

## Berger Fountain (Loring Park)

**Location:** The fountain is located on the northeast edge of Loring Park along Willow Street, where the Loring Greenway meets the park.

As part of a constellation, features that suggest connections to parks and park-like spaces beyond Loring Park are important. A refurbished Berger Fountain marks the downtown side of the park, surrounded by a more generous plaza that is more readily populated, gardens that—while smaller than others in the park—reflect one of its character-defining features, and tall trees offering shade for people and scale for the fountain. The portion of Willow Street near the fountain is conceived as a more pedestrian-focused crossing between Loring Park and the Loring Greenway.

### Motivators:

Assembly (Civic)  
Be Entertained  
Competition/Sport  
Explore/Learn  
Family + Friends  
Fitness+ Health  
Get Away/Retreat/Rest/Relax  
Study/Think/Work

## History

The fountain was donated by former Park Board Commissioner Benjamin Berger to the Park Board in 1975. It is similar to a fountain Mr. Berger saw in Australia. It was initially intended for the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden but the Walker Art Center declined the installation because it was not an original artwork, so it was subsequently installed in Loring Park.

## Existing Conditions and Character

The fountain is a beloved neighborhood landmark and a favorite location for wedding photographers and children. The plaza and surrounding trees create a cozy enclosed area with good views of the park and skyline. Pipes and parts function but are often failing and hard to repair, with the basin leaking water onto the plaza in several locations. Strong winds often blow fountain spray onto the nearby plaza benches. The Willow Street crossing to the Loring Greenway is not clearly defined and makes pedestrian and bike crossings challenging in that area.

## Issues

- » Aging mechanicals and plaza infrastructure are in constant need of repair or replacement
- » Poor visual and physical connections to Loring Greenway, including lack of a safe bicycle/pedestrian crossing at Willow Street, a lack of a welcoming entrance and wayfinding signage, and a plaza that is too small to accommodate both bicycles and pedestrians while also providing areas to avoid fountain spray
- » Current winter cover is unattractive, inviting vandalism, and staff find the cover difficult to install

## Opportunities

- » Create a grand entrance into the park from Loring Greenway
- » Provide an efficient and reliable water feature
- » Offer room for group gatherings of various sizes while still accommodating bicycle and pedestrian circulation
- » Reinforce views and visual connection between the fountain entrance, Loring Pond, and the rest of the park

## Connections

Wayfinding and connections to and from Berger Fountain should focus on:

- » The pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Loring Greenway leading to Nicollet Mall and downtown.
- » Pedestrian and bicycle connections leading into the heart of Loring Park and across it to Lyndale/Hennepin Avenues and neighborhoods and parks farther west.



Berger Fountain

## Berger Fountain Existing Conditions



Figure 1.42 Berger Fountain Existing Conditions



## Berger Fountain Proposed Plan



Figure 1.43 Berger Fountain Proposed Plan



Precedents for Berger Fountain

## Proposed Design

The proposed design features an organically shaped plaza with flowing lines that encourages pedestrian strolling through the space and into the park. Small garden spaces and new trees provide wind breaks and sheltered seating from fountain spray. A raised pedestrian table and on-street markings increase safety and access to the Loring Greenway. A simplified basin prevents plaza flooding and standardized replacement fountain parts reduce time and cost of fountain repairs. Introduction of a splash pad allows children and adults to access the water without climbing on and potentially damaging the basin. New plantings introduce color and a new signage wall creates a welcoming gateway to the park.

## Desired Key Features

- » A more organic quality to the spaces surrounding the fountain, one that resonates with the natural character of the park and maintains the focus on the fountain as the primary feature of the space
- » Routes through the plaza area reflecting the “wandering” character of the Loring Greenway and the strolling nature of the park, eventually linking to the Promenade, one of the key directives of the former master plan for the park;
- » A low sign wall identifying the fountain from Willow Street and guiding pedestrians to proper crossing points at a raised roadway which facilitates pedestrian movements while slowing traffic on the street;
- » Fixed and flexible seating, recognizing the need to move with breezes that result in fountain overspray falling on various parts of the plaza
- » Garden features balancing “hard” surfaces of the surrounding plaza, with a plan for perpetuating the overstory trees that currently surround the fountain area

## Processes

Initial Design Guidance and Ideation by Design Team	→ Design Week Products	→ Design Week Feedback	→ Final Design Product
Honor existing plans and original design intent for fountain	→ Keep dandelion head design, but upgrade to modern materials	→ OK, provide more detailed concepts of Berger Fountain and plaza	→ Keep dandelion head design, but upgrade to modern materials
Create strong connection to Loring Greenway, act as bridge between these two significant public spaces	→ Enhance crossing of Willow Street	→ OK, provide more detailed concepts of Berger Fountain and plaza	→ Enhance crossing of Willow Street
Create significant entry space that leads to but is separate from Great Lawn	→ Create plaza and seating at edge of fountain that connects street to Great Lawn	→ OK, provide more detailed concepts of Berger Fountain and plaza	→ Create plaza and seating at edge of fountain that connects street to Great Lawn
Design for wandering, create options for paths through	→ Multiple paths intersecting and passing through plaza space	→ OK, provide more detailed concepts of Berger Fountain and plaza	→ Multiple paths intersecting and passing through plaza space
Garden-like, shaded, protect old trees	→ Planters and shade trees over plaza	→ OK, provide more detailed concepts of Berger Fountain and plaza	→ Planters and shade trees over plaza
Variety of seating options	→ Planter seating, fountain edge seating, movable tables and seating	→ OK, provide more detailed concepts of Berger Fountain and plaza	→ Planter seating, fountain edge seating, movable tables and seating
Simple design highlights fountain and doesn't detract from it	→ Fountain is centerpiece of plaza	→ OK, provide more detailed concepts of Berger Fountain and plaza	→ Fountain is centerpiece of plaza
Welcoming entrances	→ Open views of plaza and fountain from street and adjacent paths	→ OK, provide more detailed concepts of Berger Fountain and plaza	→ Open views of plaza and fountain from street and adjacent paths

» Play features integrated with the fountain so that it becomes more than a visual feature and allows access to the water, but also recognizing the need to replace fountain components to make it more resilient to damage and easier to maintain

» An attractive winter cover designed with consideration for maintenance, especially one that is designed to be an attractive feature for the plaza space when the fountain is not in use

## Costs and Operations Estimates

See Loring Park (beginning on page 4-68) for information on project cost estimates and park operations estimate that includes Berger Fountain.