

**From: Todd Restel – Chair of the Rotary Club of
La Crosse’s Centennial Committee**
To: Rotary Club of La Crosse
Date: May 1, 2017

Summary:

During the April 2017 Board of Directors meeting of the Rotary Club of La Crosse, the Board voted to recommend the selection of a multifaceted project in Riverside Park to celebrate our Club’s centennial anniversary. Due to the significant scope and commitment needed to make this signature project a success, the Board wants this decision to be presented and have consensus amongst our members on this project.

The project will take place on the North end of Riverside Park and will consist of several phases. By creating different phases, our club will be able to interact and to influence the greater Riverside Park area for years to come. The initial phase of the project will focus on two projects which will be completed on June 1, 2019, which is the date of our 100th anniversary. Specifically, this initial phase would be a new friendship garden and a monument prominently reflecting Rotary and the Four Way test. Other aspects of this project will span over several years. One specific project would include commissioning a new sculpture to build community with the Native Americans. Finally, several projects are still in the idea phase and would not be possible to complete by June 2019, if at all. These projects include adding boat slips to Riverside Park, repurposing the former US Fish and Wildlife Service’s Fish Control Lab and expanding the friendship gardens to include a focus on the Native American culture and the Hmong culture.

It is important for the club to understand the primary criteria utilized to evaluate the projects submitted for consideration. The criteria were as follows:

1. The project must allow for active club participation by our members.
2. The project must be highly visible, significant and have a long useful life. If the project is not a capital asset or improvement, then the project must have a long term sustainability plan.
3. Rotary recognition needs to be prominent and clearly identified.
4. Rotary needs to be able to provide direction and influence to the project.
5. Fundraising for this project is expected.
6. Completion date needs to closely coincide with our club’s 100th anniversary date which is June 1, 2019.

Riverside Park is a highly visible and natural gathering space for both residents and visitors. Moreover, this area will be undergoing a significant facelift over the next several years. By engaging in this project, Rotary will be a natural partner to Riverside Park area for decades to come. Rotary will benefit greatly from our significant efforts.

Project: Riverside Park – North End Project

As background to this project, it is important to note the following core values which have served as the Rotary Club of La Crosse's guiding principles since our inception almost 100 years ago: service, fellowship, diversity, integrity, and leadership. Our Club's membership consists of a network of friends, neighbors, leaders and problem-solvers. Utilizing this network to come together to make positive, lasting change in our community is what Rotarians do. By adopting a project on the North End of Riverside Park, our club will focus on these core values. Lastly, this project will be inclusive of many organizations, thereby building community with the City of La Crosse.

Today, Riverside Park contains a tribute to six of our sister cities through a joint public-private partnership of the Riverside International Friendship Gardens ("Gardens"). Years ago, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration ("FSPA") developed a relationship with the Republic of Cameroon. Cameroon is a coastal country in West Central Africa. Over the years, the relationship which began with the FSPA has grown into an officially recognized "Sister City" relationship with the city of Kumbo, Cameroon. Today, all of the countries with which La Crosse has a Sister City relationship are recognized in the Gardens, except for Cameroon. Therefore, we will build a garden which celebrates Cameroon. One of the goals for this project will be to engage many different groups within our community in order to ensure that our appreciation for the diverse Cameroon culture is properly reflected.

Separately, a sculpture named Hiawatha was commissioned to honor our city's relationship with the Native Americans back in 1961. As this sculpture has aged and gone through major renovations over the years, our club would commission a new sculpture meant to honor the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin. Note that this public art project would not be commissioned until the City of La Crosse made the decision to remove and to relocate the existing sculpture. This public art project would also have the goal of being inclusive of many different organizations.

In order to tie in these projects with a direct correlation to Rotary, we will erect a monument which celebrates Rotary and the Four Way test. Specifically, the Four Way test would be a critical focal point of the monument.

To state the obvious, these garden and sculpture projects will allow us to build positive experiences with minority groups within the greater La Crosse area. Lastly, this proposal meets all six of our club's critical requirements.

Longer Term Goal for Project: Adopt the entire Riverside Park – North End.

There are three longer term projects (not including the projects that the City of La Crosse is already planning in Riverside Park) that we want to have coincide with our centennial projects. However, these projects would not be completed by June 2019. If we look at the entire Riverside Park – North End project as a long-term commitment, the following projects will also be adopted by our club. The benefits of these longer term goals are many, but most importantly will keep Rotary in the forefront of the conversations regarding a key location within the city for years to come.

First, we will work with various organizations to attempt to bring boat slips to the Riverside Park. This project would benefit many in a high profile manner that would surely attract visitors and garner media attention. Docks seems like a natural offering to our river-centric community. In retrospect, the lack of docks is an unmet need that offers a huge opportunity.

Second, we will work with various organizations to attempt to turn the former US Fish and Wildlife Service's Fish Control Lab into something that attracts people, visitors, etc.

Third, we will plan to be involved in future Garden projects which would ideally put an emphasis on honoring the Native American culture and the Hmong culture.

Complementary Projects:

In addition to our Club's signature projects which will start immediately, we will also engage the community with two complementary projects that will begin in 2019. These projects will nicely coincide with the ongoing signature projects. These condensed, but meaningful, projects will raise our visibility during our centennial anniversary year.

The first complementary project will be to replace the trees that we have lost in La Crosse to the Ash Bore beetles. To accomplish this project, the Club will donate 100 trees and encourage each member to individually gift a tree.

The second complementary project will be to perform 100 Acts of Service. To accomplish this project, the Club will have 100 members sign up for to perform an act of service. The details of this project will be finalized closer to our actual 100th anniversary.