butterflies) and is used to control numerous defoliating lepidopteran species. Indeed, BTK sprays will kill most of the young caterpillars that may ingest it as they feed on treated plant leaves. Both damaging caterpillars, such as the gypsy moth, as well as harmless caterpillars of other butterflies and moths that are present at the time of BTK application can be killed. However, in general, BTK and its toxins are destroyed within three to five days by sunlight and other

microbes. Caterpillars killed by BTK stop feeding, drop to the ground, and decay harmlessly. The BTK applied in a spray does not multiply or accumulate in the environment.”

A relatively small number of other moth and butterfly caterpillars have normally hatched out in May during the planned spray times. These other species include morning cloak butterflies and some cutworm moths. Future repopulation by the native benign species from the surrounding unsprayed areas could be expected. Still a noticeable loss of food for other animals within the spray area may occur this year.

Without the BTK spray program, there does seem to be a significantly greater risk of a rapidly spreading gypsy moth infestation in Downers Grove causing defoliation and weakening of particularly the oak trees that we value. But the BTK spray program does seem to have undesirable side effects on some other insects, insect-eating birds and other animals within the spray area. There is no ideal solution to this dilemma. But the Village and Forest Preserve elected officials have decided to move ahead with the BTK spray program this year.

We can all help with the monitoring and destruction of gypsy moth caterpillars using burlap banding of trees and following a procedure described in detail in handouts about gypsy moths that are available from the Public Works Department at 5101 Walnut Avenue, phone 630 434-5460, and on the Village Web site

<http://www.vil.downers-grove.il.us/pubworks/forestry/moth/monitoring.htm>

Another very good Web site about the gypsy moth is: <http://www.fs.fed.us/ne/morgantown/4557/gmoth/>

Tree Appreciation and Protection in Downers Grove

Mature trees in residential areas of our community help define the character of our village. Two small, but high quality forest preserves within Downers Grove, Maple Grove and Lyman Woods, also enhance our community's image and attractiveness. Many municipalities in the Chicago area have already taken significantly greater steps to recognize and protect trees on public and private property than we have taken in Downers Grove.

How can we improve the appreciation and protection of mature trees in Downers Grove? Many municipalities have focused on special procedures for permitting removal of mature trees of greater than a certain size, 6 or 8

inches in diameter, say. Other municipalities have detailed information in their subdivision control ordinances about suggested and/or required protection for mature trees on private property during construction activities. Some communities have requirements for tree replacement plantings when significant mature trees are to be removed to permit new construction or redevelopment. As we now recognize, the issue of redevelopment with wrap-a-round or teardown of an existing home is an increasingly important subject in a rapidly expanding number of Downers Grove neighborhoods.

Retrofitting new sidewalks into established neighborhoods is also raising our sensitivity to appreciation and protection of mature trees in Downers Grove. In some neighborhoods the density of trees is low enough so that few jogs in the sidewalk path permit most mature trees to be saved. In other neighborhoods, such as along Lee Avenue between Maple Avenue and the railroad tracks, the installation of standard-width concrete sidewalks is proving very controversial. What design adjustments can be made to preserve the character of a neighborhood such as Denburn Woods and still provide for improved pedestrian safety? The answer to this question will provide an important test of our ability to appreciate and protect mature trees in Downers Grove.

Short Takes

As part of the Downers Grove Adopt-a-Highway program, Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance has volunteered to **clean up Highland Avenue**, gateway to Lyman Woods Forest Preserve, between 31st Street and 39th Street on Saturday, May 11th from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. Volunteers will start out from the Lyman Woods parking area at 33rd Street. Trash that is collected will be sorted, separated and recycled. Additional volunteers are welcome. For additional information please contact: Laurel Bowen, PDHA Secretary/Treasurer, 630 852-5490.

Board members of Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance have looked at the preliminary **landscape plans for the new Park District Recreation Center** on Belmont Road. Board members agreed that we would like to see as many native plants used at that location as possible. There are already some native plantings in the preliminary plans. We plan to discuss this subject more at our next PDHA board meeting on Wednesday, June 5th.

Please plan to attend and participate in the regular quarterly **Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance board meeting** at Lincoln Center on Wednesday, June 5th, from 7:00 to 9:30 PM. All members of the Heritage Alliance are welcome. Come to hear reports about ongoing projects and join in discussions of future activities.

In April, the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County sent out bid documents for the **Lyman Woods Interpretative Center**. Construction bids will be opened in May and it is hoped that a contract can be awarded by June so that construction work can begin this summer. The Downers Grove Park District is applying for grants to support special features at the center, such as energy efficiency and landscape restoration.

Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance recently joined the **Downers Grove Area Chamber of Commerce** as a non-profit member. Upcoming activities include the next Business After Hours from 5 to 7 p.m. on Thursday, May 16 at Hickory Ridge Marriott, Lisle, located on west side of Route 53, south of Maple Avenue just before Seven Bridges. For additional information please contact: Laurel Bowen, PDHA Secretary/Treasurer, 630 852-5490.
