

Berkeley Partners For Parks

<http://www.bfp.org>

Fall/Winter 1999

Vol. 4, No. 1

Children-Designed, Community-Built Playground Project in Aquatic Park

This November 16 nationally recognized architect Robert Leathers will spend the day in Berkeley schools to translate kids' imaginations into a dream playground for Aquatic Park. At the Design Day evening meeting, Leathers will unveil the playground design that was created by Berkeley school children.

Come to the **Design Day Evening Meeting**, Tuesday, November 16, 7:30 P.M., Washington Elementary School Auditorium, 2300 MLK Jr. Way at Bancroft Avenue. The entrance is on McKinley. The Children's Committee will entertain and refreshments will be served.

Next year, we will build this exciting playground. Old and young will come together and, over the course of five days, sand, saw and nail a custom playground for Berkeley.

We need volunteers to participate in various committees leading up to build days and during the build days themselves. Some of the jobs to be done are getting materials, public relations, fundraising, food, childcare, getting volunteers, organizing the children in the schools, and art and design. Your commitment is flexible. We also need donations. Send

continued on page 4, col.1

Planning for the Future of the Santa Fe Right of Way

We need to make a plan for the SFRW to determine how this invaluable resource connects regionally to other communities and contributes to our open space needs in Berkeley.

The Santa Fe Right-of-Way is a City-owned, 3.2-mile long former railroad right-of-way. This stretch of land begins at Sacramento and Oregon Streets. It connects to the existing Ohlone Greenway (and future Bay Trail) at Cedar Rose Park. This strip of land could be an invaluable public greenway for a variety of open space uses. What is required is the vision and democratic direction from you, the citizens of Berkeley.

The City of Berkeley acquired the Santa Fe Right of Way at no cost in 1979 from the Santa Fe Railroad Co. Previous city managers and planning directors have called for a comprehensive planning process for the



A parcel of the SFRW, fenced and abandoned.

continued on page 4, col.2

The President's Corner

The role of BPPF is a huge one. It surpasses the need of the one and represents the needs of the many. Friends, this has been an exciting year.

I cannot begin to express to you how much your continued participation, your involvement, and your support has energized me to forebear. Thank you

I would also like to take the opportunity to say a heartfelt thanks to the individuals who thought of this great mission and formed BPPF

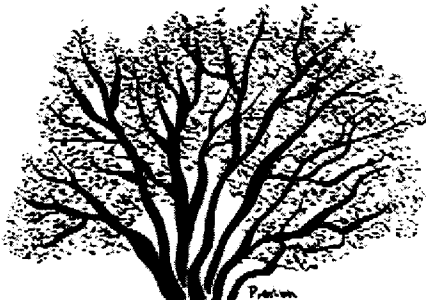
This year BPPF broke new ground through a grant received from the Haas foundation. We hired our first Community Outreach Organizer, Deb Goldberg-Gray. Deb has been successful in her outreach to the community of South and West Berkeley. Deb will be moving on at the end of her funding—late January 2000. We hope that Deb will continue her association with BPPF as a "volunteer."

We aim to extend our community outreach. To achieve this end BPPF has contracted with Mark Liolios as a part-time development consultant. Mark's task is to assist BPPF in raising operations funds

As the millennium approaches, BPPF is dedicated to the enhancement of the City of Berkeley's Parks and open spaces.

We encourage you to join us in achieving these endeavors.

