

Enhancing Van Neste Square A Monumental Project

by Cynthia Halaby

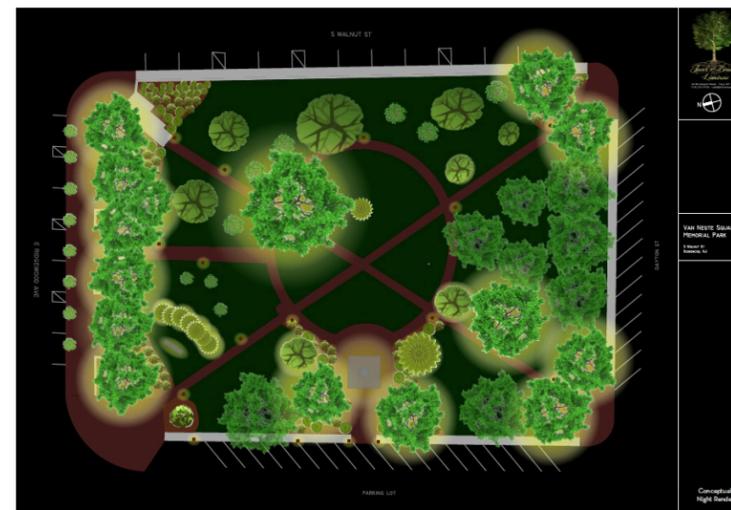
The goal of the Conservancy for Ridgewood Public Lands is to provide funding and support to enhance Ridgewood parks and public lands. Past projects have included the Butterfly Garden behind the Stable, the gardens near the train station on North Broad Street, the planting of daylilies and daffodils at the Memorial Allee by the Ridgewood Library and planting a butterfly meadow at Twinney Pond. The Conservancy depends on the generosity of our community to make our projects possible.

of all overgrown plant material blocking the monument, this spring Chris had installed a selection of shrubs carefully chosen to bloom three seasons of the year and that would enhance the area. Two new benches were purchased, along with two very large ornamental planters. "The benches match those already in the square and the magnificent planters are in keeping of the formal design of the War Memorial. This Memorial is very special to our veterans and we have worked closely with the Ridgewood American Legion Post 53 to respectfully maintain this revered site," says Cynthia Halaby, president of the Conservancy.

At present, the Conservancy is working with the Village to complete the Van Neste Lighting Project. This was started three years ago to enhance the park's safety, usefulness, and beauty. "One of our goals is to make Van Neste usable day and night," says Bill Gilsenan, of Gilsenan & Co., as well as a board member of the Conservancy. "This revitalization is long overdue."

Both Conservancy projects are well timed. This summer Van Neste has been a host to many residents and visitors alike, enjoying the beautiful park. At the weekends it has become a popular locale for music and acting groups which have been entertaining the community with their uplifting performances. With the lighting in place hopefully the park will be inviting once it gets dark and become a venue for evening activities as well. "It is hoped that the schools will be able to put on musical performances" says Bill Gilsenan. "We want people to feel safe at night and come to enjoy groups such as Shakespeare in the Park, concerts, New Players from the high school and others. The sky's the limit now."

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Attractively designed lights for the walkways at Van Neste Memorial Park

The most recent project the Conservancy has undertaken is the renewal of the plaza around the War Memorial at Van Neste Square. This is a key area in the heart of our downtown. The War Memorial was dedicated in 1924 and was designed by Henry Bacon, architect of the Lincoln Monument in Washington D.C. The memorial honors residents who lost their lives for our country. The park also displays a memorial which honors those residents who perished on 9/11.

Last fall, under the leadership of Chris Raimondi of the Raimondi Group, and a Conservancy board member, and with help from the Ridgewood Parks Department, the Conservancy began the renewal. Following the removal

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The Ridgewood War Memorial at Van Neste Square, day and night

The War Memorial honors all residents who lost their lives for our country. The monument was designed by Henry Bacon, architect of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC, and was dedicated in 1924.