Final Southwood Proposal

Conducted by
Nick Khow, Naomi Ochoa, Cindy Ai
Students in DES 3131: User Experience in Design

On behalf of
The City of North St. Paul

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The Resilient Communities Project

Resilient Communities Project

University of Minnesota
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**Resilient Communities Project**
University of Minnesota
330 HHHSPA
301—19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455
Phone: (612) 625-7501
E-mail: rcp@umn.edu
Web site: [http://www.rcp.umn.edu](http://www.rcp.umn.edu)

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Final Southwood Proposal

User:

Primary: Elementary School Teachers          Secondary: Families (with children under 13)

User Goals:
  ● Increase children's exposure to the natural environment
  ● Educate children about nature and nature preservation
  ● Get more involved with the community

Complete System:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before</th>
<th>During</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North St. Paul Community Newsletter</td>
<td>Paint the Bench Initiative</td>
<td>North St. Paul Community Newsletter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monarchs in the Classroom Activity</td>
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<td>Paint the Bench Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Naturalist Information Table</td>
<td>Large-Scale Informational Signage</td>
<td>Monarchs in the Classroom Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Master Naturalist Information Table</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following pages detail the complete system of engagement, identifying which prototypes will be implemented in the before, during and after stages.
Before & After: Prototype 1

North St. Paul Community Newsletter

Currently, information about community events is being split between the North St. Paul website, the utility bill, and other outside sources. This proposed newsletter would gather all information about community events, activities and volunteer opportunities into one place, to be emailed or sent out through traditional mailing methods. The newsletter would also be distributed throughout the North St. Paul school system, as well as at existing community events by city representatives or master naturalists. It would not be solely Southwood-related, but rather integrate Southwood Nature Preserve into the rest of the community to increase its exposure to residents who may not know about it.

Based on research in Project 1, it was established that North St. Paul is a very close-knit community. Much of their population skews older, which can indicate that distributing information about the city via social media may not be the most effective channel. At the Booya community event, we encountered many residents who did not know of Southwood’s existence, location, or intended purpose. The newsletter would act as a means of getting its name out, and establishing what it should be used for. For new residents of North St. Paul, a newsletter will aid them in getting to know the community better and increase their interaction with other residents.

The newsletter may include:
- A monthly calendar, detailing community events, city meetings, volunteer opportunities, family activities, and more.
- Sections highlighting specific parts of North St. Paul that residents may want to explore further (ie: Southwood Nature Preserve), and what they can do there.

Who would support it?
In order to promote community events, activities and volunteering, there will be an online submission form to add that to the newsletter. Someone at city hall (a “Newsletter Coordinator” position) would gather all of the online submissions and place them in the newsletter format. This way, all of the content does not have to be generated by the producer of the newsletter, but rather by those who are wanting to get community members more involved in their activities or events. A template for the newsletter can be in place to make the production process more efficient.

Next Steps:
- Identify someone at City Hall who has the time and resources to produce a community newsletter.
- Reach out to groups who may be interested in including their content in a newsletter (ie: Master naturalists, organizers of the car show, etc).
- Find a designer who could create a template for a newsletter that can be easily filled in by the “Newsletter Coordinator”.

User Goals:
The newsletter would help residents get more involved with the community. Without a consistent source of information about North St. Paul, community members may not be aware of events, family activities or volunteering opportunities. In addition, specific activities related to Southwood would help get children more engaged with nature and learning about environmental preservation.
North St. Paul Community Newsletter

What is currently in place?

North St. Paul Website: Very few events, activities and volunteer opportunities listed on events calendar

North St. Paul Facebook Page: Not updated frequently; last events posted to the page were in 2011. Not a place where residents go for information about the community and events.
**Southwood Nature Preserve**

**North St. Paul Newsletter of September 2014**

**Events of the Month**

*Butterflies releasing*
Saturday, September 13, 2:00 pm.
Students in the past months have been given monarch caterpillars from monarchlab.org website.

On the Saturday of September 13th, at 2:00 pm, students are going into Southwood Nature preserve to release their hatched caterpillars.
Residents are welcomed to come and see the annual miracle.

*Paint your own benches*
Saturday, September 27, 11:00 am.
Total of ten benches will be available for kids to paint at Southwood Nature Preserve. Elementary teachers will also show up to coordinate bench design and cooperation within their classes.
City officials will be there to provide paint and organize sign-up.

It will be a first come, first serve activity. Please come on time.

Amy and her butterflies from last year.

Wall’s family painting their bench.

