

CPAG Gains Momentum, Enhances Park Experience

by DeAnne Minner

The Cheesman Park Advocacy Group (CPAG) was formed in 2004 by Councilwoman Jeanne Robb to address community-identified issues such as crime, safety, traffic, maintenance and restoration in Capitol Hill's historic Cheesman Park. Perhaps best known for its participation in the recently completed Cheesman Park Master Plan, CPAG has evolved from grassroots get-togethers into a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

From its inception, CPAG advocated for a new Cheesman Park Master Plan, ultimately and thankfully made possible in 2006 by a grant from the Colorado State Historical Fund. CPAG then worked alongside Denver's Parks and Recreation department as well as Mundus Bishop, the design team selected to study historic and existing conditions and to develop a new plan. Once the plan was completed, CPAG supported Denver's 2007 bond initiative that provided funding for initial implementation projects. When that initiative passed, Parks and Recreation scheduled construction of a new irrigation system, traffic calming measures, and improvements to the trail system beginning in 2009.

With a fairly major success under its belt and awareness that implementation of the entire Master Plan could take many years, CPAG began to refocus its efforts on more immediately observable contributions that enrich park users' experience.

Thanks to support from Councilwoman Robb, Parks and Recreation, and CPAG, Cheesman Park users enjoyed two auto-free Sundays in 2008 – auto-free days being one strongly supported and easily coordinated Master Plan recommendation. 2009 will bring five such Sundays – the first Sunday of each month from May 3 through September 6. In addition, concurrent with four of these five Sundays the Children's Museum and Tattered Cover will present a family literacy program in the park pavilion. Targeted to children ages 2-8, *One Book, One Sunday* will kick off May 3 at 11:30 a.m.

No literacy program will be held in July since the CPAG-sponsored 3rd Annual Fourth of July Kids' Parade will take place on the first Saturday of that month. Other park events promoted in 2008 by Councilwoman Robb and CPAG that will be repeated in 2009 include performances by the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, the Denver Municipal Band, the Colorado Honors Band, and Movie in the Park night. Watch the *Life on Capitol Hill* calendar for dates and times. In addition, CPAG was honored to receive a CHUN Good Neighbor Award for Parks and Public Spaces in 2008.

Once its nonprofit status became official, CPAG received a generous donation from a private foundation to be used for programs and infrastructure projects that benefit children. CPAG then advanced organizationally by forming operating committees, establishing a website and email address, and designing a logo.

CPAG's Adopt-A-Sprinkler project, a joint effort with Neighbors and Friends for Cheesman Park in cooperation with Parks and Recreation and Councilwoman Robb, raised more than \$2,700 to replace broken and inefficient sprinkler heads in the park. Using these funds, Parks and Recreation will purchase approximately 100 new heads compatible with both the existing and new irrigation system scheduled for installation later this year. Trail users should notice a difference this summer.

Although still a fledgling organization, CPAG looks forward to a long and productive affiliation with neighbors and users of Cheesman Park. Fundraisers and other events are being planned so that CPAG may continue to enhance the amenities this inner-city park offers.

"Denver's early city planners exhibited remarkable foresight in planning a park system that protects precious green spaces within an urban setting," said CPAG President Kathleen Rust. "To sustain their vision, however, our parks' future depends upon our collective diligence. Cheesman Park is a jewel that needs polishing in order to restore its historic beauty, and CPAG is committed to continue serving as its advocate."

Cheesman Park Advocacy Group holds regular Board meetings -- usually the 4th Thursday of the month -- and guests are welcome. CPAG also welcomes volunteers for events and tax-deductible donations in support of its efforts. To learn more about CPAG, see a calendar of events, volunteer, or make a donation, please visit www.cheesmanpark.org or email CPAG@cheesmanpark.org.