



Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance

Preserving our Natural and Cultural Heritage

Spring Newsletter

Mission of Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance

PDHA activities respond to changing community concerns. Founding members of the Heritage Alliance in 1995 focused their attention on safeguarding and enhancing Lyman Woods near 31st Street and Highland Avenue in Downers Grove. Over the years PDHA support for protection of local natural areas has grown to include Belmont Prairie Nature Preserve and Maple Grove Forest Preserve.

The current upsurge in residential redevelopment now raises concerns about threats to Downers Grove's rich architectural heritage and to the traditional livability of our neighborhoods. Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance, in cooperation with the Downers Grove Watch Association, led a successful petition drive last year to preserve the 19th Century Rev. Orange Lyman House on Maple Avenue when it was threatened with demolition.

Nearly 1900 supporters petitioned Downers Grove Village and Park District officials to "*assure our community maintains its distinctive neighborhoods, including Maple Avenue with its characteristic collection of 19th and early 20th century residences...*" Our **Neighborhood Character Petition** asked for three actions: 1.) *Cooperate to protect and preserve the Rev. Orange Lyman House;* 2.) *Tighten controls on demolition permits;* and 3.) *Create a community-based task force to study possible preservation options and make recommendations.* Petitioners are still waiting for actions responding to their requests for better demolition controls and for recommendations about preservation options.

In recognition of our evolving role, PDHA Directors recently adopted the following mission statement:

The mission of Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance is to promote appreciation and protection of the natural and cultural heritage of Downers Grove through education, advocacy, and community outreach. The Alliance is committed to the preservation of our community's outstanding natural features, such as Lyman Woods and Belmont Prairie, as well as our significant cultural traditions, including our rich architectural heritage."

This new mission statement recognizes that older homes and the forested streetscapes of established Downers Grove neighborhoods are an important part of our community's cultural heritage. Moreover, our natural heritage includes trees and other plants located throughout the neighborhoods as well as those in our parks and forest preserves.

Next PDHA Meeting

The next meeting of the Heritage Alliance will be held on **June 29, 2005** at 7 PM in **Room 503** at **Lincoln Center, 935 Maple Avenue** in **Downers Grove**. Please plan to come and join in our work.



The Reverend Orange Lyman house on Maple Avenue.

Spring Wild Flowers

For a wonderful view of spring wild flowers take a walk through Maple Grove and Lyman Woods sometime in late April or early May. Ground cover plants put on a spectacular floral display before the oaks and maples leaf out!

Visit the Lyman Woods Interpretive Center for more ideas or to start your adventure. Or, sign up for the Adult Woodland Wildflowers Class with the Downers Grove Park District on April 30 from 9-11:30 AM. www.dgparcs.org

Tree Protection Ordinance

Participants at last fall's Community Dialogue on Residential Development ranked "Green space/trees" as the most desirable neighborhood aspect that should be preserved and/or enhanced. They ranked "Diminishing Green Space" among the five most undesirable aspects that need to be addressed in Downers Grove neighborhoods.

In response to the Community Dialogue, Downers Grove Village Staff recommended steps to strengthen the Village's Tree Protection Ordinance. (<http://www.downers.us/govt/packets/03-08-05/tree%20preserve.pdf> and <http://www.downers.us/govt/packets/04-05-05/trees.pdf>) The Village's Environmental Concerns Commission endorsed the proposed changes in March. Twice now the Village Council has tabled consideration of these proposed changes. Currently, the Council plans to discuss these issues at its Workshop Meeting on May 10th.



Construction damage causes significant damage to trees, which often do not survive.

The Council recognizes two areas of concern about loss of mature trees and green space throughout our community. Their first concern is to strengthen protection for publicly owned trees, such as those in the parkways. Their second concern is how to initiate/encourage protection and preservation of mature trees on private property.

The staff proposal would increase protection for both publicly and privately owned trees. During redevelopment projects, parkway trees would be better protected, and the builder would be required to submit a survey of existing trees on the lot and a plan for protection of larger trees. The staff proposal would increase substantially fines for the injury or unauthorized removal of trees identified for protection.



Mature trees are one of Downers Grove's most valuable resources.

Much of the current discussion focuses on how and when to identify trees for protection. Outstanding questions include the following: Under what conditions should a survey of existing trees by a professional arborist be required? What type of new subdivision, planned development or residential redevelopment should trigger village efforts to protect and preserve mature trees?

Surrounding communities have successfully implemented useful tree preservation ordinances similar to the one proposed here. Please join our efforts to strengthen tree protection in Downers Grove. Study the specific staff proposals and additional information at our website. (<http://www.pdha.org/>) Let your elected Village Commissioners know your views. Attend the Council Workshop Meeting on May 10th at 6:30 PM, if you possibly can.

PDHA's New Look

What do you think about the new look for this Spring 2005 Newsletter and the new appearance for the Heritage Alliance website. (<http://www.pdha.org/>)? We owe much gratitude to PDHA Director Mark Sklair for his many years of service as Webmaster and designer. But now that Mark's interests and work have now changed to focus on his career in nursing and healthcare, we are very fortunate to have found another skilled volunteer Webmaster and designer. PDHA Director Charley Smart recently took over this important responsibility. The web site is currently being redesigned and updated. It will be unveiled in a few weeks. Please let us know how you like our new look and the many new features.



