

*Investing in
Portland's Future*



**PORTLAND
PARKS & RECREATION**

Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland



**Denorval Unthank Park
Assessment
2004**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Plan adopted by Portland City Council in 2000 included a set of goals and objectives that reflect a broad-based community involvement effort. A Community Livability Working Group was formed to make recommendations for an implementation strategy to guide decisions related to a) Parks & Open Space, b) Community Facilities, c) Historic Preservation & Urban Design. The Community Livability Strategy was accepted in 2002.

In 2003 the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Parks Subcommittee completed a Needs Assessment for the parks and open spaces of the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area. This document serves as a reference and guide for the allotment of Urban Renewal Funds in these parks and open spaces as they may become available each fiscal year.

One of the projects recommended for the 2003-2004 fiscal year was a Park Amenity Assessment specifically for Denorval Unthank Park. This assessment includes a Portland Parks & Recreation designer working with the community on the design and prioritization of park concerns identified by the ICURA Parks Subcommittee and Boise Neighborhood Association.

The first step of the assessment was to examine the existing conditions in Unthank Park. This was completed in large part by the ICURA Parks Subcommittee and the Boise Neighborhood Association. The needs identified by these groups were then observed and assessed by a landscape designer and district supervisor from PP&R. After studying the community desires, their feasibility and their maintainability, recommendations were formed for each of the issues. In addition to these recommendations is an estimate of the associated costs and a prioritization for implementation of improvements.

This report is funded by the Portland Development Commission. The information is intended to serve the PDC, the ICURA Parks Committee, the neighborhood and Portland Parks & Recreation as a guide for making recommendations, selecting and funding improvements in Denorval Unthank Park, as money becomes available in the coming years.

The assessment and recommended improvements proposed for Denorval Unthank Park will fulfill the ICURA accepted goals and strategies by enhancing an existing park and creating a better environment within the Boise Neighborhood and surrounding community.



Park Path

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1

Denorval Unthank Park was established in 1966 by Portland Parks & Recreation. Located at 510 N. Shaver, it is composed of a softball field, two full-size basketball courts, a playground, SEI recreation facility, and restrooms. It is named after Dr. Denorval Unthank, a doctor who practiced medicine in Portland at Good Samaritan, Providence, St. Vincent, and Emanuel Hospitals.

