

## **Reviving a Historic Park Corridor: An Update on the Irvingdale-Stransky-Rudge Parks Campaign**

By: Maggie Stuckey-Ross, Executive Director, Lincoln Parks Foundation  
JJ Yost, Planning & Construction Manager, Lincoln Parks & Recreation Department  
Kaylyn Neverve, Park Planner, Lincoln Parks & Recreation Department

Lincoln Parks & Recreation Department and Lincoln Parks Foundation recognizes how important the Irvingdale-Stransky-Rudge Parks Corridor is to surrounding neighborhoods. We appreciate your patience as we have navigated this process and are thrilled to share significant progress has been made (and much more is coming!).

Many neighbors will remember a master plan was developed for the three-park corridor of Irvingdale, Stransky, and Rudge Parks in 2016-2017. With financial support from many neighborhood associations, Lincoln Parks & Recreation, and Lincoln Parks Foundation, designers from *Big Muddy Workshop* created a master plan that encompassed many improvements throughout all three parks, emphasizing the usability, safety, and experience in these parks.

### **Fundraising Journey**

Since then, Lincoln Parks & Recreation and Lincoln Parks Foundation have worked on a funding strategy for the master plan. In August 2018, an application for significant federal funding was submitted to nationally competitive grant programs for urban parks within the National Parks Service. The application required evidence of 1:1 matching of the federal dollars. Thanks to the generosity of many neighbors and support from the City, the match was achieved. Unfortunately, the project was not selected for funding.

In September 2020, Lincoln Parks & Recreation Department learned of and applied for a state-level grant for the project. While the funding available was not as much as our previous application, it would allow us to complete a significant portion of the master plan. As with many government programs, the pandemic delayed action and notice on this application. However, patience has been the “name of the game” on this project. And, after a long wait, we are thrilled to report that the project was selected for funding! FINALLY!

### **Project Scope**

Olsson has been hired by Lincoln Parks & Recreation to provide engineering services needed in development of the construction documents. Work has begun in earnest, as Olsson has completed the topographic survey of the parks and provided a preliminary set of plans for park improvements that is under staff review. Combining the grant with the previously secured private dollars and municipal dollars, we will be able to include the following components in the renovation:

#### **Irvingdale Park**

- Remove existing parking lot, reconfigure for traffic flow, and replace
- Remove existing playground and replace
- Add new park shelter and picnic facilities
- Extend the perimeter pool fence to include green space inside for patrons
- Add concrete walking paths to connect to Stransky Park/Rudge Park
- Install brick entrance markers/columns at multiple entry points around the park perimeter

## Rudge Park

- Add new park shelter and picnic facilities
- Add concrete walking path that loops the park and connects to Stransky Park
- Remove existing playground and replace
- Close/remove the segment of 16th Street between Harrison Street and Lake Street, reestablish turf and create contiguous park space
- Regrade former pond with limited retaining walls along the southwest corner to increase opportunities for recreational play
- Preserve of the 'island' using stone salvaged from pond perimeter
- Install brick entrance markers/columns at multiple entry points around the park perimeter

## Stransky Park

While the master plan called for several changes to Stransky Park, due to limited funding, there will be no improvements made in this area as part of the current project.

## Timeline

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, Lincoln Parks & Recreation will host a public open house at the park shelter in Stransky Park where staff will be available to share plans for both park improvements and the 16<sup>th</sup> Street vacation. All neighbors are encouraged to drop in anytime between 4:30 and 6:00 pm to view plans, ask questions, and provide feedback. Following the open house, a formal petition to vacate 16<sup>th</sup> Street will be submitted to the Planning Department, which will commence the City review process and conclude with a public hearing at a Planning Commission meeting. Once all plans are finalized, the project will be advertised for bid.

Assuming weather holds and the municipal processes go as planned, construction is anticipated to begin in July 2022. Construction in the area of Irving Pool will be limited until the conclusion of pool season to minimize disruption to normal pool operations. Unless delayed by weather and/or the availability of materials or labor, construction should be completed by the end of the calendar year, with only final landscaping carrying over to Spring 2023.

## FAQ

Here are some common questions we have received from neighbors about the project.

*What about the civil defense shelter in Irvingdale Park? Will it be removed and turned into a soccer field?*

At this time, no. Demolition of the civil defense shelter is both financially and logistically challenging. Preliminary estimates to dismantle and remove the shelter exceed \$1,000,000, which is well over funding we have available for the project. Logistically, it is also a place of significant off-season storage for the Department. There is currently not a location identified that could house equipment in the off-season, so maintaining this space is critical. It should be noted that the Department will likely be replacing the roof on the shelter with some expediency as we currently face significant leaking inside the facility.

*Will we lose parking stalls at Irvingdale with the new configuration?*

No, reconfiguration of the parking lot will provide easier access to park amenities and better facilitate pool drop off/pickup traffic while continuing to offer approximately the same number of parking stalls in a more organized fashion.

*Why are no improvements included for the area around Stransky Park?*

As many neighbors will recognize, Stransky Park has been the recipient of a great deal of support and enhancement over the years, thanks in large part to generosity of the Leonard & Angeleen Stransky and the Trust that bears their name. When the team was considering improvements that could be funded with the limited funding currently available, it was decided to focus on Irvingdale and Rudge Parks.

*Will the playgrounds at each park be different?*

Yes! The goal is to have each playground provide a different user experience and be geared toward different age groups. Currently, the Stransky Playground is geared towards children under the age of 2 to 12. The new playground to be installed at Rudge Park will feature multiple swings of varying design. With its adjacency to Irving Middle School, the new playground at Irvingdale will be geared towards older children with play equipment designed for more active uses such as climbing.

*Will there be a lighted pedestrian crossing across 17<sup>th</sup> Street at Harrison?*

At this time, no. The average daily volume of vehicles traveling 17th Street between Harrison and Lake Streets and the number of pedestrians crossing 17th Street at this location do not warrant the installation of a signalized crossing. Lincoln Traffic and Utilities periodically updates these traffic counts and will adjust should the number of pedestrian/vehicle conflicts warrant such action.

*The channel through Irvingdale and Rudge Parks seems overgrown and at times unsightly. Will something be done about this?*

The Parks & Recreation Department coordinate with the City's Watershed Management Division and the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District to manage drainage ways to effectively convey storm water runoff while maintaining stabilized channel banks. Department staff will seek their guidance and manage vegetative growth within the channel as resources permit.