Happy Holidays to you and to your loved ones.
Zasa



About Berkeley Partners for Parks

Berkeley Partners for Parks (BPPF) is a citywide non-profit devoted to the support and development of parks, community gardens, and open spaces in Berkeley by encouraging citizen involvement and support. Since its incorporation as a nonprofit in 1994, BPPF has played an instrumental role in bringing additional funding and thousands of hours of volunteer labor ("sweat equity") to bear on improving Berkeley's parks, community gardens, and public landscaping. The participation of adopt-a-park groups working in partnership with the City and local businesses has led to improvements in dozens of parks and community gardens throughout the City of Berkeley. ■

Berkeley Partners for Parks Annual Party
Monday, December 13
7:00PM, 2617 Derby St.
Come meet the movers and shakers
for Berkeley's Parks.
Potluck—"bring what you can"
Contact Zasa Swanson at 510-649-9874

*This newsletter is published by
Berkeley Partners for Parks (BPPF)
P.O. Box 13673
Berkeley, CA 94712*

Editor/Designer: Ted Gartner

*BPPF is a nonprofit 501(c)3
corporation (I.D. # 94-3228356)
founded in 1994 to support parks and
open spaces in Berkeley.*

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Ted Gartner 548-9235*

Adopt-a-Park Group News

Prince Street Mini-Park

Bids have been opened for the renovation of Prince Street Mini-Park. Funded in part with \$50,000 in a federal Community Development Block Grant, the project will bring new accessible play equipment, seating, landscaping, and entryway improvements to this neighborhood's open space. Construction should begin in the next three months. Completion is expected in the summer of 2000.

Berkeley Way Mini-Park

Neighbors of Berkeley Way Mini-Park successfully lobbied for \$48,000 in federal funds to improve the park's play equipment. Proposed layout options will soon be reviewed and construction should be completed by next fall.

Aquatic Park

Designs are complete for the dramatic steel arch bridge to link the northern end of Aquatic Park with Berkeley's waterfront and Bay Trail. Construction will take place throughout 2000.

The City is reviewing landscaping design plans for the innovative "Living Wall" noise barrier. Caltrans is expected to have final designs by March, 2000.

By spring the rest room adjacent to the meadow on the park's east side will be rebuilt and a drinking fountain added.

Friends of Dorothy Bolte Park

During September Friends of Dorothy Bolte Park finished installing their beautiful and fun new equipment in the hidden lower area of the park. It consists of a climbing structure with decks, a spiral climber, a corkscrew, an exciting swing out, a chinning bar and a climbing wall.

Go and visit! They are ready to play! Their mini-grant application was also recently approved and they they will use the funds to purchase the final component of the cluster, a "Ring a ling." This

equipment is designed for the 5-12 age group, and fills a definite need in the neighborhood.

Volunteers are always needed. Please contact Vanessa Moraga at 510.527.2556; Vaness's email is moraga@lmi.net.

University Avenue Gardeners

University Avenue has again been seeded with California native poppies and other wildflowers in anticipation of the winter rains. The University Avenue Gardeners are hoping to keep the winter weeds well maintained in anticipation of another glorious display of early spring blooms.

The Gardeners get together on the first and third Saturdays of each month to till this unique urban garden. Contact Ted Gartner, 510.548.9235, for information.

Friends of Five Creeks

Friends of Five Creeks is planting natives at its restoration site at the Codornices Creek crossing of the Ohlone Greenway. The site is opposite 1200 Masonic, under the BART tracks. On November 13, they will transplant rooted native-blackberry shoots. Call 510-848-9358 or email F5creeks@aol.com for more information.

The group plans a December start on replacing the ugly cyclone fence at the site with a handsome bridge rail. A \$3,200 Berkeley Parks Mini-Grant will pay for the project, and the Berkeley Parks and Recreation Commission has approved the design.

They are continuing to test for E. coli bacteria, evidence of sewage pollution in creeks. The Berkeley Department of Environmental Health is trying to track the specific source of high bacteria counts on Codornices Creek above Spruce. The good news is that Blackberry Creek, which flows through John Hinkel Park and Thousand Oaks School Park, has low bacteria counts after recent sewer repairs.

Did You Know?...**Berkeley Partners for Parks** is a member of the **Berkeley Chamber of Commerce**.

Visit our web site at <http://www.bfp.org>

Continued from page 1

your donations in the return envelope made out to BPPF/Aquatic Playground.