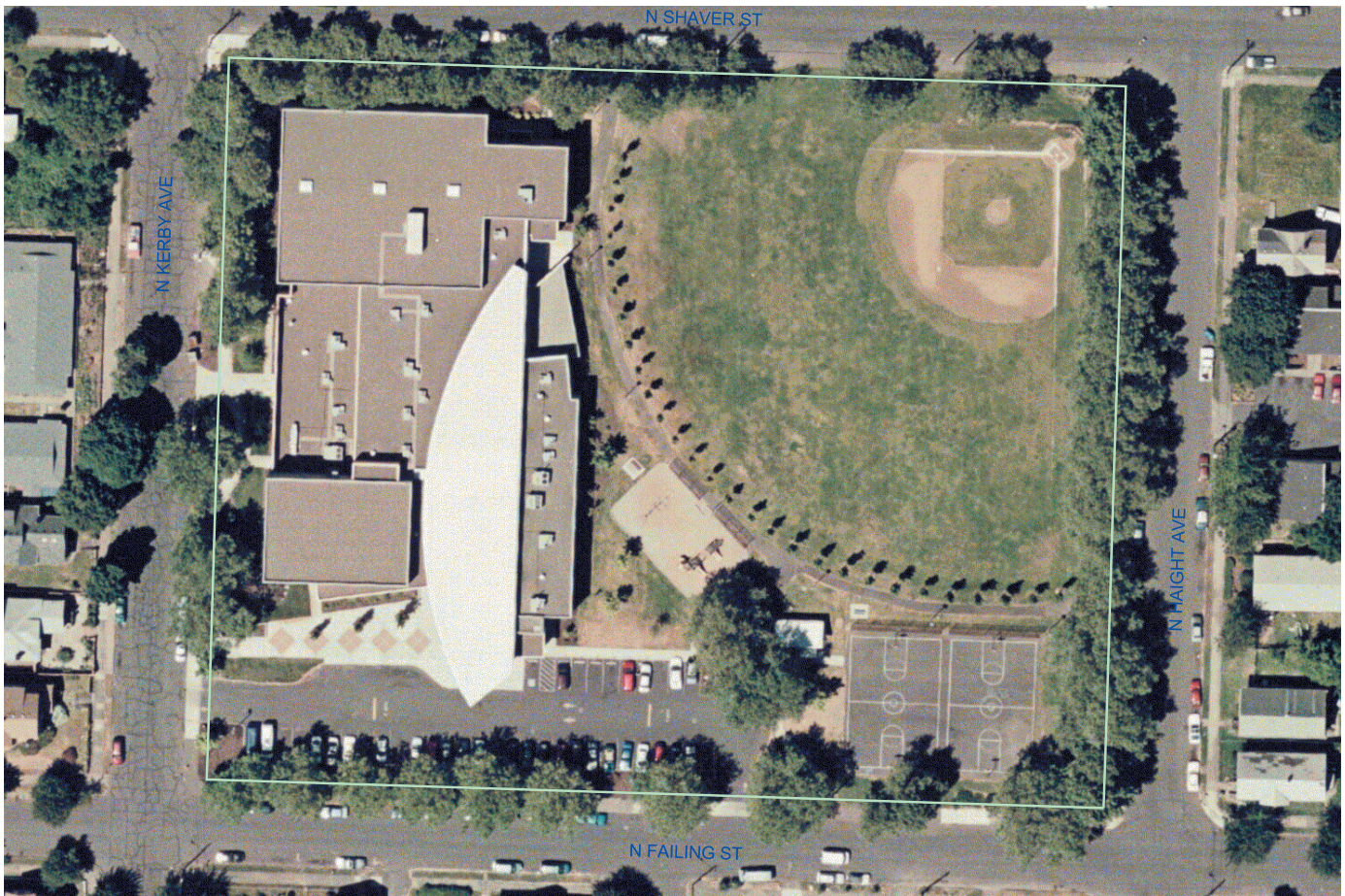
Although the park's total acreage is 4.65 acres, the western half is occupied by SEI, Self Enhancement Inc., an independent non-profit social service and recreation center for the neighborhood youth. Portland Parks & Recreation entered into a lease agreement with SEI in 1995 to use this portion of park land for the center until the year 2045.

A charter school will be opening in the school in the fall of 2004. This may create additional impacts and opportunities for the park.



Vicinity Map

Unthank Park Aerial View





Each of the following features of Denorval Unthank Park was identified by the Boise Neighborhood Association and the ICURA Parks Subcommittee as an area of concern. The amenities were then examined by a Portland Parks & Recreation landscape designer and maintenance supervisor to determine and document the existing condition and best course of action for each area.

Ball field

The softball field at Denorval Unthank Park suffers from significant drainage problems. A combination of grading and poorly draining soil keeps the outfield constantly moist. This is not only inconvenient for park users wanting to take advantage of the open space of the outfield, but it is problematic for those using the ball field for scheduled games. Site visits revealed catch basins in locations and elevations that do not appear to alleviate the moisture from the field.



Drainage Problems on Softball Field

Playground

The playground in the park is in good condition. It features 4 swings and a multi-age play structure. The area contains curbs, a ramp, and wood chips which create an environment compliant with codes for fall zones, ADA accessibility, and safety surfacing. The equipment offers play opportunities to mostly older children as there are no accommodations for toddlers. This has been limiting to park users that wish to have a play area for their younger children.



Existing Play Structure

Picnic and Gathering Areas

Another of the identified needs in Denorval Unthank Park is the lack of a space where park users can enjoy the park by sitting or picnicking in the same vicinity. There are currently two benches and one picnic table found in different areas of the park. One bench is located facing the playground; the other faces the outfield of the ball field and is located near the basketball courts. The picnic table can be found located adjacent to the playground area on the north side. Neither the benches nor the table are currently ADA accessible. They rest on concrete slabs that are not connected to the path running through the park. Neighbors are interested in adding benches and picnic tables to create the gathering space the parks currently lacks.