**Calendar of Events Mockup**

**Back Page**

**Calendar of Events Mockup**

**Southwood Spotlight Page Mockup**
During & After: Prototype 2
Paint the Bench Community Activity

Currently, few residents have a sense of personal connection to the preserve, and many are unaware of its existence. The Paint the Bench initiative seeks to address both of these issues in a way that encourages creativity and engagement from young residents. School groups would apply for the opportunity to decorate a bench located within Southwood Nature Preserve on a first come, first serve basis. The selected classes would arrive at Southwood on a designated day and be provided with painting supplies by the city.

Based on feedback from community members, annual events are an effective way of building engagement with residents. While the primary audience for this activity is the children and teachers participating in it, parents will also be reached indirectly by children wanting to show off their efforts. Interviews with current users also uncovered a concern about vandalism. By increasing the evidence of community concern for the space, this initiative will deter and hopefully reduce these negative actions towards the space. Carpinteria, California provides an example through their bus bench painting project. This similar project also engages youth and has been a successful semi-annual recurrence since 1992.

Who would support it?
Implementing this program would require involvement and support from:
- Teachers - to coordinate bench design and cooperation within their classes
- City officials - to provide paint and organize sign-up

By opening a sign-up, the activity is limited to teachers who are excited to participate and feel that the activity adds value to their classes. This activity would require some class time to create and vote on a bench design. It would also require a half-day of out of class time to travel to Southwood and paint.

It would be beneficial for at least one city representative to be present on the day of painting to provide materials and oversee the activity. It is key that the activity should cause as little disruption to the natural environment. Providing the paint and materials gives the city control to select a low VOC (volatile organic compound) paint and limit the color palette to colors that are not jarring or disruptive to the preserve’s relaxing qualities.

Next Steps
- Acquire 0-4 more sturdy benches.
- Host a discussion with master naturalists and current users to determine their level of support for this idea.

User Goals
The Paint the Bench activity helps develop a sense of ownership over the preserve, provides another outdoor activity for children, and encourages visits from families to see the artwork.
Paint the Bench Activity

Example Imagery
Before, During & After: Prototype 3
Monarchs in the Classroom Program

An educational program, Monarchs in the Classroom, is run out of the University of Minnesota. Their website is located at http://www.monarchlab.org/Default.aspx, and provides resources for teachers, an annual Insect Fair, courses, workshops, newsletters, and more. A master naturalist was aware of this program’s existence and brought it to our attention during a critique session after we had proposed a monarch butterfly-related educational prototype.

Before engaging visitors at Southwood, master naturalists could inform elementary school teachers about the monarch program, and lead them to the resources available online. It is evident that educators in North St. Paul wish to get children more engaged with the natural environment, and Southwood represents the perfect opportunity.

An elementary school class can take a short field trip to Southwood in order to hear a presentation from a master naturalist on the Mesic Prairie, or butterfly garden. Here, students will be able to learn more about the species present at the preserve, where they reside, and how they can be preserved. They will be encouraged to explore the preserve during this trip, and able to utilize resources like large-scale informational signage and a scavenger hunt handout activity provided by their teacher.

After the initial field trip, students will be given monarch caterpillars which can be bought from the monarchlab.org website. They will learn about caring for the species in-classroom, and study its evolution from caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly. After the butterflies are hatched, the students can return to Southwood in order to release them into the wild. This educational program can be integrated into the curriculum year after year, resulting in repeat visits to Southwood.

Who would support it?
Master naturalists and teachers would collaborate in bringing this educational program both to the classroom and to Southwood Nature Preserve. Resources on the monarchlab.org website would help the teachers implement the program in their curriculum with ease.

Next Steps:
- Have master naturalists familiarize themselves with the Monarchs in the Classroom program.
- Get master naturalists in the school system to promote the program to teachers, and integrate it into their curriculum.
- Identify master naturalists who can give presentations on the Mesic Prairie to elementary school groups.

User Goals:
The Monarchs in the Classroom program would help expose children to the natural environment and help them learn about nature and nature preservation. It would get children to learn in an outside-of-class environment, and inform them about the monarch butterfly species.
Monarchs in the Classroom

Welcome!

Monarchs in the Classroom aims to promote and facilitate inquiry-based education through original curricula and research opportunities. We use monarchs and other insects as focal organisms in inquiry-based teacher workshops and conduct an annual Insect Fair to spotlight student research. The monarch butterfly serves as an excellent tool to get students excited about science and to teach inquiry in the classroom.

Monarchs in the Classroom is a program of University of Minnesota Extension and the University of Minnesota Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology.

Insect Fair

The 17th annual Insect Fair was held on Saturday, December 07, 2013. Thanks to everyone who participated! Check out Past Insect Fair Abstracts.