- \$1000, or more *Playground Patron*—Playground Patrons will receive site publicity; prominent mention in our Newsletter and special thanks at events.
- \$500-\$1000 *Playground Supporter*—Playground Supporters will receive prominent mention in our Newsletter and special thanks at events.
- \$100-\$500 *Friend of the Playground*—Playground friend will receive prominent mention in our Newsletter.
- \$100 *Buy a Tile*—You can buy a tile to paint. The painted tile will be incorporated into a tile mosaic.
- \$25 each *Buy a Board*—Supporters can “buy a board” for the playground. A drawing of the playground will be made with a name for each sold board.

For more information, contact the project general coordinator and BPPF President Zasa Swanson at 510-649-9874. The project is sponsored by Berkeley Partners for Parks, in conjunction with the City of Berkeley.



Continued from page 1

SFRW, but as far as we are aware, a comprehensive planning process was never done. Today, the majority of the SFRW remains as it was in 1979—abandoned parcels of land, some of them surrounded by five-foot hurricane fencing.

Under Berkeley's 1977 “mixed-use” policy for the SFRW, the City of Berkeley is free to individually sell off, lease or develop parcels without citizen review or a comprehensive planning process. A block of the SFRW is now in escrow. Neighbors on other blocks have received offer letters from the City asking them if they would like to buy land adjacent to their houses.

On August 23 Berkeley Partners for Parks wrote a letter to the City Council asking the Council for an immediate cessation of any SFRW sell-off and calling for a public, city-wide process to plan the use of the SFRW. In response to our letter, the City Council directed staff to report back on the issue (their report is on our website, <http://www.bppf.org>. Call your City Council member to voice your support of a full public process concerning use of the SFRW.

BPPF will hold a walking tour of the Santa Fe Right of Way at a future date. The tour will be guided by Mark Liolios. Please contact BPPF President Zasa Swanson at 510-649-9874, or send an email to mail@bppf.org. Our website is located at <http://www.bppf.org>.

Help support Berkeley's parks, community gardens, and open spaces! Please give to Berkeley Partners for Parks, a 501(c)3 nonprofit. Make your check payable to BPPF. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

Name(s): _____ Business: _____

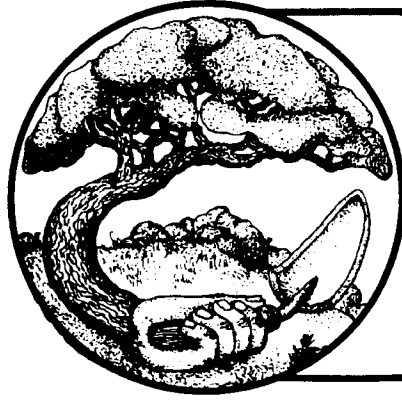
Address: _____ Title: _____

City/State/Zip: _____ Phone: _____

- \$1-15 (low-income) \$50 (contributing partner) \$500 (benefactor partner)
- \$25 (individual partner) \$100 (supporting partner) \$1000 + (patron partner)
- \$35 (participating family) \$250 (business partner) Other: \$ _____

Contributors of \$50 or more are entitled to receive a complimentary T-shirt (natural color with BPPF's logo in forest green); if you are giving \$50 or more, please indicate your preferred T-shirt size: Large Extra Large

Please mail this form and your check to BPPF, P.O. Box 13673, Berkeley, CA 94712.



Berkeley Partners For Parks

P.O. Box 13673, Berkeley, CA 94712

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Dear Friends of Berkeley Partners for Parks:

Thanks to citizen participation, 1999 has been a tremendous year for parks, community gardens and open space. Whether installing a new playground, planting a poetry garden, or restoring creek habitats, neighborhood Adopt-a-Park groups within Berkeley have been very busy.

A few of the projects we are excited about: 1) We are sponsoring the Aquatic Park Children's Playground Project - a one-of-a-kind, community-built, designed by the children playground and an attraction for all our children. 2) This year we hired a Community Outreach Organizer to assist Adopt-a-Park groups in South and West Berkeley. 3) We've raised awareness regarding the Santa Fe Right-of -Way.