Landscape

It is a desire of the neighbors and park users to add some landscaping to improve the park's aesthetic quality. The most attractive landscaping in the park is concentrated around the SEI building which are maintained by SEI. There are some evergreen shrubs planted around the park sign at the northeast



Existing Swings



Dogs Playing Off-Leash

corner of park and other large shrubs are located in the southeast corner of the park. The larger shrubs in this corner have been abused as a dumping site for garbage and drug accessories, found by PP&R maintenance crew staff. The height of the vegetation can also conceal misuse of the park facilities, prohibit visibility and create a safety hazard. Other than these plantings, the existing trees, and turf, there are no other plantings in the park.

Lighting and Safety

Safety concerns due to insufficient lighting in Denorval Unthank Park are also troubling to the neighbors and parks users. Currently, lighting exists along the path that follows the outfield of the ball field. This lighting is sufficient for this area and creates an effect that would be desirable in other portions of the park as well. The biggest lighting deficiency is on the eastern side and southeast corner of the park, which is of particular concern. The low lighting and low branching of the trees along N. Haight Ave. create a dark zone of low visibility that is not considered a safe atmosphere. The lack of lighting in the evenings provides concealment and misuse of this corner of the park after dark.



Leash Law Signage

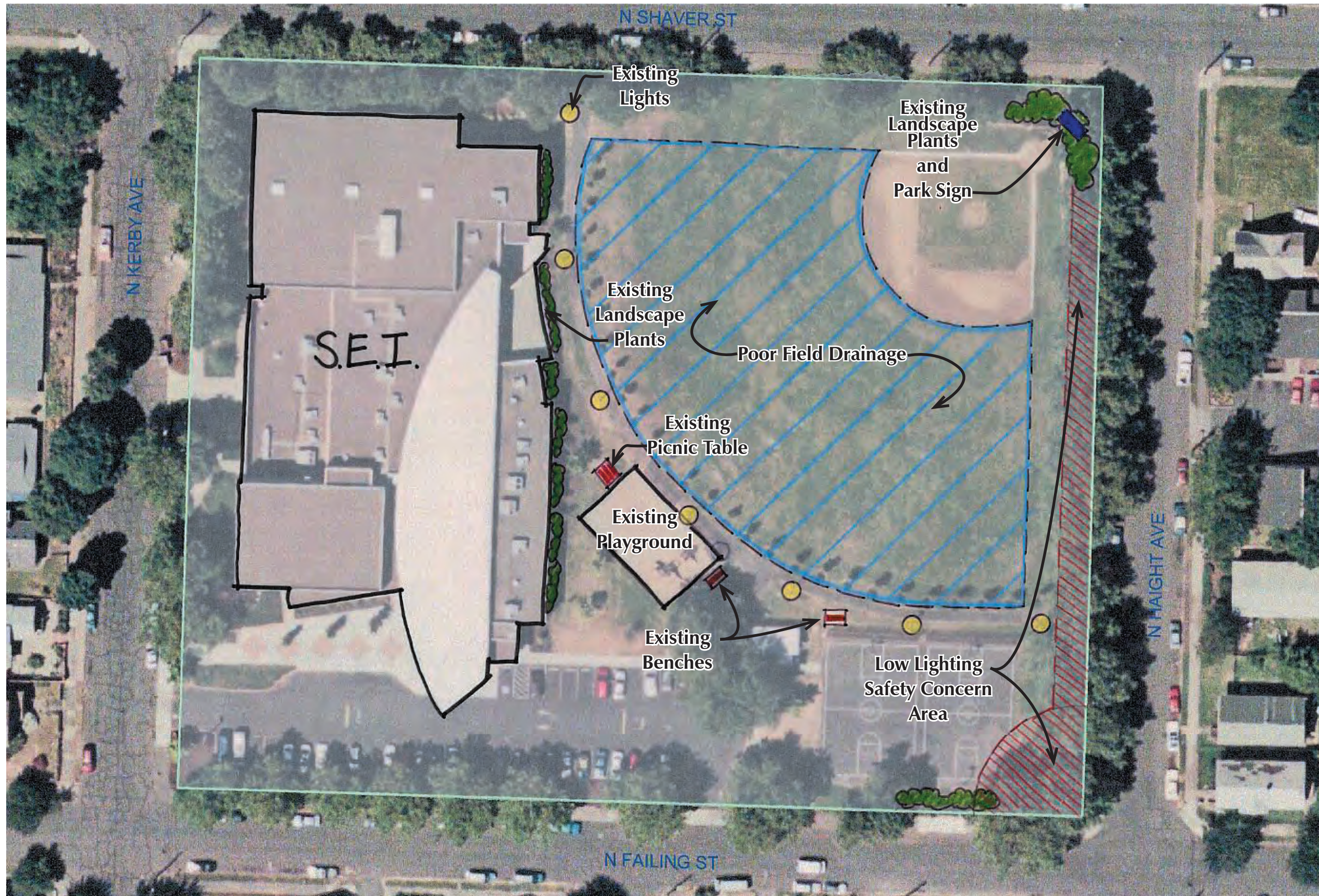
Restroom Condition

The restroom building is located in the southern half of the park and houses two restroom units and storage/control closets. The units are scheduled to be unlocked and open from May to November.

While the interiors of the restroom units are in excellent condition, the exterior of the building could use some repair. Paint is chipping off the doors and the awning's ceiling. There is also some damage to the exterior walls of the structure, due to vandalism. These blemishes can be unsightly and deterring to park users.

Dogs

Although it is not an off-leash area, off-leash dogs are abundant in Denorval Unthank Park. A visitor to the park can observe that leash laws are not observed by several dog owners. Dog waste can be found in the ball field area, as it is the popular spot for dog owners to let their dogs roam. There are three signs addressing leash laws in the park. They are located on the bathroom structure, the N. Shaver entrance of the park and on the ball field backstop. These signs are, unfortunately, disregarded by most dog owners visiting the park.



The following recommendations were developed to address these issue areas.

Ball field

The ball field needs to be renovated and possibly reconstructed. A renovation would involve returning the field to its original condition by repairing damages made after a season of heavy use. A more permanent improvement would be a complete reconstruction of the field which may include regrading, soils amendments and improving or redesigning the drainage system. This reconstruction would be the best solution to resolve the drainage issues, but if costs are prohibitive, a field renovation could offer some improvement in the interim.

