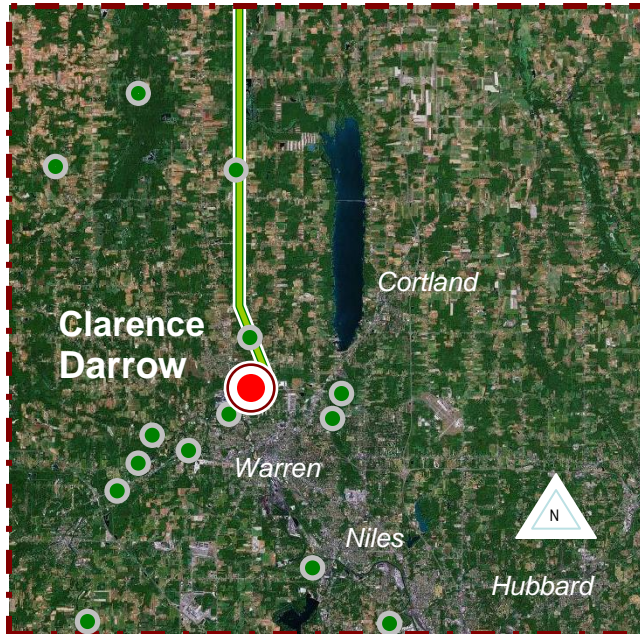


# CLARENCE DARROW METROPARK

*Introductions • History • Present Conditions • Future Development Plans • Implementation Strategies • Statistics*



## Introduction

Clarence Darrow MetroPark is a popular recreation spot located across from the Kent State University Trumbull Campus in Champion Township. The park exhibits a surprisingly diverse landscape ranging from grassy fields and rolling hills to wooded flatland and deep stream banks, leaving several little environments to explore and study. Visitors to the park will find forested walking trails, streamside park benches, the Young's Run 15-hole disc golf course, open lawns, and picnic areas with grills. Wildlife abounds throughout the park, from small aquatic animals at the stream's edge to woodland creatures. The park is also a home and foraging ground for a rich variety of bird

species, making the site a favorite location for the annual Trumbull County's Audubon Christmas Bird Count. The park is particularly popular with disc golfers, bicyclists seeking to utilize the Western Reserve Greenway located about one mile northeast of the park, and birdwatchers.

## Clarence Darrow MetroPark

- 32 acres of gently rolling land bisected by Young's Run Creek and featuring forest as well as open meadows.
- 15-Hold Disc Golf Course is spread throughout the park along with a short walking trail, picnic areas, and park benches.
- In the future, MetroParks plans to redesign and expand the Disc Golf Course to 18 Holes, install a fenced dog park, establish potable water on-site, construct a pavilion, and investigate opportunities to attain additional space.
- Clarence Darrow MetroPark is Trumbull County MetroParks' second-largest open park and is also the oldest County park.

The eastern portion of the park, which features a 32-space parking lot, hosts the starting disc golf tee for the Young's Run Disc Golf Course. Positioned alongside the parking area is one of the park district's two storage sheds used to house equipment and materials as well as a portable lavatory. Also located nearby are two picnic tables, a park kiosk, and a Young's Run Disc Golf Course message board.



*Clarence Darrow in early Autumn*



### ***Area Attributes***

The park's neighbors include Fairhaven School for the Developmentally Disabled, Delphi Corporation's Engineering Division, a residential subdivision, and Kent State University's Trumbull Campus. Additional residential communities, the Western Reserve Greenway, and a traditional golf course exist nearby. Many development proposals have recently surfaced for the general area, including a research and industrial park, Phase III of the Western Reserve Greenway, and Kent State University's Health and Wellness Center, which would be located immediately south of the park. Moreover, new roads to connect the area to an industrial park south of the Warren Bypass and to Park Avenue are possible.

After receiving petitions, the park district applied for a grant in 2007 that would help fund a proposed Dog Park on the western end of the park. Should MetroParks attain the necessary funding for the project, two disc golf holes would be moved from their present location closer to the Young's Run stream to accommodate new facility, and improvements to the existing west parking lot would be made. Other plans include expanding the 15-hole disc golf course to 18 holes, constructing a pavilion, and placing educational signage at key points throughout the park. Additionally, the park district should work to promote more events.

