

COMO WOODLAND OUTDOOR CLASSROOM PROJECT



RESTORING
an urban forest

RESTORING
local history

RESTORING
a child's
sense of wonder

RESTORING
connections to
nature



DEVELOPED AS A
COLLABORATION
BETWEEN

COMO COMMUNITY
VOLUNTEERS,

ST. PAUL
AUDUBON
SOCIETY,

COMO WOODLAND
ADVISORY
COMMITTEE,

ST. PAUL PARKS &
RECREATION
DEPARTMENT'S

ECOPARTNERS

LOCATION OF COMO WOODLAND SITE

**South of Horton Avenue/North of Como Avenue
East of Hamline Avenue/West of Como Public Pool**



JOYCE KILMER

MEMORIAL FIREPLACE

Can be restored and adapted into a meeting place and story circle.

The Fireplace, Cascades, and Arboretum was:

Dedicated to Kilmer, a WWI hero and poet.

Designed in the WPA style in 1936.

Built in Como Park with American Legion funds.

"I Think that I shall never see, A poem as lovely as a tree."



Joyce Kilmer Fireplace in 1936

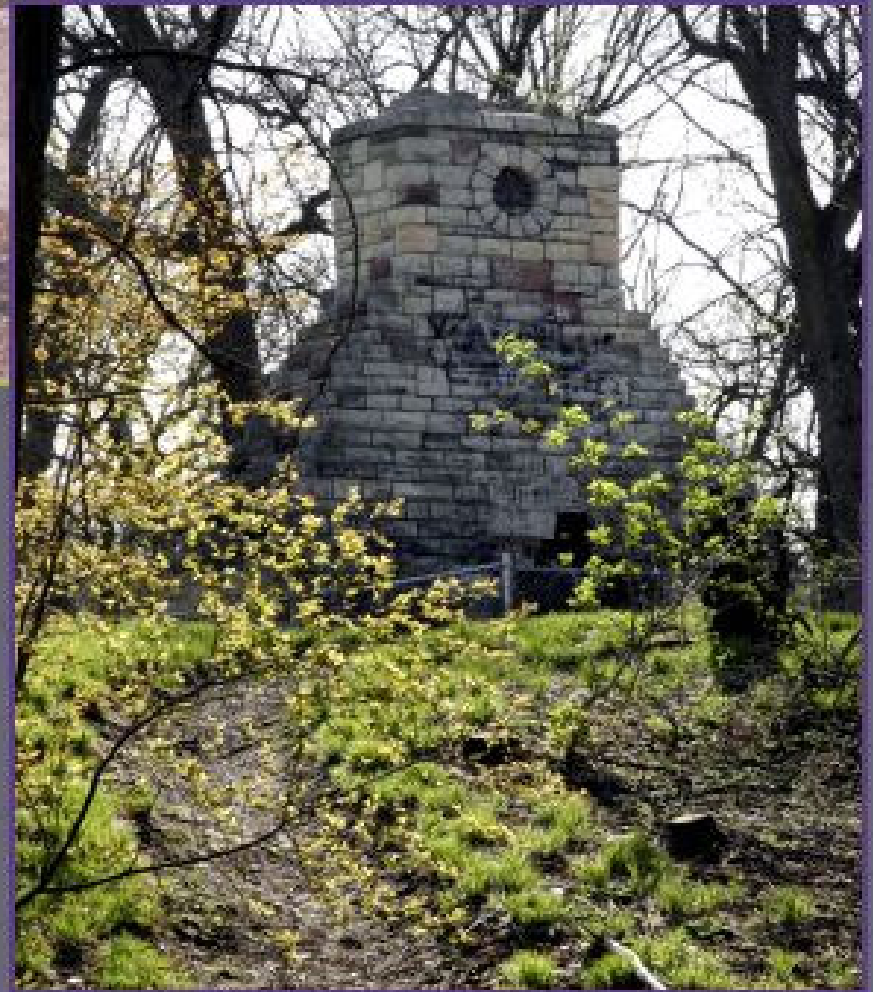
And in its current condition



Story Circle at Valley Branch Environmental Learning Center



DEGRADED CONDITION OF COMO WOODLAND SITE



- } Invasive species overshadow natural forest undergrowth
- } illegal construction of BMX bike jumps - trees were cut and soil disturbed
- } Vandalism and neglect of historic landmarks

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VOLUNTEERS

Issues

- } Urban forest is degraded
- } Historic features in disrepair
- } Local students need setting for study and reconnection to nature

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Project goals

- } Improve native species diversity in woodland
- } Save historic features
- } Increase stormwater retention
- } Improve student understanding of environmental science
- } Improve stewardship behaviors