Playground

Because the playground accommodates older children (ages 5-10), an addition of equipment for younger children and toddlers would provide a more diverse play area and experience. The current play area could be expanded to the southwest to allow the addition of play equipment and maintain safety fall-zone standards. One piece of equipment to be added would be the Multi-See-Saw. This playground amenity has been successful in several Portland Parks and appeals to children of several age groups, from toddlers and up. Other equipment for younger children may also be considered for addition such as a small slide or climbing structure. The additional area would be limited to a space of approximately 300 square feet and would need to comply with safety and accessibility standards, including curbs and surfacing.

Site Furnishings and Community Gathering

The locations of the existing picnic table, near the playground, could be enhanced with an additional table to create the desired gathering area. By adding another picnic table and/or bench the space could then accommodate more people who want to convene in the same vicinity. The garbage can near the restroom could be relocated to a place that is more visible and accessible to this gathering area.

Another bench could also be added along the park path near right field of the ball field. If this and other new seating and gathering amenities are added to the park, they should be implemented according to Portland Parks & Recreation standards and provide ADA accessibility.

A covered gathering structure is not recommended for the park at this time. Currently, there is a small amount of unprogrammed open space within the park, located on either side of the basketball courts and surrounding the



Existing Bench and Playground



Area Adjacent to Playground



Park Entry from N. Haight Ave.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPTIONS



Restroom Structure

play area. Approximately half of this space would be required for this type of structure reducing the amount of open space within the park. A covered area could also add to the security issues that the park currently faces by providing shelter for undesirable park activities.

Landscape

If additional landscaping is added, it must be done with careful consideration of location and type of vegetation. Misplacement of plant materials or inappropriate plant selection can create safety concerns and may provide a dumping ground for garbage and drug paraphernalia. Horticulture Services and District Gardeners should be included in the planting planning efforts of proper plant selection and locations to ensure survival and maintainability of the landscape.



Southeast Corner of Unthank Park

The landscaping around the park sign at the corner of N. Shaver and N. Haight should be the first priority of landscape improvements. The planting bed could also be extended to the sidewalk to provide more space for accent plants and eliminate the need to mow the small strip of grass that is between the planting bed and sidewalk. This could provide benefits from both an aesthetic and maintenance perspective. Opportunities for additional landscaping exist at the north and east park entries.