### **History**

Clarence Darrow MetroPark is among the oldest parks in MetroParks' inventory of leased and owned properties. Although MetroParks did not effectively acquire Clarence Darrow until 1984, the park district worked with a variety of other county agencies to maintain and develop the site into what it has become. According to the park's recorded deed, the eastern portion of Clarence Darrow was originally acquired by the Trumbull County Commissioners in 1837 and made part of the Trumbull County Infirmary Farm. The eastern portion of the property had been known as the North Warren Heights Townsite. Throughout the 1950's and 1960's, Champion Township developed into a suburb of Warren, the Warren Bypass was constructed, and Kent State University constructed a regional campus immediately south of the site. In the wake of such development, there was interest in creating a park nearby the university campus, as indicated by correspondence from the University to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) in 1968. The Trumbull County Commissioners, through a Land and Water Conservation Grant offered by ODNR, purchased the property's eastern portion of the park in the 1970's in order to establish a park. Clarence Darrow was officially dedicated as a county park in 1975 when the Trumbull County Commissioners placed the 50 acre property under the supervision of the Metropolitan Park Board with the intention of creating nature trails and opportunities for recreation. It was the second park managed by MetroParks, the first being Anderson Park which was later sold by the park district to Lordstown Township (now a village),



*Youngs Run in early 2008*



and the oldest in its current inventory of leased and owned properties. It was also the first memorial in the county to defense attorney Clarence Darrow, a native of Kinsman Township who went on to defend a high school biology teacher in the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925, the result of which worked toward disallowing prohibitions against teaching evolution in schools.

In 1981 the Trumbull County Commissioners leased Clarence Darrow to MetroParks so that the park district could utilize license tax revenues from Ohio's Park District Highway Fund to build a 10-car parking lot west of Young's Run. In 1984 MetroParks received full ownership of Clarence Darrow when the county commissioners signed a real estate deed to donate the approximately 28 acres of parkland. By that time, the remainder of the original 50 acres had been utilized or reserved for other county projects. Plans for MetroParks spanned from preserving the land as a field laboratory along Young's Run to creating a recreation area equipped with restrooms and from building a large museum and to constructing an outdoor amphitheatre along the eastern end of the park. Overtime, however, nature trails were built along Young's Run, and benches were set in place to allow visitors a place to relax and watch the park's abundant wildlife.



*Disc Golf at Clarence Darrow in 2008*

In 1992 a Trumbull County resident submitted a proposal for a frisbee golf course at Clarence Darrow. Frisbee golf, or disc golf, had been a popular sport for decades prior and was played similarly to golf with discs in place of balls. As disc golf was a low-impact and low-cost sport, it was a natural addition to the park. In 1995, MetroParks wrote a successful NatureWorks Grant to attain funds to install 12 disc golf baskets and accompanying tee cement pads throughout the eastern end of the park. The Trumbull County Commissioners also granted MetroParks an easement to use approximately four acres of adjacent meadowlands for part of the course. Later, an additional two disc-golf baskets were purchased for the area west of Young's Run, and a bag book guide was printed to promote the course. Most recently in order to provide space to accommodate a possible dog park along the park's western end, the Trumbull County Commissioners donated to MetroParks the four acres of meadow adjacent from the park's eastern boundary.

## **Present Conditions**

Clarence Darrow remains one of MetroParks' most visited parks, attracting nature watchers and disc golfers throughout the year. Disc golf, of course, is the park's most popular feature, as evident by the weekly disc golf events and games held nearly every weekend throughout the year. There are many opportunities for regional and state tournaments at the site, particularly



when used in combination with the newly constructed nine-hole disc golf course at the adjacent Kent State University Trumbull Campus.

Disc golf is played similarly to golf, only with the use of discs in lieu of a ball and baskets instead of holes, although the baskets themselves are often referred to as “holes” and the starting points, which may be a simple marker or cement pad, as “tees.” Players throw discs toward the golf holes, attempting to make as few throws as possible before reaching the destination. Disc golfers may select from many types of discs at any time while playing a disc golf hole. A driver, generally flat and designed to travel long distances, is typically the first type of disc used when tackling a new disc golf hole. Mid-range discs tend to be thicker than drivers, offer a bit more control to the user, and are best used for moderate-throwing distances. The bulkier putters are designed for short tosses, offering better maneuverability in place of distance.