As you may be aware, Berkeley Partners for Parks (BFPF) has embraced an even larger role with respect to the untapped potentials of parks, community gardens and open spaces. We need your continued help and support. Your donations are tax-deductible.

To learn more about and to support the Aquatic Park Children's Playground Project, please see the reverse side of this letter.

Thank you. Happy Holidays and a safe and healthy New Year to you and to your loved ones.

Very truly yours,

Zasa Swanson
President, Berkeley Partners for Parks

Aquatic Park Children's Playground Project
 Zasa Swanson, General Coordinator
 PO Box 13673
 Berkeley, CA 94712
 Telephone: 510-649-9874
 Fax: 510-848-8566
 Aquaticplayground@bfpf.org
 http://www.bfpf.org/AquaticPlayground



Dear Friends of Berkeley's Parks:

On November 16, internationally-acclaimed architect Robert Leathers met with Berkeley's school children to transform their wildest dreams into a blueprint for a designed by the children, community-built playground at Aquatic Park (Please see the enclosed newspaper article). In order to make this dream playground a reality, we need your help.

This playground will be completely built from scratch: the cutting, sawing, drilling and sanding will all be done by volunteer labor, including children where appropriate. Please sign up below to participate in the community build tentatively scheduled for May 31 through June 4, 2000. We'd also like your help in getting your church, company or other group to volunteer en masse. Please return the form below in the enclosed envelope.

We've raised funds for this playground, but we still need to raise \$130,000. Please help with one of the fundraising levels below, or donate goods or services. We need food, catering, lumber and hardware.

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| \$1,000 or more | Playground Patron | Playground patrons will receive site publicity, prominent mention in our newsletter and special thanks at events. |
| \$500-\$1,000 | Playground Supporter | Playground supporters will receive prominent mention in our newsletter and special thanks at events. |
| \$100 - \$500 | Friend of the Playground | Playground friends will receive prominent mention in our newsletter. |
| \$100 - \$25 | Buy a Tile | You can buy a tile to paint. The painted tile will be incorporated into a tile mosaic at the playground. Tiles must be non-commercial and appropriate for a children's playground. |
| \$25 each | Buy a Board | Supporters can "buy a board" for the playground. A drawing of the playground will be made with a name for each sold board. |

We also need assistance organizing, working with children in Berkeley's elementary schools, calling volunteers, getting donated and purchased materials, being "construction captain" on build days, providing childcare, food preparation, serving and much, much more. Any way you can help is appreciated.

To build this playground from scratch we need to borrow tools for the event. Hammers, tape measures, chainsaws, wheelbarrows, boom augers, fork lifts, etc. All tools are guaranteed to be returned in "as-loaned" condition or they will be replaced.

Zasa

Thank you. Zasa Swanson, Project General Coordinator.



IF YOU BUILD IT, WE WILL PLAY!
 designed by the Children - Built by the Community

Aquatic Park Children's Playground Project
 PO Box 13673 - Berkeley, CA 94712
 Zasa Swanson, Project General Coordinator
 Tel: 510-649-9874 - Fax: 510-848-8566
 AquaticPlayground@bfpf.org
 http://www.bfpf.org/AquaticPlayground

The Aquatic Park Children's Playground Project is sponsored by Berkeley Partners for Parks (BFPF) in conjunction with the City of Berkeley. BFPF is a citywide 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit dedicated to the improvement of Berkeley's parks and open spaces. Contributions are tax-deductible.