The low branches of the trees along N. Haight Ave. limit both visibility of the park and mobility of mowers. It would be beneficial to limb these trees to give more clearance for maintenance mowers and provide more direct views into the park for safety purposes.



Existing Park Sign

Park Sign

The park sign is in disrepair and needs to be repainted or replaced. Repainting the sign could be an interim solution while funding is identified and Portland Parks & Recreation's new signage standards are developed. If a new sign is placed in the park, the park's complete name of Denorval Unthank Park should be considered for the title.

Lighting

To solve the issue of the low lighting on the eastern side of the park, additional lights could be added. Portland Office of Transportation (PDOT) is responsible for the lighting along streets, including those streets adjacent to parks. The lighting along N. Haight Ave. currently meets the street lighting standard. PDOT does not have a fund for supplemental street lighting or the maintenance that accompanies such an installation. The park is also located within the district of Pacific Power and Light (PP&L), which, unfortunately, does not have an option to improve lighting above the established standard.

One solution to provide lighting to this eastern portion of the park would be to extend a path from the exiting entry at N. Haight to the backstop area and install lights along this path. Although the path may appear to be somewhat redundant as it would run parallel to the side walk, it would be at a lower

elevation within the park and offer ADA accessibility to the bleacher area. Lights could be added along the path, for maintenance vehicle access, and also provide the needed illumination on this end of the park.

Another option to provide lighting to the southeast corner of the park would be to light the basketball courts. However, this can result in basketball games in the evenings, which could be disturbing to adjacent neighbors. This should be explored with the neighborhood to determine the impacts of lighting this facility.

Maintenance Improvements

At the time of the printing of this document, work orders for painting and repairing the restroom have been submitted. These Portland Parks & Recreation work orders are requests for items or repairs in parks that are performed and funded as part of park maintenance. Other recommendations for the restroom building would include power washing and repainting the underside of the bathroom awning. Work orders have also been placed for repainting benches and bleachers for the field and backstop.

The limbing of the trees along N. Haight should be pursued as a maintenance task and coordinated with Urban Forestry.

Safety

Safety improvements in Denorval Unthank Park could be addressed by physical modifications, PP&R involvement and substantial neighborhood efforts. With the addition of lighting and some limbing of trees, the eastern side of the park would be brighter and open for better visibility, deterring undesired activity. Neighbors are discouraged from independently confronting problems in their park. The best practice is to observe the conflict and contact the appropriate authority to address the issue. Portland Parks & Recreation has informational flyers, "Park Neighbors," with safety suggestions and contact numbers available for park users. These can be distributed through the Boise Neighborhood Association.

One contact number of the "Park Neighbors" flyers is for local Park Rangers, who patrol the park during the summer months. They are qualified to be good neighbors to the park and handle minor misuses of the park such as campers and off-leash dogs. They are not able to address serious law violations, but they can report such problems to the police.

There are also other ways to create a more positive presence in parks. Programs such as PP&R's Adopt-A-Park and the Citizen Foot Patrol organized by the Office of Neighborhood Involvement Crime Prevention are both outlets for neighbors to get involved in their park's atmosphere. Programmed activities such as concerts and events in the park are also very effective in changing the use and perception of safety. Cooperative efforts between the neighborhood and SEI should be pursued for sponsorship of these activities. With these community efforts, great strides can be made to improve the safety of Denorval Unthank Park.

