

Spring 2011

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BLAKE ROAD

Corridor Collaborative

Safety • Neighborhood Improvement • Youth

Development Plans Moving Forward

A few hard-to-miss changes are taking place on Blake Road this year.

The first of these changes took place in March as the owners of Pizza Lucé removed the building and tanks of a gas station that sat on the corner of Blake Rd and Second St NE. After months of sitting abandoned, this property was purchased by the restaurant owners at auction last year. The City of Hopkins has approved the restaurant's plans to convert the lot into additional parking with added landscaping features.

Building removal on Blake Road continued through the start of April as the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District began demolition of the first of five buildings located on properties at the corner of Blake Road and Lake Street. These properties, which connect Cottageville Park with Minnehaha Creek, have been purchased by the Watershed District as part of a regional plan to restore the creek. The removal of buildings on these properties brings benefits not only to the creek, but also to Cottageville Park with added space and increased accessibility and visibility.



Cottageville Park Present and Future: The area outlined in blue shows the park expansion.

Efforts to improve Cottageville Park began last year as the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative and the City of Hopkins worked to add amenities such as an expanded basketball court, additional lighting, and picnic tables. Until then, the park, which was difficult to access and hidden from view, had become a source of concern for neighbors. The expansion of the park with the removal of the buildings along Minnehaha Creek builds upon these initial changes and offers opportunities for

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Crime Statistics Show Improvement

In 2005, concern for the amount of crime occurring in the Blake Road area of Hopkins prompted community members to take action and resulted in the formation of the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative (BRCC). Since 2005, this group of community and government organizations has worked with Blake Road businesses and local residents to address concerns in the neighborhood and to improve the quality of life along the Corridor. As recently released crime statistics suggest, these efforts appear to be making a difference.

According to new statistics, the total number of crimes in the Blake Road area (from Highway 7 to Excelsior Boulevard and Texas Avenue to Highway 169) decreased by 25% in 2010 compared to the total number in 2006. Part 1 crimes which include violent and property crimes such as aggravated

assault, robbery, and theft were down 19% compared to 2006, and total Part 2 crimes which include vandalism, narcotics, and disorderly conduct decreased by 27%.

The trend is encouraging to all those involved in the BRCC who have taken concrete steps in recent years to improve safety in the neighborhood. Many of these efforts have been led by the Hopkins Police Department including increased police presence in the neighborhood and collaboration with neighboring law enforcement agencies. Residents have also been involved in the efforts to improve safety through the creation of Neighborhood Watch Groups, and BRCC-initiated improvements to neighborhood infrastructure including a sidewalk along the east side of Blake Road and the renovation of Cottageville Park have been aimed at increasing safety.

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Discover Blake Road!

Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail

Among the amenities located in the Blake Road Corridor is the Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail. This paved trail is one of four trailheads in Hopkins and is part of the Three Rivers Park regional trail system. It runs from Hopkins to Minneapolis following the former railroad lines of the

Great Northern Railway and the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway. The trail crosses Blake Road just south of 2nd Street NE. Hop on this trail and travel east through St. Louis Park all the way to Minneapolis and connect with other trails such as the Midtown Greenway. Or, hop on this trail and travel west toward downtown Hopkins.

When the trail ends near Hwy 169, you can connect with other trails heading north or continue west all the way to Eden Prairie. With amenities such as this, the Blake Road neighborhood is a convenient place to live! For more information on the trail, visit the Three Rivers Park District website at www.threeriverspark.org.



Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail in Hopkins

Summer Activities

Looking for something fun to do this summer? Looking to get outside after a long winter? Look no further! Many fun activities for families and youth are being planned this summer in the Blake Road neighborhood and throughout Hopkins! Indoor soccer for families with children ages five to ten will move outdoors

to Cottageville Park starting in May and will continue on Saturday mornings from 10am - noon throughout the summer. Beginning in June, Hopkins - Minnetonka Joint Recreation Services will host the Playground Program (M-F), Tiny Tots (Tu & Th), and Summer Adventure Club (Tu & Th) in Oakes Park as well

as Rec-tivity for Teens (M-F) at Katherine Curren.

Information on these and other activities is available on the BRCC website at www.blakeroad.org/summer-programs. Check back for updates as more information becomes available!

Changes *(continued)*

additional park improvements to occur. Demolition of the buildings is set to wrap up by the start of the summer and the area will be seeded and converted into green space. However, looking to the future, the expanded space offers opportunities for inclusion of additional amenities. Once demolition is completed, the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative, the

City of Hopkins, and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District will work together to host community forums to gather community input. Stay tuned for updates!

In addition to building removal along Blake Road, the Corridor will soon welcome two new businesses. Last fall, the abandoned Oasis gas station located at 530 Blake

Road North was purchased at auction by Holiday Stationstores. The company plans to renovate the site and re-open as a Holiday gas station this summer. A second new business, a Dollar Store, will soon open at 172 Blake Road N (former site of the Blake Chiropractic Center). It seems 2011 will be an exciting year on Blake Road!

Crime Stats *(continued)*

Through efforts such as these, the statistics for nearly all Part 1 crimes and for many Part 2 crimes improved by 2010. As Hopkins Police Services Liaison Anne Marie Buck explains, for the statistics that did not experience improvements, the story behind these numbers helps to more fully describe the situation in the neighborhood. Although there were 32

reports of narcotics in 2010 compared to 17 in 2006 (an increase of 88.2%), this rise does not necessarily represent an increase in the incidence of narcotics in the neighborhood, but rather demonstrates the effectiveness of increased police patrols—as police have made an effort to have a greater presence in the neighborhood, they have been able to take

greater action. Since the start of the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative in 2005, reducing crime and improving safety has been one of the main goals. Work in this area will continue into 2011. For anyone interested in learning more about the BRCC or participating in BRCC activities, please visit www.blakeroad.org for more information.

Upcoming Activities:

- Outdoor Soccer Practice at Cottageville Park on **Saturdays from 10am-noon starting in May.**
- Community SWLRT Workshop/Training on **May 4, 6:30pm** at 43 Hoops.
- City of Hopkins' Cinco de Mayo Celebration in Burnes Park on **May 7 from 11am-1pm.**
- Neighborhood Clean-Up Day on **May 21, 9:45am to noon** (part of the Community Days of Service).

For more information on any of these events or activities, visit the website www.blakeroad.org or send an email to: blakeroad55343@gmail.com