Contributions:

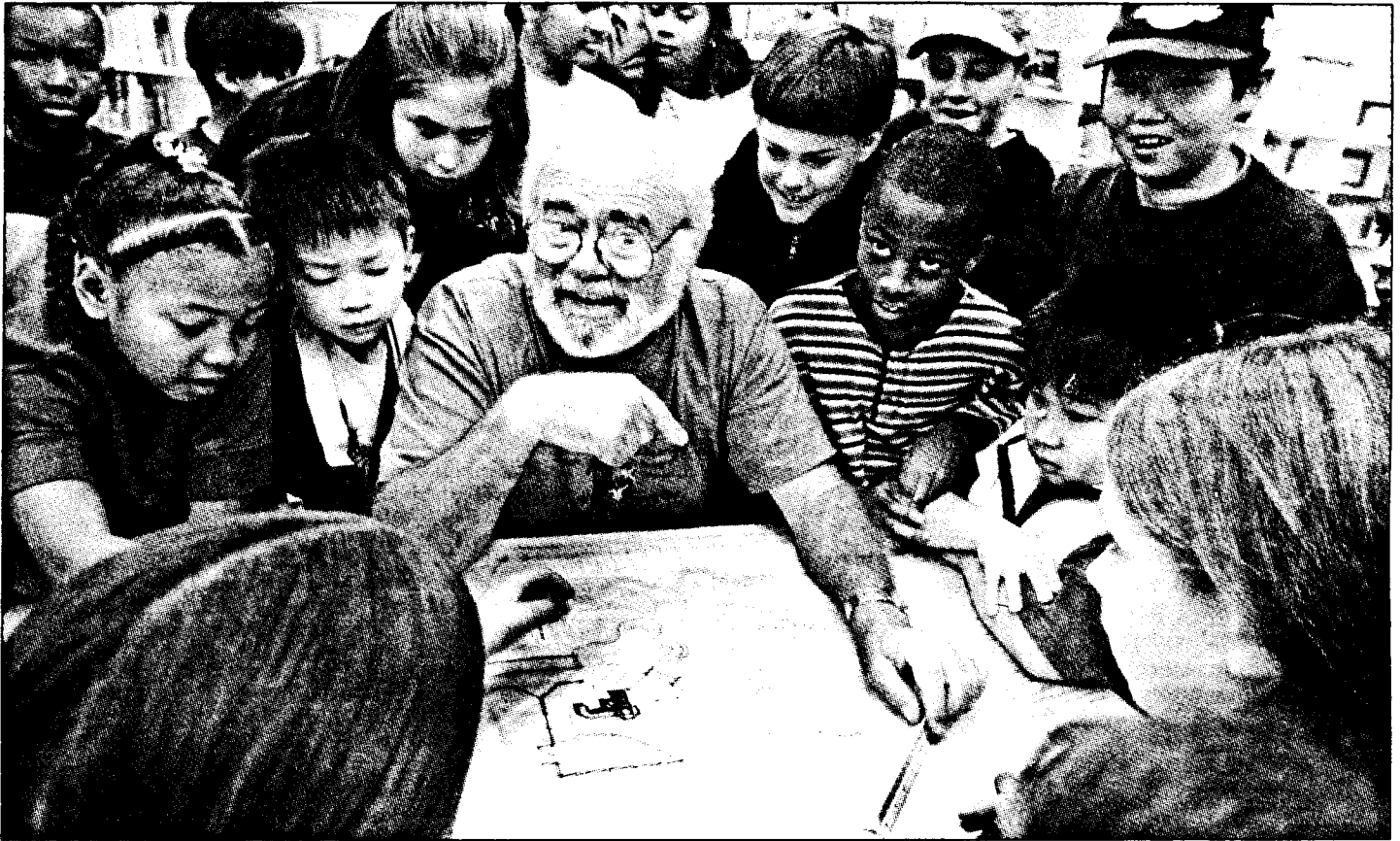
- Playground Patron - \$1,000 and up.
- Playground Supporter - \$500 to \$1,000.
- Friend of the Playground - \$100 to \$500.
- Buy a Tile - \$100-\$25.
- Buy a Board - \$25 each.
- I/We want to provide volunteers and help build the playground.
- I/We want to donate goods or services.
- I/We want to help organize.
- I/We want to loan tools.

Contact Name: _____

Contact Tel: _____

Address: _____

Please make checks payable to: BFPF/Aquatic Playground.



