

RIVERSIDE PARK: 5-YEAR PLAN, updated

Draft presented to the New London Parks & Recreation Commission, 4/3/13

2012 – Review of activities in support of “Riverside Nature Park & Recreation District” (5/5/11)

1. Riverside Park Conservancy, a formal group in support of the park (similar to SOBs), was formed; RPC, whose board includes park neighbors and community activists, attained 501(c)(3) status as a public charity in its first year of existence.

2. The scope of Re-Connect New London was expanded to include master planning for Riverside Park, utilizing DECD’s “Creative Placemaking” grant funding and resources offered by UConn’s Community Resource & Design Collaborative.

3. Regular events were held in the park:

- Community clean-ups and planting days

- Family festivals: Neighbor Day, Regatta Day, Down By the Riverside, Fall Fest

- Plein Air painting day, followed by “Scenes from Riverside Park” exhibit at Union Station

- Nature walks

- “Creative Placemaking” Saturday Art Jams

Partners for Riverside Park events included: Riverside Park Conservancy, NENL Neighborhood Association, New London Landmarks, Connecticut College OVCS and the Arboretum, Drop-In Learning Center, Union Station, Kiwanis, local bicycling and skateboarding groups.

4. Needs identified in order to get people into the park to work and play:

- functional restrooms and running water

- additional grills and picnic areas

- WIFI

- signage for locating park entrances

- signage for traffic control within the park

- underbrush control to enhance safety

- message board

- community gardens

- play equipment

5. Needs identified in order to conserve and enhance the park’s natural resources:

- invasive plant removal

- native plant and habitat restoration

- stormwater run-off management

- underbrush control to enhance views

- beach clean-up

- feral cat population stabilization

2013 – Specific goals

1. Restore running water and refurbish one of the park's existing restrooms.
2. Install four (4) family-sized charcoal grills near park entrances.
3. Extend planting strip outside the wall on Crystal Avenue to Stanners Street; extend plantings outside the wall on Adelaide Street to full length of the wall.
4. With support of neighbors, control feral cat population through trap-neuter-release program.
5. With support of FRESH-NL, create a Riverside Community Garden.
6. Engage youth in park stewardship through ongoing activities and special events.
7. Engage community members in park stewardship through "adopt an area" program.
8. Host at least 3 community events in the park.
9. Based on the recommendations of the Re-Connect New London master plan, finalize plans for reconfiguring street patterns, defining pedestrian and bicycle paths, managing stormwater run-off, locating play equipment, and connecting with Winthrop School and the waterfront.
10. Target 1 or 2 areas for invasive plant control and restoration of native vegetation.
11. Identify potential sources of funding for park improvements, maintenance and events; seek broad-based financial support from foundation and government grants, individual and corporate donations, and fundraising events.
12. Continue to develop partnerships with local groups and organizations that use the park.
13. Survey East New London recreational resources outside of Riverside Park (including Fulton Park, Winthrop Cove and the Winthrop School Playground), and develop goals for providing facilities, programs, services and natural areas throughout the district.

Follow-up

These annual goals will be reviewed and evaluated on a quarterly basis, and updated as necessary. Specific, achievable goals for 2014 and 2015 will be set following the completion of the park master plan by UConn's Community Research and Design Collaborative in June 2013.