

GreenPlan Philadelphia – August 28, 2009

Grant Application for Parks and Recreation Centers

Name of Applicant Group:

Friends of Cianfrani Park

Name of Park or Center

Cianfrani Park

Facility Location:

Eighth and Fitzwater Streets

Application Contact:

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About the Group

The Friends of Cianfrani Park: Mission and Brief History

Our Mission is to build community by creating a safe, clean and beautiful place for all to enjoy.

Cianfrani Park, located at the corner of Eighth and Fitzwater Streets, was created on the site of a demolished school over 40 years ago. A group of neighbors met occasionally to clean, plant and care for their new park. By the early 90's the park had begun to deteriorate. Trees and turf were stressed and dying. Graffiti began to appear on the benches and walls. The park was no longer the green heart of our community. Reacting to this loss, new neighbors and "old timers" got together to talk about stopping the decay. Several meetings were held in the park and it became clear that we all wanted to remake the park into something more. Why couldn't Cianfrani Park once again become the green center of our community? The problem was clear. The need was immediate. We had people with energy and vision. Out of these elements was born our current group of over 100 people, the "Friends of Cianfrani Park".

For over sixteen years our park group has been working to implement a master plan for the park. With the financial help of many neighbors, small business people and supportive city and state officials, we have accomplished much of it. Gardens fenced with attractive wrought iron, urns overflowing with flowers, benches filled with seniors engaged in conversation, mothers with children playing with pets are all now a reality. Through our efforts, Cianfrani Park is once again the green heart of our community.

Past projects accomplished with help from PHS include installation of wrought iron fencing around all of the major planting beds. We replaced seven trees that had been lost to disease and age in 2007 and 2008. We installed two new trashcans in 2008.

In 2007 we completed a master design review with the Community Design Collaborative to help us develop new ideas for the park. This past spring we implemented the first phase of that plan with a grant from TreeVitalize to plant seven additional trees along Fitzwater Street.

Membership Activities:

We sponsor six types of activities in Cianfrani Park.

MUSICAL EVENTS:

These include weekly live musical concerts throughout the month of June.

MOVIE EVENTS:

We show at least one movie each summer. We are seeking expand these events.

PARK WORKDAYS:

Every spring and fall we hold park workdays. Typical activities include raking leaves, planting new flowers, shrubs and trees, and painting the perimeter iron fence. To encourage the participation of the community we try to make it a festive event by providing lunch and refreshments for all who attend.

GARDENING PROJECTS:

We are proud of the gardens we have created and maintained over the years. They are enjoyed by neighbors and visitors alike for their horticultural interest and diversity.

FALL FESTIVAL:

This is the major fundraising event of our year. Held each fall for over fourteen years, it includes a flea market with live entertainment, homemade food and a raffle.

HOLIDAY LIGHTING:

During the holiday season we install our “Pyramid of Light” in the center square. This has become a neighborhood tradition and kicks off the Bella Vista United Civic Association holiday lighting contest.

About Partnerships

We have a good working relationship with the Department of Recreation. They cut our grass semi-regularly, pick up the trash weekly and after our workdays. Barbara McCabe and her staff have always been responsive to our needs.

Both Frank DiCicco, our City Councilperson, and Babette Josephs, our State House Representative, are aware of and support the Friends of Cianfrani Park. Councilman DiCicco has helped the park with yearly Activities Fund grants. Representative Josephs has helped us in the past with DCED grants and is enthusiastic about our current project.

The Citizen’s Alliance picked up park trash one extra day each week last year.

Bella Vista Town Watch coordinates activities with our park.

Reverend Grandell of the Church of the Crucifixion on Eighth and Bainbridge Streets has volunteered to let us use his church for park activities and concerts.

Bella Vista United Civic Association (BVUCA) supports our work and for the last eight years has held a Holiday Lighting ceremony in our park. Park members designed and built a “Pyramid of Light” that sits in the center square and symbolizes the unity of all faiths.

We have worked with the Community Design Collaborative to help define and refine our Master Plan.

Some dog-owners who frequent the park have organized themselves into a group that raises money to pay to have the trashcans emptied regularly.

Our fundraising efforts are supported by many local businesses, for example Whole Foods, DiBruno Bothers and numerous local restaurants.

About the Project

1. Project Description, Overall Goal, List of Tasks and Timelines

Building on a successful fifteen-year history of park improvements, our project will continue the transformation of Cianfrani Park into the “green” heart of our community. In broad outline, we would like to transform the center of our park from a socially and ecologically passive space into a place that actively manages storm water while providing new performance opportunities for the larger community. This project is composed of five phases. Each phase is part of our overall Master Plan, developed with help from the Community Design Collaborative and through our own internal design committee meetings. Listed in order of importance, they are:

- A. Replace the existing deteriorating concrete paving in our center square with new water-permeable paving to create a large central community space and storm water storage area. Remove the existing decorative urn and store.
- B. Build a new raised performance platform for concerts, movies, festivals and meetings that connects to the new central community space.
- C. Move the existing decorative urn and planter from the center square to maximize community space and reinstall it as the new centerpiece of a refurbished garden in the existing Eighth Street circular planter.
- D. Plant new trees on either side of the dying linden tree in the “triangle” and one in the center square to begin the eventual replanting of all four center trees.
- E. Install new perimeter French drains along the lengths of Fitzwater and Pemberton Streets to prevent storm water from leaving the park and overloading the local sewershed.

