

Loring Greenway Renovation 2006-2007 Loring Greenway Trees

Many people have noticed that a number of trees on the Loring Greenway are marked for removal for this summer's renovation of the Loring Greenway. Although the eye is drawn to the red Xs, and it seems like a lot of trees, only a small proportion of the existing trees will be removed. What will be removed is not the only consideration; replacements by a variety of new tree species will make the future greenway a more beautiful and interesting urban space. The renovated Loring Greenway will have twice as much space that is truly green, (including more grass and less pavement), fewer stairways, more accessible grades that meet ADA requirements, a greater diversity of tree species, more special trees with interesting growth forms to provide interest throughout the year, and more plantings at the ground level to green up those areas that are currently mud or mulch.

The original greenway tree planting was very generic, with little thought about tree spacing and look of the greenway once the trees became mature. The rapidly deteriorating pavement surfaces are going to be replaced this summer, and that makes this a good time to deal with tree issues on the greenway.

There are three reasons why trees will be removed. First, realignment of walkways and bringing grades into compliance with ADA requirements will require removal of some green ash, red oak, and Austrian pine trees in the central part of the greenway, and a number of flowering crab trees on the greenway branch extending down to Grant Street.

Second, in a number of areas the original tree plantings were simply too dense. Species such as locust, ash, linden, maple and oak will eventually have crowns 40 feet wide, but were planted only 15-20 feet apart. If these dense areas are not thinned, the trees will be deformed, in poor health, and be more susceptible to wind damage. Such close spacing of trees also creates too much shade for ground level plantings on a greenway that already has a lot of shade in some areas due to high rise buildings.

Third, a number of trees are in poor health and are going to die soon or will shortly become hazard trees. Examples include two maples near the playground which have been severely injured at the base and have rotten trunks, and the flowering crab trees along the wall at the Nicollet Mall end of the greenway. Those Flowering crab trees essentially have no chance of survival in the shade of the much taller locusts, and are near the end of the lifespan for the species. Spruce trees near Loring Green West have an incurable fungal canker, and are also near the end of the species lifespan.

As part of renovation of the greenway, new shade tolerant shrub and perennial plantings will be planted in areas currently not supporting plant material. Shrub varieties include yews, viburnums, dogwoods, hydrangea and spirea. Perennials include the use of engelmann ivy, lily of the valley, hosta, bugleweed, lungwort, spiderwort, foamflower, daylily and sedum. A variety of new trees including honeylocusts, rebuds, magnolias, douglas fir and austrian pine will also be planted to provide more seasonal color and visual interest on the greenway. New irrigation will also be provided for all planting areas on the Greenway.