

# NEWS FROM NORTHSIDE

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION • IOWA CITY, IOWA

## THE FUTURE OF NORTHSIDE AREA PUBLIC POOLS

Iowa City's proposed changes to its public pools, including the two closest to the Northside – City Park and the Robert A. Lee Recreation Center – have elicited an outpouring of response from pool users and other concerned citizens. Resistance to the closing of the Robert A. Lee pool in downtown Iowa City is particularly strong. In July, more than 160 local residents submitted a letter of protest to the City Council and local media regarding the closing of the Robert A. Lee pool: [thegazette.com/guest-columnists/keep-robert-a-lee-pool-open/](http://thegazette.com/guest-columnists/keep-robert-a-lee-pool-open/)

Several Northside residents have been gathering signatures to contest the proposed redesign of the City Park pool, which the Parks & Rec Commission has already recommended to City Council. In the proposed new design, the main body of the pool will have “spray features” and a “current channel” for young children, while leaving fewer opportunities for swim lessons, lap swimming, aquacizers, and general pool users of all ages.

Northside resident, Gina H, commented that the City Park pool can be updated to include zero-entry

to increase accessibility without taking away the pool's ability to serve a wide range of people. She said, “I don't want water features to dominate the pool to the exclusion of other uses, but I do support water features that will increase the appeal and draw of the pool while being compatible with other uses – general swim and play area for all ages, lap lanes, and a diving well.”

The City's recreational facilities contribute greatly to our quality of life on the Northside and beyond. We encourage interested residents to learn more about the City's pool plans and to share their feedback with Parks & Rec Director Juli Seydell Johnson ([parksandrecreation@iowa-city.org](mailto:parksandrecreation@iowa-city.org)), as well as with the City Council ([council@iowa-city.org](mailto:council@iowa-city.org)). For background on the proposed new design, see page 6 of the Master Plan Update: [View the Gather here Master Plan Public May 25, 2022 Update](#). For more information on the community's efforts to retain the original footprint and characteristics of City Park pool, contact Amy Kretkowski ([amy.kretkowski@gmail.com](mailto:amy.kretkowski@gmail.com)). A decision to vote on the new pool design may come to the city council agenda as early as September 2022.

## PUBLIC INPUT MEETING for Happy Hollow Park

TUESDAY, AUGUST 9TH 6:30 – 8:00 PM  
800 BROWN STREET

IOWA CITY Parks and Recreation Department will make improvements at Happy Hollow Park. The updates will include a new playground and site amenities. The park improvements meeting will include a discussion of the baseball field. Northside and neighboring area residents may remember two years ago, the lime infield was replaced with sod. The City is willing to revisit the possibility of restoring the skinned infield. Happy Hollow ballfield has been a favorite location for pick-up games, LGBTQ softball teams, and the Writers' Workshop annual Poets vs Fiction Writers softball game.

Happy Hollow Park  
Public Input Open House

Parks & Recreation  
CITY OF IOWA CITY

HAPPYHOLLOW  
PARK

ADOPT A PARK  
GIRL SCOUT TROOP 8054

Tuesday, August 9, 2022 | 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.  
800 Brown Street  
Iowa City, IA 52245

### PARTY IN THE PARK

Come to North Market Square on Thursday, August 18, 6:30–8:00 p.m. Live music provided by Ingrid Streitz, as well as lawn games, craft activities, and the Iowa City Public Library's Bookmobile.

# 724 RONALDS STREET UPDATE

AT ITS WORK SESSION ON JULY 12, the City Council majority approved moving forward with the staff proposal to build an affordable single-family home at 724 Ronalds Street. The proposed project will be a collaborative effort with the City of Iowa City, The Housing Fellowship, Iowa City Community School District, and the Home Builders Association Vocational Training Council. On July 14, the Historic Preservation Commission gave its support to the project as well, with the understanding that the design will come to them for approval as the property falls within the Brown Street Historic District. More details can be found in this Press-Citizen story, which covered the City Council discussions: [click here for Press-Citizen story on 724 Ronalds Street](#). Whether the double lot remains as a single parcel or is divided in two will be determined at a later time.

While I completely endorse the collaborative aspect of the project, the decision to build a single-

family home does not retain the fundamental reason the City purchased the property in 2016: to explore the possibilities of Missing Middle housing for diversity and affordability in the Northside Neighborhood, and by extension the other close-in historic neighborhoods. Missing Middle housing types include duplexes, of which there are outstanding examples in the Northside and other Iowa City neighborhoods, including Longfellow.

Aside from adding housing diversity, Missing Middle housing significantly lowers development costs (most notably, land acquisition) by distributing it over more than one dwelling. Lowering the development cost per dwelling is essential to a viable affordable housing strategy.

A Northside neighborhood meeting will be scheduled once the project team has developed the preliminary concept. Please stay tuned.

– City Council Member John Thomas

**2022**  
**Northside Block Party!**  
 September 18th 5:00 to 7:00 pm  
**BROWN ST**

MARK YOUR CALENDARS for the 2022 Northside Neighborhood Block Party to be held on Sunday, September 18 between 5:00 – 7:00 PM! Like before, we will set tables at the corner of Brown and Van Buren Streets. We will also provide a grill, paper napkins and trash & recycling bins. If you would like to help with any aspect of the block party, please contact Puja Birla at [birlapuja@gmail.com](mailto:birlapuja@gmail.com) or 319-541-6589. This is Puja’s first time organizing the block party and she will need all your help, suggestions and recommendations!