Photos by MIKE KEPKA / The Chronicle

Robert Leathers, a renowned architect from Ithaca, N.Y., collaborated with students at Berkeley's Washington Elementary School on plans for a fantasy playground planned for the city's Aquatic Park.

Pied Piper of Swing Set

Architect, kids design Berkeley playground

By Debra Levi Holtz
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Imaginations ran wild yesterday when hundreds of Berkeley schoolchildren were asked to help a well-known architect design a new playground at the city's Aquatic Park.

"Every one of you is a playground expert," Robert Leathers told students at Washington Elementary School. That's all they needed to hear before their creativity was unleashed.

A slide into a dragon's stomach, a pool with an octopus, an underwater holographic scene and a Pokemon store where all of the merchandise is free were among the most ambitious ideas. Castles, swimming pools and haunted houses were also popular.

Some children, not sure whether they were designing an amusement park or a



Leathers' playground in Boca Raton, Fla., features his trademark whimsical play structures, such as this larger-than-life face.

► BERKELEY: Page A28 Col. 1

EAST BAY

Kids Help Plan Berkeley Playground

► BERKELEY

From Page A21

community playground, asked for roller coasters and water slides.

The more practical of the bunch recommended swing sets, monkey bars and sandboxes.

Leathers, an architect from Ithaca, N.Y., is known for the whimsical, wooden play structures he has co-designed for communities across the country.

Yesterday, Leathers traveled from one classroom to another at Washington Elementary, listening to the children's playground fantasies and perusing their pencil-and-crayon drawings. In the meantime, one of his colleagues and several community volunteers conducted similar consultations with children at Berkeley Arts Magnet, Black Pine Circle and Walden schools.

Once described as the "Johnny Appleseed of the Swing Set," Leathers coaxed the children to consider Aquatic Park's wildlife and landscape when envisioning their playground design.

The playground will be built in a meadow overlooking the lagoon on the east side of Aquatic Park. The 100-acre park, the largest in Berkeley, is wedged between the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks and Interstate 80 on the city's southwestern edge. Partly because of its isolated location, the park has been underutilized for the past 20 years except by rowers and Frisbee golfers.

Berkeley park enthusiasts hope that will change when the playground is built next spring. Shortly after he sat down in the school library with colored pencils, rulers and graph paper to transform the children's ideas onto paper, Leathers described his vision.

Children will climb, like moles, through a maze of tunnels up to a tree house shaped like an egret or hawk. A twisting dragon slide will lead to a climbing structure in the shape of a spider's web. A large play boat will sit in a sand-lined moat around a castle. Jungle animals and other imaginary creatures will be



MIKE KEPKA / The Chronicle

Ericc King, 7, a Washington Elementary School student, eagerly raised his hand to suggest adding a teeter-totter to the playground.

scattered throughout.

"Who do you think is going to build it?" Leathers asked a group of kindergartners and third-graders. "You are."

*"Who do you think
is going to build
(the playground)?
You are."*

ROBERT LEATHERS
architect

"We are?" asked one girl, looking confused.

"What if we don't know how to build?" asked another girl.

"We're going to teach you," Leathers explained.

While the architect will guide the planning and design process, parents and children volunteers will do the nuts-and-bolts work when the five-day construction project takes

place next spring.

Sponsored by the nonprofit Berkeley Partners for Parks, the playground is one of a host of improvements that will be made to Aquatic Park in the next few years. Also planned are a pedestrian-bicycle overpass linking the park to the shoreline, a sound wall to reduce freeway noise and habitat restoration.

Funded mostly by a \$180,000 federal grant, the playground will rely on donated tools, supplies and building materials. To raise additional funds, residents can sponsor wood planks and hand-painted tiles in their name.

Washington Elementary Principal Rita Kimball said her school jumped at the chance to host the playground's design day. She said the school, located near downtown Berkeley, just received a state "Healthy Start" grant to help build a sense of community among its culturally diverse families.

"This is a perfect kind of project to bring people together," said Kimball.