*Proposed Dog Park Site at Clarence Darrow*

Clarence Darrow features one of the MetroParks’ two maintenance garages and also provides a portable lavatory year-round for visitors. The park is dotted with park benches as well as picnic areas with tables and cooking grills. With the help of Youth Build, a kiosk was installed at the park in early 2008. The message board near the western end of the main parking area will offer disc golfers and other members of the public a place to post notices for special events. A shelter structure, either a gazebo or pavilion, is planned on the opposite end of the parking lot, a location chosen for its optimal visibility and distance away from disc golf flight paths.

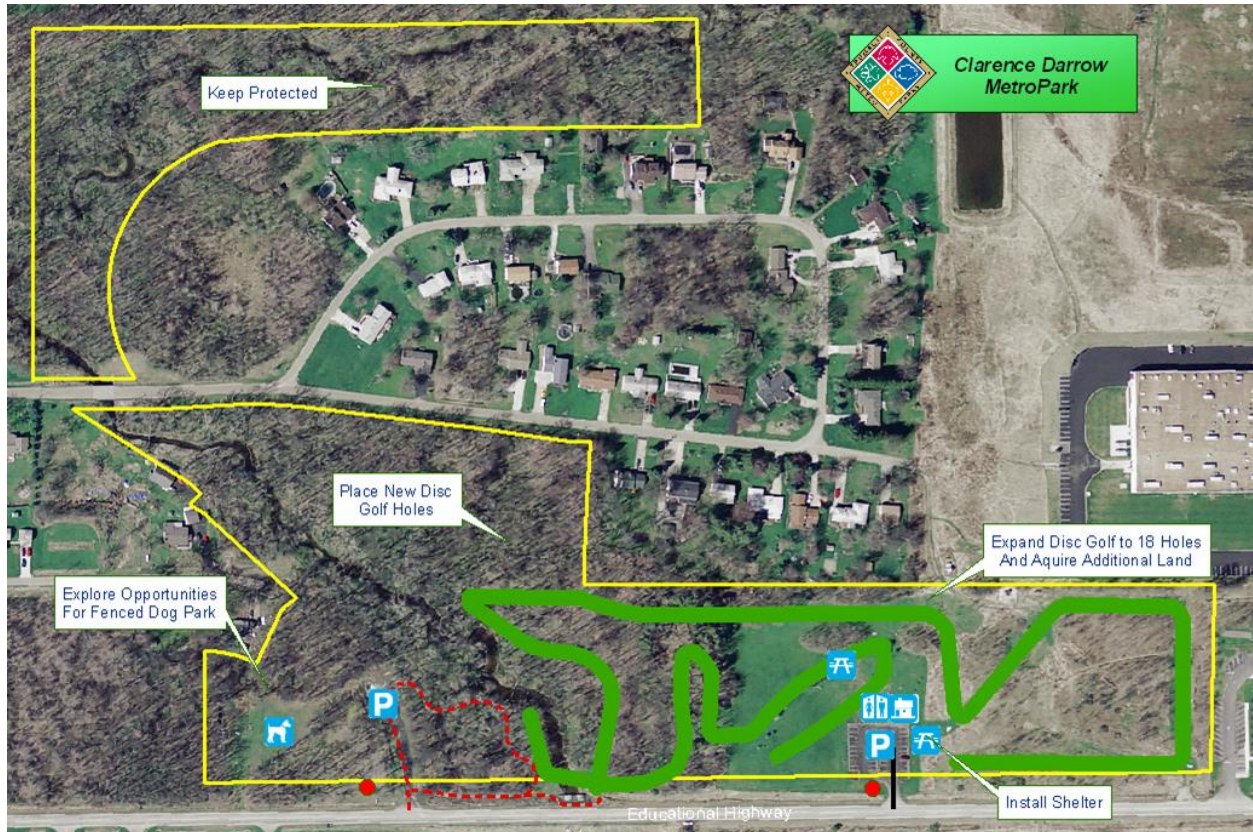
After receiving a petition from area residents requesting a dog park, MetroParks created preliminary plans for an off-leash and fenced facility that would provide running water. The construction of a dog park is contingent upon available funding. MetroParks submitted a NatureWorks grant application in early 2008 to assist with the project. Should the dog park attain funding, three disc golf baskets will be moved to a nearby location along the stream.