**THE BROWN STREET INN REOPENS**

As many neighbors know, the Historic Brown Street Inn at the corner of Brown and Van Buren Streets was purchased back in February by Doug & Christine Blake. After settling into their new home and making a few renovations for their family of three kids (Andrew, Matt and Miriam) and Jemma, a beagle/pug mix, the Blakes re-opened the Inn on May 12. They’ve been serving happy guests ever since. Remember the Inn next time you need extra room for visiting family and friends.

More info here:  
<https://brownstreetinn.com/>

## Streetscape Gardening

IF YOU'VE WALKED, biked, or driven by the 400 block of Church Street in recent months, you can't miss it: A prolific urban garden that begins outside the fenced-in yard and takes up the entire right of way between the sidewalk and the street. Bushy rows of tomatoes, squash, potatoes, carrots, beans, sweet corn, and more grow in profusion. Passersby stop by to marvel, admire, and ask: "What's going on here?"



Northside resident Thomas Agran is the creator of this street-side garden, the result of a lifelong gardening habit and a neighbor willing to lend her property to something other than lawn.



"I don't have any sun in my own yard, and was looking for a place nearby where I could grow vegetables," Thomas says. "The property on Church Street has great sun exposure, and when

I spoke to the neighbor living there, she was not only willing to give me the space, but was enthused about the garden and basically said, 'do whatever you want!'"

The result is a very visible demonstration of how under-used urban spaces can be turned into productive food sources – an important lesson at a time when inflation is making fresh produce increasingly expensive. Thomas has been using much of the garden's bounty to feed his own family and shares the excess with friends and neighbors.

Thomas also has been gratified by the response from the public. He reports that drivers often pull over to ask about the garden when he and daughter Nina Lisette are working there. Even the City approves, reassuring Thomas that the garden meets all City regulations for right-of-way plantings, which need to stay under 4 feet in height (although the tomatoes may be pushing it). Thomas says he plans to replant again next year. We can't wait to see what comes up.

– Susan Shullaw

## Northside Concert Series

IN THESE DOG DAYS of summer, here are two more chances for you to howl in the streets, thanks to Summer of the Arts' NORTHSIDE CONCERT SERIES. Performances are free and begin at 6:30 PM near "restaurant row" on North Linn Street. Mark your calendars!

Saturday, August 13:  
JOHNNY KILOWATT BAND

Saturday, August 20:  
DANDELION STOMPERS

## Meeting Notes: May 1, 2022

About 20 neighbors braved chilly temps on Sunday, May 1, to attend a Northside Neighborhood meeting held at Happy Hollow Park.

The minutes of that meeting can be viewed at this link: [NNA May 1, 2022 Meeting Minutes](#).

Neighbors are in the process of putting together an "organizational meeting" in the coming weeks to discuss neighborhood projects and priorities. If you'd like to get involved, or if you have questions about the May 1 meeting and its outcomes, contact Linda McGuire at [linda.mcguire7@gmail.com](mailto:linda.mcguire7@gmail.com).



# NORTHSIDE WELCOMES THE JAMES

When Riverside Theatre announced plans to move from its long-time home on the Northside to its new location on the Ped Mall, the change spelled opportunity for Leslie and Mark Nolte. They took over the space at 213 N. Gilbert Street in April 2021, and after extensive renovation, reopened the facility earlier this year to a variety of live performances. Visitors will be wowed by the changes to the old space, including a Deco-themed lobby and moveable seating within the theatre space.



According to Leslie, The James builds on her two decades of leadership at Nolte Academy, Iowa's most awarded performing arts school located in Coralville, and its many partners in the Iowa City arts community. The space is named for Leslie's father, James Bartnick, as a tribute to his support of her artistic and business endeavors in Johnson County.

For more information about upcoming performances, visit: [www.thejamesic.com/](http://www.thejamesic.com/)

## TO SSMID OR NOT TO SSMID?

The question of whether the Northside should pursue designation as a Self-Supported Municipal Improvement District (SSMID) has been tabled due to lack of interest. To learn more about what a SSMID is and does, see: [iowaleague.org/resource/self-supported-municipal-improvement-districts/](http://iowaleague.org/resource/self-supported-municipal-improvement-districts/).

## Tis the Season

August is a time of transition and new beginnings in Iowa City—including scores of UI students, faculty, and staff who will be moving into the Northside neighborhood. We encourage you to meet and greet these new neighbors, and invite them to support and participate in the many amenities that make the Northside so livable, including our family-friendly streets, parks, and small businesses. All are welcome!



Over several weekends this spring, a group of Northside gardeners removed weeds and planted an array of flowering and prairie perennials in the planting beds at North Market Square Park. The planting beds were created and have been maintained by neighborhood residents since summer 2012. Funding for plants has been awarded several times to the NNA via the city's PIN (Program to Improve Neighborhoods) grant process. Come by and enjoy!