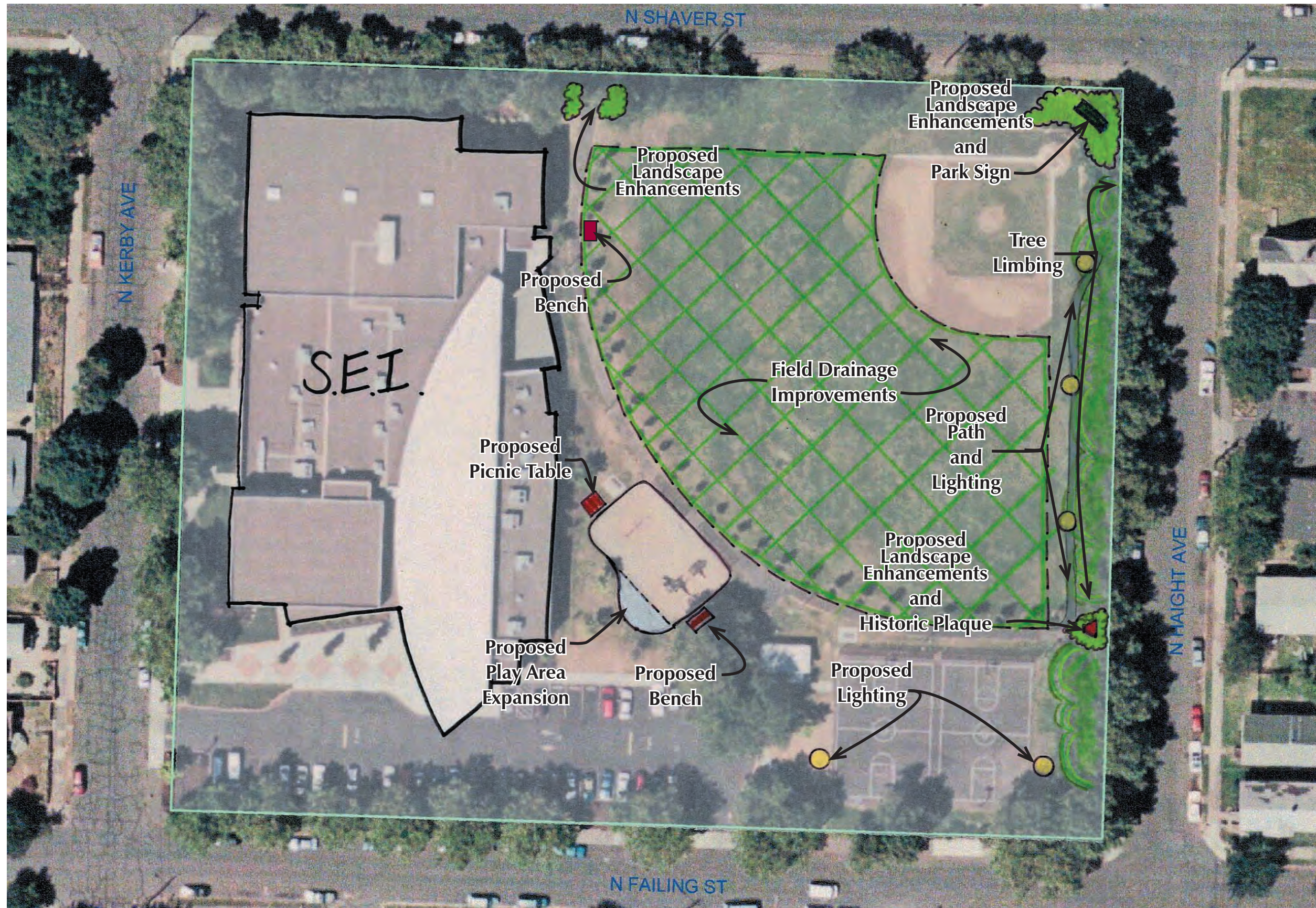
Dogs

The off-leash dog activity in Denorval Unthank Park is problematic for a number of reasons. Not only is it a violation of the established and posted leash laws, it poses a sanitary issue as well. Dog waste that is left on the ball field or playground creates a potential health risk to children using these spaces. Community outreach should be pursued to encourage neighbors to adhere to leash laws and scoop laws in their neighborhood park. This is another opportunity for a neighborhood patrol to be a positive presence in the park and encourage their neighbors to observe leash and scoop laws.

Installing a bag dispenser for dog waste was suggested by the neighborhood, but this is an amenity PP&R usually reserves for off-leash dog areas. However, the issue is being reviewed by PP&R's Off-Leash Advisory Committee and should have a policy by the January of 2005. It may be possible for a dispenser to be added if it is funded and maintained by the park's neighbors, but until the policy is determined, no action should be taken.

Historic Plaque

The community would like to add a historical plaque noting the life and work of the park's namesake, Denorval Unthank. He was an important member of the Portland community and Boise Neighborhood who made great strides against the discrimination and prejudice he and his medical practice faced in the 1930's. His community involvement and work as a civil rights advocate could be documented and displayed in this park which bears his name. A plaque would be appropriately located at one of the park's entry point paths and could be combined with a landscape improvement effort. Grant opportunities should be explored to fund this amenity.