Structuring our project in five phases has several advantages. Phases can be done separately and in any order, yet will eventually contribute to the overall transformation of our park. Any level of funding can be useful. A small grant could provide a replacement tree. A larger grant could provide a place for community performances. There are also ample opportunities for community involvement through individual donations and fund raising events.

Timelines can vary according to phase. We think these improvements could be made within a two-month time period when park use is low and the temperature is appropriate for concrete work, probably some time late fall 2009 or early spring 2010.

This strategy of phased improvement is one we have followed with great success throughout our history with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and the City. In past years PHS has helped fund new center park entrances and planting beds, new wrought iron fencing, new trees and new trashcans. In every case what has been built before has served as the foundation for what has come after. We always plan ahead, always think long-term, always build on what exists, never waste anything. To us, this is the ultimate meaning of “green”. We believe that our proposed projects will transform Cianfrani Park from what is already a successful park into one that is truly inspired.

2. Proposed Budget and Itemized Costs

Below is a breakdown of each phase into its component tasks. Approximate cost information is supplied by Monkey Business Landscaping, Inc., a neighborhood green landscaping contractor. They are as follows, organized by phase:

- A. The tasks required to repave the center square with water-permeable pavers : Cost - \$18,280
- Demolish the existing concrete paving, taking care not to damage the three existing mimosa trees.
 - Demolish the existing center brick planter.
 - Remove and save the decorative urn and iron fencing.
 - Dismantle and save four existing wood and iron benches for reinstallation.
 - Evaluate the existing substrate and install new gravel, etc. as required for the new water permeable paving material.
 - Install new pavers in a sand bed, following any decorative patterns shown in drawings.
- B. The tasks required to complete the performance platform : Cost - \$6,750
- Remove and save the existing center light pole.
 - Remove two existing wood benches
 - Construct a new rectangular concrete wall approximately 10' x 16' and 17" high at the narrow end of the "triangle". (Alternate – wood platform, see attached detail)
 - Fill the contained area with gravel and sand and then install permeable pavers as a finished surface.
 - Reinstall the existing light pole with a second matching light pole and a power source on either side of the new platform.
- C. The tasks required to move the decorative urn from the center square to the Eighth Street circular planter (Ideally done at the same time as Phase "A", if funding allows) : Cost - \$3,375
- Remove the existing plantings from the circular planter and donate to other parks.
 - Pour a new concrete foundation in the circular planter.
 - Re-install the urn as the centerpiece of the Eighth Street circular planter.
- D. The tasks required to plant new trees in the "Triangle" and the Center Square : Cost - \$1,755
- Develop landscape plan for "Triangle" as dedicated children's area.
 - Decide on tree species based on mature size, spring and fall color.
 - Plant two new trees.
 - Open empty tree pit in Center Square.
 - Decide on tree species to eventually replace three existing ageing Mimosas.
 - Plant one new tree to begin replacement cycle.
- E. The tasks required to install new perimeter French drains along Fitzwater and Pemberton Streets : Cost - \$30,760
- Excavate new trenches of required width and depth.
 - Evaluate need for perimeter retaining curb.
 - Fill with gravel.
 - Cover with new sod.
 - Attached detail is preliminary and subject to change.

3. Existing Drawings, Landscape Plans and Supporting Letters

- Cianfrani Park - Existing Plan, Proposed Plan and Master Plan
- Cianfrani Park - Paving and Drain Details and Performance Platform Detail
- Letters of Project Support (5)
- Neighborhood Petition of Project Support

4. Maintenance of New Improvements

The Friends of Cianfrani Park have always maintained improvements to the park. This past spring we spent over \$1,500 in park funds to professionally prune and stabilize park trees. We will continue general park maintenance with our regularly scheduled park clean-ups, including the annual Spring into your Park event sponsored by PHS.

5. Water Sources

Please see attached drawings for the locations of our existing water sources. We have a total of three.

6. Community Benefits

The Friends of Cianfrani Park observe the behavioral dynamics of our park every day. We believe that good design will shape how the park is used. We are always thinking of ways to improve it through landscape design to benefit the larger community. What has become obvious to us is that our park is more heavily used today than ever before, proving the success of our past efforts to make Cianfrani Park the green center of our community.

By design, our park has a strong focus on its Center Square. All of the pathways in the park lead people to the center. We surrounded the square with planting beds to create a sense of enclosure. We installed a planter and urn to architecturally mark the place. Our new project will again strengthen the center by making it the focus of our community concerts, movies and festivals. Our green areas are under extreme stress from overuse by both dogs and people. Lawn areas are severely compacted and struggle to support any green ground cover. Topsoil washes away with every storm leaving an even more impervious surface. Our center square has become shabby and underused. The original forty year old concrete paving is still in place, cracked and uneven. The base of the urn is collapsing, causing the entire assembly to tilt.

Our project attempts to solve all of these problems with carefully targeted efforts that leverage all resources to maximum effect by achieving two goals with every dollar. The center square becomes both a center for community events **and** a storm water retention area. The performance area provides a new venue for community talent **and** redirects audience traffic away from lawn areas back to the newly paved center. Moving the decorative urn to the Eighth Street circular planter opens up space and sightlines in the center for community events **and** creates a new focal point for passing pedestrians. Planting new trees ensures that the future of the park will be green now **and** in the future. New perimeter French drains keeps rain water in the park where it can help keep trees and grass green **and** helps relieve an overloaded city sewershed. We believe that by doing the most with every resource is the true meaning of the concept of being "Green". We are confident that the modest changes we've outlined in this proposal will make a significant and positive effect on the beauty and utility of our very special park.