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Activities

- } Remove invasive species
- } Conduct biological survey
- } Replant native species
- } Restore historic feature and adapt into meeting place
- } Build trails
- } Install information posts
- } Develop educational program available to teachers online
- } Involve students and teachers in process

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Project models

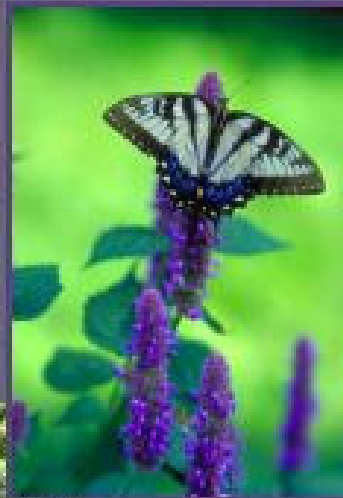
- } Valley Branch Environmental Education Center
Formerly Belwin Outdoor Classroom
(St. Paul Public Schools)

- } Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary
(Minneapolis Parks Department)

BENEFITS OF PLACE-BASED LEARNING



Valley Branch Environmental Learning Center



- | Helps compliance with new MN Academic Standards for Science
- | Helps students internalize learning
- | Helps students bond with their local environment and their community
- | Can improve student behavior



Eloise Butler
Wildflower Garden
& Bird Sanctuary



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM FEATURES

- } 2,930 feet of trails
- } 50 numbered posts that correspond with online lesson plans
- } online scheduling for groups of ten or more

A FOREST OF NATIVE PLANTS

Provides habitat for native wildlife

Is less costly to maintain

Has educational uses

Can be a place to reconnect to natural world in the heart of the city



Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden



Como Park neighborhood

Volunteer buckthorn, garlic mustard, burdock busts - removing invasive plants before restoring woodland to native plants.



Scientists estimate that non-native invasive species cost the US economy \$123 billion/year (Cornell University)




PROJECT PROPOSAL ACTIVITIES

- Wrote draft plan, objectives and goals
- Interviewed teachers and gathered input
- Met with city department staff
- Formed an Advisory Committee
- Created dialogue document of ideas and concerns, list of recommendations, and draft site plan
- Gathered letters of support and use

Meetings, meetings, emails, emails, more meetings . . .

Como Woodland and Outdoor Classroom
St. Paul, MN



Design Features


- A. Butterfly garden with labeled plants
- B. Rain garden with labeled plants
- C. Historic educational path with interpretive signage, benches at each signage stop
- D. Trail going to historic waterfalls
- E. Outdoor classroom area and nozzles for students
- F. Ephemeral forest/woodland forest
- G. Winter garden walk with labeled plants
- H. Restored Joyce Kilmer Memorial Fireplace with story circle
- I. Restored path leading into a prairie planting
- J. Children's educational walk through plant communities
- K. Native woodland garden walk with labeled plants
- L. Mobile viewing area benches along path
- M. Native ephemeral prairie
- N. Walk connecting parking lot to woodland

Key:

- Oak woodland
- Savanna
- Ephemeral forest
- Prairie
- Paved trails
- Dirt trails

The Como Woodland and Outdoor Classroom is an educational space for people of all ages. The design is centered around a series of trails, both paved and dirt trails, that take visitors through a variety of nature experiences. A children's educational walk goes through several plant communities, including labeled plants in a butterfly and rain garden, a classroom area with benches, garden plots for growing plants, an ephemeral pond, oak nozzles, and prairie plantings.

The main east-west trail follows the old street-car line. Historic markers will line the trail. Benches provide places for sitting along the way. A native woodland walk features labeled shade plants. The woodland areas are restored to native species throughout the park and a prairie planting is added near the former court to add diversity and enrich the educational experience.



A paved woodland walkway for people of all ages in the Como Woodland.

DRAFT

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEMBERS

- } St. Paul Parks & Recreation
- } Teachers & Students from local Schools & Colleges
- } St. Paul Audubon Society
- } Ramsey Conservation District
- } Dist. 10 Environment Committee
- } USDA Forestry
- } Local citizens, and more



WHO WILL BE SERVED



} Local schools

} Community education

} Como Campus education

} And the public

Woodland site Buckthorn Busts in October

In 2006, 146 volunteers from
Como High School, Fresh Force,
Students Today Leaders Forever, ROTC,
St. Paul Audubon Society, Hands on Twin Cities,
District 10 Environment Committee,
And local citizens.