The improvements for Denorval Unthank Park should be implemented by first addressing safety and maintenance issues. Both are priorities for Portland Parks & Recreation, the Boise Neighborhood Association and the ICURA Parks Subcommittee.

First Priorities

These project are those with the greatest safety and maintenance impacts.

Lighting and Safety

PP&R Standard Fixtures (5) -\$40,000 est.

New Path - \$8,500 estimate

Tree Limbing - Internal Maintenance Costs

Ball field

Field Renovation - \$10,000 est.



*Unthank Park Sign and Landscaping
(corner of N. Shaver St. and N. Haight Ave.)*

Second Priorities

These projects are listed as second priorities as they are requested supplemental park amenities.

Playground

Playground Addition - \$12,000 est.

Ball Field

Reconstruction - \$60,000 est.

Landscape Amenities

Park Sign \$1,600 est.

Entry Points \$5,500 est.

Historic Plaque \$15,000 est.

Park Furniture

Picnic tables \$5,000 each est.

Benches \$6,000 (2) est.

These costs are estimates based on 2004 unit prices. They should be revisited and adjusted for inflation in future years. Depending on the options chosen, they may also need to be adjusted to allow for economies of scale and contingencies.

PP&R Park Neighbors Safety Flyer



PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

Park Neighbors

“Helping Keep Parks Safe, Welcoming and Accessible for all”

Portland Parks and Recreation is interested in working with park users, neighbors, police, and others to keep parks safe, clean, and inviting for all persons who seek to recreate in a safe environment.

Neighbors and park users are in a good position to observe conditions in the park and report problems. If you see a problem, don't confront persons causing the problem, simply report it to appropriate place:

Crimes in progress or emergencies, Call Emergency 9-1-1

Report non-emergency problems to police non-emergency line 823-3333

or to the Portland Police Precinct for the park:

Central Precinct	823-0097
East Precinct	823-4800
North Precinct	823-2120
Northeast Precinct	823-5700
Southeast Precinct	823-2143

You can also report non-emergency problems or concerns to:

Portland Park Rangers	823-1637
Office of Neighborhood Involvement - Crime Prevention	823-3048
Portland Parks & Recreation Public Safety Manager	823-5459
Parks Maintenance	823-1600
Portland Parks & Recreation Main Switchboard	823-PLAY
For Dogs in Parks	
Serious dog attacks or emergencies, Call	9-1-1
For specific incidents or problems	
Call Multnomah County Animal Services	988-PETS
For general information, dog program updates	
or comments call	823-DOGS

Over

A FEW BASIC PARK RULES:

- Graffiti, vandalism, or other damage or theft of property is unlawful.
- No littering or dumping of trash.
- No unauthorized motorized vehicles are allowed in the park.
- Parks are closed from 12:01 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. or as otherwise posted
- No alcoholic beverages are allowed in parks except by special permit.
- Dogs must be kept on leash and their solid waste picked up.
- Fires, fireworks and camping are not allowed
- Amplified Music is not allowed except by special permit

A complete listing of Park Rules is in the Portland City Code, Chapter 20. Check your library or the City of Portland Internet web site: www.ci.portland.or.us/

GET INVOLVED:**Adopt-A-Park Program (Parks)**

Help keep the park clean and well maintained. Call 823-5121

Citizen Foot Patrol (Office of Neighborhood Involvement Crime Prevention)

Patrol the park with others. Be a positive presence. Call 823-3048

OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Mult. Co. Animal Services	988-7387
City Main Information and Referral	823-4000
Gang Hotline (Police/GET)	823-4264
Graffiti Reporting Hot Line	823-4824
Abandoned Auto Hotline	823-7309
CHIERS (Mobile Detox unit)	238-7309
Mediation Center	823-3152
Elders in Action	823-5269
Portland Public Schools Police	916-3307
JOIN (Homeless Outreach)	232-2031
Project Respond (Mental Health Outreach)	827-0335

Portland Parks and Recreation
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Visit Portland Parks and Recreation Web Site: www.portlandparks.org

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