



ALTERNATIVE SITE PLAN "E"

MK ARCHITECTURE & PLANNING

City of Naples Gordon River Park

a park for naples future



by Kelly Merritt

Excitement for the new Gordon River Park has reached a fevered pitch in Naples, as Southwest Florida prepares for the Park Gala, Prelude to a Park on March 15, 2014. It will take place right in the very spot where the park will be, which adds to the enthusiasm.

The latest plan in the park process is dubbed "Plan E" and it reflects several few updates from the last plan unveiled by Kragh and the park gala committee.

"There are new pavilion structures, one on the side of the hill and on the peninsula while everything else was mostly moving things around different locations," said Kragh. "We added a shaded lawn which was a big part if the concept – instead of having one large open lawn, we now have one large open lawn and one heavily shaded lawn."

Kragh also grew the park hill from 30 feet to 40 feet. When he and Mayor John Sorey and park officials examined

the view of the river from the park at 30 feet, they realized they needed to go higher.

"Up at that height we really couldn't see the river that well, but when we rose up to 40 feet the view was perfect," said Kragh.

Plan E is everything park organizers could want in a park and the plan itself is a colorful inspiration of what's to come. Kragh's office created a 3D model of the park which has taken thousands of man hours to complete.

The response to the park project has been overwhelming from all age groups. Kragh and Mayor Sorey have been making stops to glean interest in the park from the people who will enjoy it most -- the area's children.

"St Anne's Catholic School created a class forum for us so we were able to present to all of the kids in the school was our first stop and all these little hands began raising

and little girls were offering \$15 and \$20 - all the kids were really getting excited about it," said Kragh. "And we have appointments with other schools coming up." Educators who would like to schedule a park presentation should visit www.NaplesGordonRiverPark.com.

The reality is it will probably take a year to start pushing dirt out there, however the engineering process and permitting will begin right after the gala. If all of the funds needed are raised it could take as little as two years to construct, including permitting and construction.

People will also be welcome to patronize the park with their four legged friends on a leash. The new park is directly across the street from the Naples Dog Park, which is the county's most popular canine gathering spot. Kragh also designed the dog park for the City of Naples which is one reason supporters are so excited about the new park for people. And the park is another step towards the Blue Zone philosophy.

"The Blue Zone references areas of the world where longevity and quality of life have a high correlation, where people are still very actively physically and mentally and it is driven by lifestyle in these parts of the world," said Mayor Sorey. "There is no question that longevity has to do with the development of healthy lifestyle opportunities - a key component of that is exercise and the park will provide the citizens of the city and country with many opportunities to be active."

The website, www.ParkGala.com is live and people can go online to contribute to the park in a variety of ways.

"This is a legacy park and it needs to be built to Naples standards and while that may seem like a big number to people it will be a great asset and provide multiple returns," said Mayor Sorey. "Raising private money to go with the public money will make that happen and it will be phased in as we can raise the money."

Mayor Sorey says that's the beauty of the way the park has been designed by Kragh. Following the infrastructure things can be phased in as organizers can raise the money or if the plans change.

Delores Sorey and her team of park organizers know the park will be successful because it will bring so much joy to the community.

"When you have a good product to sell it is going to sell and we have an excellent product to sell," said Mrs. Sorey. "I have had people call me and say, 'I heard about the park and I want to give you \$5,000 because it is fabulous for Naples and I want to be a part of it,'" said Mrs. Sorey. "And other people are giving us \$100 brick by brick so they can say this is my park and I invested in it."

Others have taken a major interest in the park and are stepping up in big ways. William Boyajian of Port Royal Jewelers is one of the parks biggest supporters. He designed a custom pendant which will be up for sale at the gala to benefit the park.

"As long as I have lived here I have heard about this project and finally it's really going to happen," said Boyajian. "Because I grew up in Naples I feel it's an extreme honor to finally give back to our city - it is greening up the quality of life."

Boyajian is encouraging his fellow community leaders to become conscious and caring benefactors to complete the park.

"My dream is that I can inspire benefactors with my pendant and donation all of which will go to help raise money and



A GALA EVENT

This park is a public private partnership between the city and everyone who will love and use this park for generations to come.

"I did just put together the probably cost which is part of my task and it is down to every speck of sand and sod," said Kragh. "If this was built all in one phase it is every bit of \$10 million and with contingency and construction fees it could rise to as high as \$15 million."

