

# Kilbourn Reservoir Park

The new Kilbourn Reservoir Park, created with the removal of a 135-year-old underground drinking water reservoir, provides a green urban retreat in Riverwest at North Avenue and Humboldt Boulevard. The 35-acre park is on land donated in the 1870s to the City of Milwaukee by Mayor Byron Kilbourn. In designating the site as historic in 1999, the Historic Preservation Commission noted:

*“The reservoir is a visible reminder and symbol of Milwaukee’s first great public works project, the public water system, and is a highly visible landmark... .”*

Historians say Polish residents of nearby Brady Street called Kilbourn Park “zielona gora” – “the green hill.” Riverwest, north of the reservoir, was known as “zagora,” or “beyond the hill.”

Water usage changed during the past century, and the Milwaukee Water Works found it no longer needed the water storage. In a multi-year public involvement project, neighbors and elected officials designed a park without the reservoir with goals to:

- retain the historic height and shape of the hill and provide access to the top
- provide a recreational resource with landscaping, pathways, benches and bike racks, and play areas
- provide connectivity between park areas north and south of North Avenue
- improve pedestrian and traffic safety by reducing the curvature of North Avenue

The Department of Public Works modified North Avenue, closed the east end of Garfield Avenue in exchange for a park path, realigned the intersections of North with Bremen and Booth Streets, and added two pedestrian crosswalks across the avenue.

A contractor demolished and removed the 25-foot-deep reservoir structure that had once held 20 million gallons of water, then trucked in 88,000 cubic yards of soil to replicate the irregular shape of the reservoir.

To control erosion and stormwater runoff, plantings of grass, shrubs, and perennials replace the paved top of the reservoir, a return of 3.63 acres of pavement to pervious surface. Landscaping includes historic and native vegetation – trees, shrubs, and a mix of prairie grasses, sedges, and forbs – to enhance stormwater absorption and to eliminate the need for high maintenance mowing.

The hilltop plateau meets the guideline to preserve the hill as a landmark with an unmatched view of the city. The south end of the hill is five feet lower than it was, creating a larger plateau. The north, east, and west sides were shaped to an all-accessible slope with new staircases at the east and west entrances to the park. The bowl-like center provides a sledding hill and a natural amphitheater. Paved paths outline the shape of the reservoir and allow access to the top. The north end of the site was re-graded to provide flat space for a baseball field, tot lot playground, and basketball half-court.

Furnishings selected at public meetings include Harp lights, ornamental fencing, waste receptacles, benches along pathways, and bike racks at park entrances.

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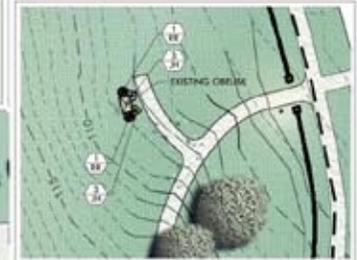


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**Milwaukee**  
**Water Works**

Safe, Abundant Drinking Water.

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**OBELISK ENLARGEMENT**

**LANDSCAPE LEGEND**

MS	Malva 'Snowdrift'	Snowdrift Crabapple
SR	Syringa reticulata	Jap. Tree Lilac
QS	Quercus x stuebeli	Swamp x Burr Oak
GD	Gymnocladus Dioica	Kentucky Coffeetree
AS	Acer saccharinum	Sugar Maple
QR	Quercus rubra	Red Oak
BR	Rosa rugosa 'Jess Musk'	Jess Musk Rugosa Rose
JH	Juniperus horiz. 'Wilton'	Blue Rug Juniper
TM	Tulipa 'Milka'	Milka Tulip
NT	Nardus 'Tahiti'	Tahiti Daffodil

MS/SR	ORNAMENTAL TREES
QS	SWAMP WHITE X BURR OAK
GD	KENTUCKY COFFEETREE
AS	SUGAR MAPLE
QR	RED OAK
(Grey circle)	EXISTING DECIDUOUS TREES
(Green circle)	EXISTING EVERGREEN TREES
(Light green)	NATIVE TALL GRASS PRAIRIE*
(Yellow)	NATIVE SHORT GRASS PRAIRIE*
(Orange)	NATIVE PLUG VEGETATION*
(Dark green)	LAWN AREA

\*Reference pamphlet plant lists for specific species

**SAA**  
SOUTHWEST ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATES

**KILBOURN RESERVOIR MASTER PLAN**  
ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN

Milwaukee Water Works  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
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**Water Engineering**  
Department of Public Works

**Milwaukee Water Works**