News and Updates

Community Connections Garden Lab

The University of Minnesota Monarch Lab built a Community Connections Garden in 2013 on the University campus. University students, staff, and visitors will utilize this garden as a place to learn about and enjoy native plants and pollinators. Click here to watch a brief video about this garden.
Monarchs in the Classroom

Example Imagery
During: Prototype 4
Large-Scale Informational Signage

Currently, Southwood Nature Preserve lacks sufficient signage. There is the main bulletin board at the entrance, which appears cluttered with information. The abundant 8.5x11 signs intended to inform visitors of the preserve have small text and images, which has proven to have little impact. Based on interviews with visitors, they either never look at the bulletin board or only look at it every once in a while. In addition to this board, there are various signs around the preserve (again, 8.5x11 paper) supplied by Eagle Scout troops. These signs have brief descriptions of different areas of the preserve, like the Oak Savannah. In terms of nature-related signage, there is only the 8.5x11 pages designating areas that have been treated by chemicals and should not be entered by visitors. There are also small, handwritten labels for plant species scattered throughout the preserve with little consistency.

We propose the implementation of more permanent, large-scale informational signage that provide rich descriptions and visuals to supplement the user’s physical experience at the preserve. High quality designed structures will attract visitors to the preserve who wish to learn more about the natural environment. They will be specific to certain areas of the preserve, like the Oak Savannah or Mesic Prairie. Permanent structures will remain intact throughout all weather conditions, unlike the handwritten paper labels. They will also be more noticeable than the Eagle Scout information posts, which are small and tend to blend into the environment. Other large-scale signage can include a map of the preserve, clearly marking trails, entrances and exits so that visitors know where they can and cannot go.

Who would support it?
In order to implement this prototype, it makes the most sense to outsource the design of these structures to a professional designer. Current informational material produced directly by the city or master naturalists has had little impact on visitors of the preserve. Master naturalists can provide the content of the signage (text information and supplementary visuals) to the designer, and they can work on laying it all out to be visually appealing and informative.

Next Steps:
- Identify a designer or design firm that can design informational signage, on a pre-determined budget.
- Master naturalists can gather informational content and visuals regarding Southwood Nature Preserve, to be supplied to the signage designer.

User Goals:
This prototype supports the user goals of getting children more engaged with nature, and teaching them about nature and nature preservation. Without resources or information from this large-scale informational signage, visitors to the preserve are not necessarily learning while they are walking through the preserve. Currently, most of the information is consolidated to the entrance of the preserve on the bulletin board. Seeing as this is not currently being seen by many visitors, it is more efficient to have information consistently placed throughout areas of the preserve where visitors will be walking or observing nature.
Large-Scale Informational Signage

Example Imagery
Before & After: Prototype 5

Master Naturalist Information Table at existing community events

At this time, there is a lack of awareness for Southwood Nature Preserve - its existence, location and intended purpose. Prototype 1, the North St. Paul community newsletter, would help inform residents about Southwood. To supplement this promotion of the preserve, master naturalists could have the opportunity to be present at existing community events, and have materials (handouts, brochures) that would inform residents or outside residents about the preserve and volunteering opportunities.

There exists an abundance of parks around North St. Paul which receive much wider attention than Southwood. Often, community events and activities take place at these parks. It would be effective for master naturalists, if interested and available, to interact with residents face-to-face at these events. It is not sufficient to rely solely on existing interest in nature preservation in order to generate volunteering. It is also necessary to teach residents, especially those who may have more free time, about nature preservation and how they can get involved at Southwood specifically.

At these events, a table can be set up with a printed tablecloth. On the table, there can be fliers or brochures promoting future volunteer opportunities, or events and activities specific to Southwood. People can learn what it means to be a master naturalist and how they can become one.

Who would support it?
Master naturalists can request promotional materials regarding the master naturalist program and volunteering opportunities to be designed by outside designer.

Next Steps:
- Master naturalists determine what additional informational resources would be useful for them to hand out at existing community events.
- Identify which community events would be most effective for creating awareness for Southwood and promoting volunteer opportunities.
  - Create a calendar designating which master naturalists will be present.

User Goals:
This idea addresses the user goal of becoming more involved with the community. Becoming a master naturalist is a great means of giving back to the community, through learning about the preservation of the natural environment and implementing this knowledge through action. Master naturalist volunteers work in the removal of invasive species, the planting of new species, general cleanup and maintenance, and education. Children can become engaged with the natural environment through potential volunteer opportunities promoted by master naturalists at existing community events where children may be present.
Coomunity information table

Example Imagery