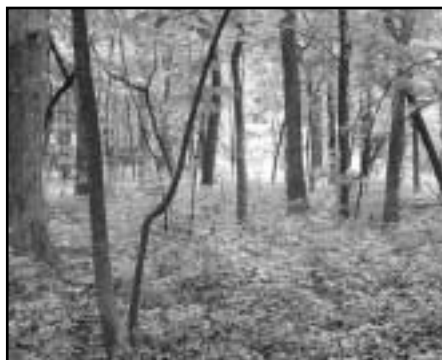
Maple Grove Forest Preserve Encroachments

Maple Grove is one of the oldest and smallest DuPage Forest Preserves, established in 1920 and currently containing 82 acres of land. Maple Grove Forest Preserve is rated Class IV, the highest quality classification for natural areas in the DuPage Forest Preserves. There are 2 Illinois Endangered and Threatened species and 14 Species of Special Concern in this ecosystem.



Brent Manning, Executive Director of the Forest Preserve District, recently sent comments to the Downers Grove Zoning Board of Appeals about a requested variation to reduce a rear yard setback adjoining

the west side of Maple Grove for construction of an in-ground pool. He wrote in part, "This relatively small preserve is completely surrounded by development and adjacent buffers are important to preservation efforts. Any reduction in the buffer by allowing a reduction in setback on adjacent property could have a negative impact. For instance, root systems and branches generally



Current Officers and Directors Of Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance
 Gordon L. Goodman, Chair, Jerry Yoksoulian, Chair Pro-tem, Laurel Q. Bowen, Secretary, and James Cavallo, Treasurer are the current officers of Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance. Other Directors of the Heritage Alliance are Jane E. Amorosi, Aspasia Colias, Lee A. Forsythe, Matt LeCren, Ken Lerner, Kathleen Panek, William M. Runyon, David Schulz, Mark D. Sklair, Charley Smart and William (Buzz) Whowell. Mark Sklair lives in Westmont and Kathleen Panek lives in Burr Ridge. All other Directors live in Downers Grove.

extend beyond the property lines; excavation and construction activities within setback areas create a potential for damage to and subsequent mortality of large trees along the property line.

"Additionally, the pool water and chemicals could pose a serious threat. Leaching or outright dumping of treated pool water or stored chemicals could adversely affect the health of this high quality area. We would encourage proper storage, use and disposal of chemicals and pool water, and adherence to existing Ordinances."



The ZBA continued consideration of the requested variation to its next meeting on April 27th.

The Village of Downers Grove is planning to install a sidewalk on the north side of Maple Grove along Gilbert Avenue/Street. But the right-of-way in much of this area is not suited to a sidewalk since it is steeply sloped and quite narrow. In fact, for one stretch of this roadway the

Downers Grove Zoning Map does not indicate any dedicated right-of-way. Thus, the Village may be seeking permission to build a portion of the sidewalk within Maple Grove Forest Preserve. Again the Forest Preserve District staff anticipates possible adverse impacts of such construction on the fragile ecosystem.

DuPage Forest Preserve Commissioner W. H. Brown spoke at the March meeting of PDHA. He appealed for greater sensitivity by all involved parties to likely adverse effects that their actions can have on the value and quality of Maple Grove, a unique and important public property.

For more information about Maple Grove please visit <http://www.dupageforest.com/PRESERVES/maplegrove.html>.

Downers Grove Park District 2005 Natural Areas Spring Workdays

The Downers Grove Park District manages two natural areas - Lyman Woods and Belmont Prairie. Volunteers are needed throughout the year to help restore and preserve these natural areas. For more information visit <http://www.dgparks.org/find-item.cfm?itemid=3720>. Workdays for Spring 2005 are held from 9:00-11:30 AM each day listed below.

LYMAN WOODS

Saturday, April 9th, brush cutting and removing garlic mustard.

Saturday, April 16th, brush cutting and removing garlic mustard.

BELMONT PRAIRIE

Saturday, May 14th, brush cutting.





Highland Avenue Adopt-A-Highway Work

Look for the Adopt-A-Highway signs along Highland Avenue. Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance claims the section of the highway between 31st Street and 39th Street for all future clean-ups.

We are helping to eliminate litter, and hope that "Fines for Littering" signs will soon be posted to get the message out. You are welcome to join us in clean up efforts along Highland Avenue. We schedule three organized workdays each year. Saturday, April 23rd is the next scheduled date. Clean up dates later this year are also Saturdays, June 11th and October 8th.

We meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on the east side of Highland Avenue at 33rd Street. (This normally closed parking area is open for our use on clean up days.) Expect it to take no longer than 2 hours to clean up from 31st - 39th Streets.

We hope to have your help to combat litter along the gateway to Downers Grove. **Please mark your calendars now for April 23!** Thank you for your continued support. Please view our website at <http://www.pdha.org/>.



**Pierce Downer's
Heritage Alliance**

P.O. Box 422
Downers Grove, IL 60515

Spring Newsletter



Pierce Downer's
Heritage Alliance *Preserving our Natural and Cultural Heritage*

Your membership in the Alliance helps in our efforts to petition local government officials to preserve our heritage resources. Your participation in our programs demonstrates to our community the strength of our coalition to protect Downers Grove's natural and cultural heritage.

Please Join the Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance or renew your membership now to help protect the natural and cultural heritage of Downers Grove.

Name(s): _____

Street Address: _____

City : _____ State: _____ Zip _____

Telephone: (____) _____ email: _____

Contribution \$ _____ Employer Matching Contribution _____

I/We can also volunteer some time.

A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION of \$10 or more will help us defray expenses, but is not required for membership. Your email address will help us keep you informed of future events.

Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance, PO Box 422, Downers Grove, IL 60515