Present areas of concern for the park, aside from the possible dog park, include the lack of directional signage and the small scale of MetroParks logos on the premises. While the nearby Kent State University Trumbull Campus golf course can be used in conjunction with Youngs Run for events, MetroParks could expand the existing disc golf course to a total of 18 holes while offering players a new course layout. Also, a set of constricted and rusting metal steps provide the only means of access across Young’s Run and could be greatly improved. Lastly, an industrial and research park is planned and partially developed to the east of the site while a Kent State University-owned health and wellness center is planned immediately south of Clarence Darrow and east of Lake Anne. A connecting spur trail to the Western Reserve Greenway from



the park could potentially be routed around future improvements and utilize portions of proposed roadways.

## Future Development Plans



Clarence Darrow is almost fully developed; however, there is still room for additional amenities and future uses, such as the proposed dog park. This section highlights the park district's future goals for the park, which include enhancing the MetroParks' logo upon the existing signage and placing directional signage along State Route 45. Other future development plans include:

### *Establish Educational Signage*

Considering the rich environment and wildlife present in Clarence Darrow, it is no surprise that the area was once intended to serve as a land laboratory. Opportunities for nature observation abound throughout the park, particularly along the riverbanks of Youngs Run. Educational signage could alert visitors to the many different types of environments existing around them. Similar to some traditional golf courses, MetroParks could establish educational signage at disc golf tees that highlight environmental, historical, or disc-golf related facts. As with other proposed educational signage projects, MetroParks could coordinate with the Trumbull County Educational Service Center to find school districts and teachers interested in a signage project. Also, MetroParks could enlist the help of the local Audubon Society to create signs pertaining to the bird population and the organization's Christmas Bird Count.



### ***Improve Young's Run Crossing***

In order to cross Young's Run, visitors must take a trail which passes over the massive culvert along Educational Highway and, upon reaching the eastern end of the park, descend a set of narrow metal stairs. The stairway could easily be replaced, or with minimal earth moving, a ramp could be created similar to the incline present on the eastern bank of the stream. Additionally, MetroParks may consider constructing a small bridge over Young's Run where the stream narrows near the northern end of the park, near where future disc golf basket holes are being considered.

### ***Create Fenced Dog Park & Realign Disc Golf Holes***

MetroParks submitted a NatureWorks grant application for the construction of a fenced-in dog park in early 2008. If constructed, the dog park would be built along the western end of Clarence Darrow, displacing two disc golf baskets to a location along the Youngs Run stream. The proposal calls for fencing in approximately one and a half acres of land with vinyl-coated fencing, creating a culvert from the existing parking lot, laying a patio space with picnic tables, building a double-gated entry system to prevent pets from running away, and establishing a drinking fountain and a yard hydrant. An alternative concept calls for establishing a parking lot to the west of the proposed fenced area over where an existing gas well right of way exists, which would effectively separate the dog park from the disc golf course. Additionally, the grant covers up to 75 percent of the project costs up to a set amount allocated for all projects within Trumbull County. Without significant funding, however, the project will not be affordable.

### ***Expand & Reconfigure Disc Golf Course***

It would be desirable to build Clarence Darrow into an 18-hole disc golf course to allow it to compete with other regional disc golf courses for tournaments and events. Current space exists along Young's Run Creek, which could serve as space for either new disc golf holes or those displaced by a dog park. Several locations along the eastern end of the park could also accommodate new disc golf holes. Also, wide strips of vacant lands exist to the west and to the north of the park that, with an easement or purchase of the property, could provide additional space for the course as well as room for walking trails. Any substantial additions would likely require reconfiguration of the course. Even without additions, however, it would be advisable to change the configuration in the future in order to effectively offer a new course, as is the practice with many traditional golf courses. Notices could be placed up at the park to gain input from players prior to the planning session that will be required to ascertain a new course layout.



*Disc Golf Hole*

### ***Western Reserve Greenway Link***

Clarence Darrow is located within one mile of the Western Reserve Greenway terminus at Champion Avenue East. The park is presently used by a few bicyclists for parking,



who then traverse Educational Highway and Research Parkway to each the greenway. In order to encourage greater use of the parking lot by trail users, MetroParks could install directional signage at the intersection of Educational Highway and State Route 45 as well as Champion Avenue East and Research Parkway. Additional directional signage could be provided at Sunside to alert visitors of the additional space. As Phase III is developed, however, MetroParks could consider creating a direct spur trail that could be integrated into future developments, such as the proposed Kent State University Health and Wellness Center and utilize easements or portions of future roads to reach Phase III north of the Warren Bypass.