Como Sr. High School Field Days Spring & Fall

COMO WOODLAND OUTDOOR CLASSROOM PROJECT



**PROTECTING OUR
ENVIRONMENT
STARTS CLOSE TO
HOME...**

**WITH ACTIVE
CITIZEN
INVOLVEMENT**





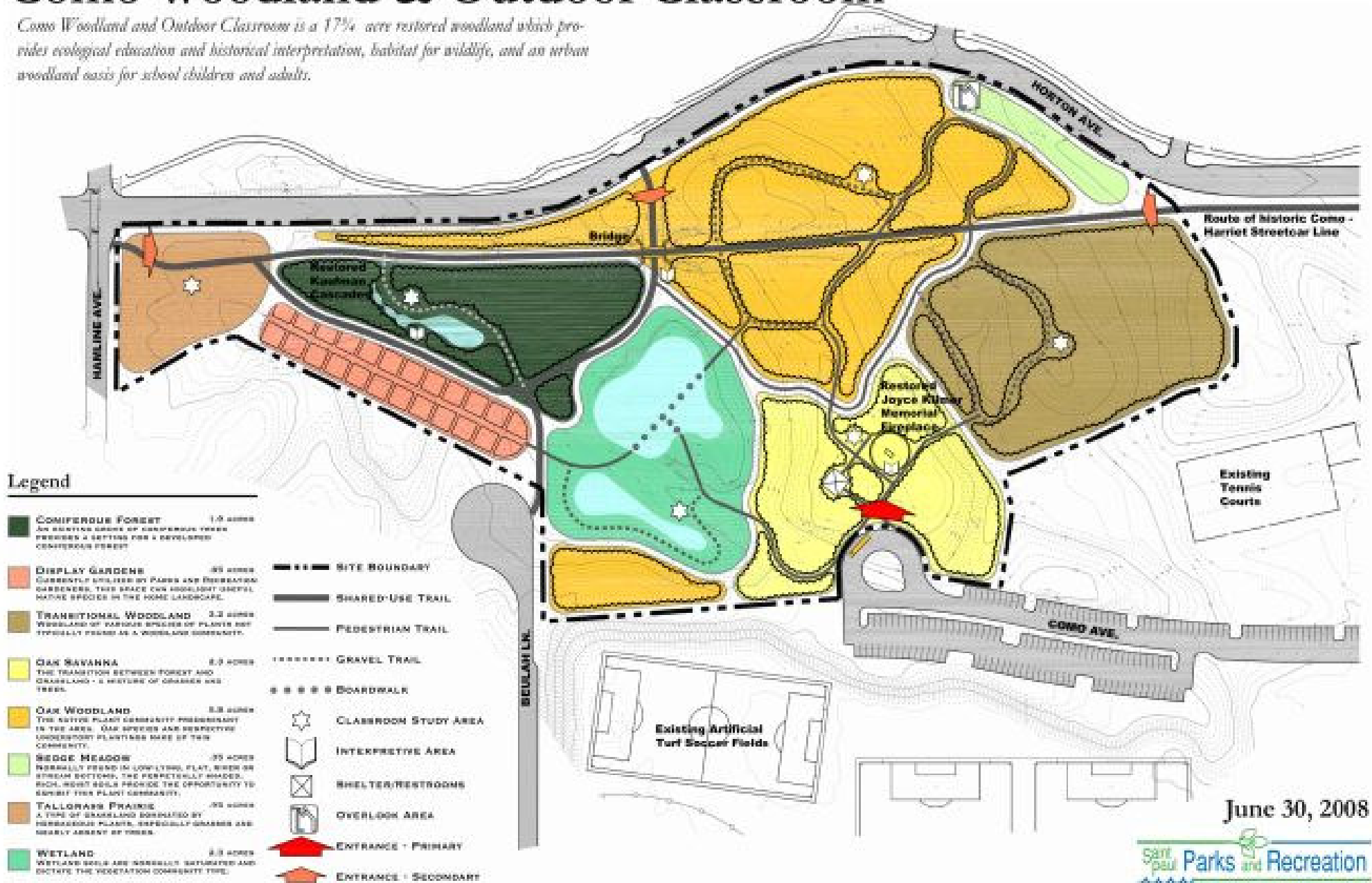
HONORING COMO PARK'S HISTORY

“The primary object in the improvement of parks should be the preservation and development of natural features in such a manner as to show just appreciation of their innate beauty.”

Horace W. S. Cleveland 1885

Como Woodland & Outdoor Classroom

Como Woodland and Outdoor Classroom is a 17 1/4 acre restored woodland which provides ecological education and historical interpretation, habitat for wildlife, and an urban woodland oasis for school children and adults.



June 30, 2008

THANK YOU

**COMO WOODLAND
ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

www.comowoodland.org

