

River Art Walk, Gallup Canoe Livery and Argo Canoe By-pass

I met with Amy Kuras, Parks Department landscape architect, Colin Smith, head of Parks, and Cheryl Saam, head of the canoe liveries, at the Gallup Park Canoe Livery to discuss the two sites up for improvement along the Huron River. I explained that Malverne Winborne and I are evaluating the two sites for possible public art. After talking with Parks, we'll present our findings to AAPAC, ask for their recommendation to continue, then bring the proposal to PAC, the Parks Commission, for their recommendation. Colin will send PDFs of the plans and I'll forward them.

1. Gallup Canoe Livery improvements

This project has been planned and Parks is applying for a state grant of up to \$300,000, which the city would match up to the amount received. Depending on funds they will proceed faster or slower on all these projects. Only city funds would generate art funds.

The basic plan is to enlarge the facility to accommodate expanded public use. They plan to divide the pedestrian entrance from the truck entrance in back, add more docks, enlarge the outdoor cafe area, improve access for disabled, and open up the conference/rental space to the outdoors.

Parks recommendations for public art at Gallup Canoe Livery:

a. a memorial wall that creatively combines art with donor names on the north side of the livery building. It could have a river theme. Animal sculpture is already part of the building and playground so that could also be worked in. This is Parks staff highest choice and greatest need.

b. directly across the river from the livery there is a bridge that connects 2 small islands. One can see over it to the far shore. This could be developed into a repeated viewing experience.

c. a walkway will lead from the new docks to the livery. This walkway could have decorative elements added to it as long as they can be moved when pavement is replaced.

2. Argo Mill Race/ Canoe By-pass

The old Mill Race was a channel that historically diverted water to be used for industry, flour and lumber mills. Lately it has been a rather awkward portage path for canoes. It will now be turned into a series of stepped pools that canoes can go down with an entrance before the Argo Dam and an exit to the river near the Broadway Bridge. The earthen berm between the race way and the river will be rebuilt with natural landscaping. The foot path along the berm is already part of the "Border to Border

Trail" that follows the river through the county. Two white water rapids that will be canoe-able will be built in the river at a later date. There may be a pedestrian bridge at each end.

Parks recommendations for public art sites at the Argo Mill Race/ Canoe By-pass:

- a. at the Broadway end a public area with an amphitheatre is planned. This could have a public art element
- b. a way-finding system along the walking path on top of the berm could feature history of the area (mills, industry, Indian path, etc.)
- c. a way-finding system that works as a water trail
- d. at the end of the Argo Dam there's an connective space where canoers go into the by-pass, walkers come from over the dam or continue on the river walk

Parks problems to be solved:

- Maintenance is barely covered in Parks budget so public art should be as maintenance free as possible. Parks maintenance staff should be consulted as part of the selection process before art work is selected to assess maintainability for any piece.
- Graffiti is an ongoing problem especially in remote areas of parks. This should be considered. (My suggestion: AAPAC could develop a program that gives teenagers a place to paint and includes them in the public art making process, directing their creativity into positive civic good.)

Public Art problems to be solved:

- Artists should be included at the earliest stage of planning so that art projects can be integrated into built structures in the most imaginative ways.

River Art Walk

The larger prospect that we discussed was connecting these two current projects with a longer River Art Walk that would follow the Huron through the city. Then as park improvements are planned along the river, public art can be sited as well. This is planned as a county wide project. Other communities up and down the length of the river are expressing interest in cleaning up the river to make it walkable for it's whole length. Colin pointed out that there is already the "Border to Border Trail" that runs uninterrupted from Ypsilanti through Ann Arbor to Bandimere Park. If this larger project becomes a goal, these first two projects in Ann Arbor could be a starting point a river-long renewal effort.

Colin responded that this should come to PAC as a proposal.

It was a beautiful morning on the river! Plans to follow.

Margaret Parker