#### ***Consider Additional Potable Water For East End of Park***

Despite its size, Clarence Darrow attracts a substantial number of visitors on a daily basis, features a variety of disc golf events throughout the year, and is located in close proximity to the Western Reserve Greenway, yet there is no drinking water available on site. Of course, thirsty park patrons tend to look for water, even if that means leaving a park or event before they would have otherwise. Providing water service to the park would require drilling a water line underneath Educational Highway up to 100 feet or more into the park. Yard hydrants would allow park patrons to quickly fill water bottles while also providing park maintenance staff a connection for a water hose. However, a drinking fountain, while more expensive than a yard hydrant, is generally a more comfortable and acceptable source of drinking water. Either utility would require a solid base and backflow prevention device, which would be installed below the surface. An optimal location for these devices would be near the eastern end of the parking lot near the site of the proposed pavilion, as such a place would be easily accessible by park patrons while requiring the least amount of distance from the main water line, saving costs. Such water service would only strengthen the use of the disc golf course while making the park an attractive off-site trail head for the Western Reserve Greenway.

#### ***Additional Considerations***

Beyond the five-year scope of this plan, MetroParks may wish to consider installing a vault or composting restroom on site once demand warrants the investment. Also, Clarence Darrow has grown over the years, originally expanding out from what would have otherwise been a residential subdivision. As a result, the park is comprised of many individual parcels, a primarily aesthetic issue as far as the park's boundary map is concerned. MetroParks may consider combining the parcels in the future.

## **Implementation Strategies**

The most imminent project at Clarence Darrow includes the construction of a gazebo, or pavilion, near the eastern parking lot. Directional signage is another vital priority for the park along with the possible dog park, depending upon the outcome of the park district's grant application. Clarence Darrow incurs significant maintenance costs, particularly in the landscaping required to keep the disc golf course open and picnic areas accessible. However, the need for the investment is clear when considering the park's popularity and its frequent events. MetroParks may consider partnering with local disc golfers to help promote the park and



establish additional events, such as disc golf clinics. Without funding, Clarence Darrow would be very difficult to manage. With volunteers and donations, fairways could be kept clear and a significant portion of the park could possibly remain open. Services such as trash removal and lavatory service would likely have to be suspended; however, volunteer and community service groups could help to keep the park clear of litter.

### ***Implementation Checklist***

#### ***Phase I – Dog Park Creation***

- Enhance park entrance signage
- Contingent upon funding, install dog park fencing, patio, culvert link to parking lot, running tubes, and pea gravel
- Add potable water to site with water line, water fountain, and yard hydrant
- Adjust affected disc golf tees, or skip to Phase II

#### ***Phase II – Disc Golf Course Enhancements***

- Confer with adjacent property owners about possible easements of future land acquisition to expand disc golf park
- Hold planning session with disc golf stakeholders to create new course
- Make appropriate reconfigurations and install additional three disc golf holes (18 holes total)

#### ***Phase III - Additional Enhancements***

- Establish educational signage at disc golf tees and at other points of interest
- Install pavilion/shelter
- Collaborate with Kent State Trumbull Campus and the Trumbull Career and Technical Center to create a link to the Western Reserve Greenway
- Install directional and parking signage at key intersections around park
- Establish potable water along eastern end of park which will also serve as a trailhead for the Western Reserve Greenway
- Consider permanent restrooms if demand warrants
- Consider performing a lot combination to simplify property's tax map

## **Clarence Darrow MetroPark Statistics**

### **Parkland Attributes:**

Acreage: 32.00  
Parking Spaces: 40  
Trailer Spaces: N/A  
Picnic Tables: 4  
Cook-Out Grills: 2  
Restrooms: Yes  
Trails: Yes  
\* Disc Golf Course  
\* Audubon Christmas Bird Count  
\* Northeast Ohio DG Open  
Daily Traffic Counts:  
Educational Highway: 2,940  
Mahoning Ave / SR 45: 16,360

### **Restrictions:**

Reservation of mineral rights

### **References:**

Douglas O. Linder, JD , 2007. "State v. John Scopes ("The Monkey Trial")" UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-KANSAS CITY (UMKC) SCHOOL OF LAW (Web-Source, faculty documents) <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/evolut.htm> Retrieved 2 May 2008.

MetroPark Archives: Letter of Support from Kent State University Trumbull Campus to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources regarding Clarence Darrow's Development, sent 16 May, 1968.

MetroParks Archives