

SCOUT LAKE PARK

Feb. 3, 2014

In reference to the potential beer garden in Scout Lake, I'd like to present three reasons why Scout Lake would be an inappropriate park for a beer garden and provide a couple suggestions for more suitable locations.

1. The size of the park;

Scout Lake Park is a very unique place. It is a small park enclave that consists of a pond-sized lake surrounded by trees. There is a wooded path that goes around the small lake and a network of narrow paths through the woods that lead to residential neighborhoods. There is a warming house designed for ice skaters in the winter and indoor celebrations in the warmer months. There is a parking lot, a playground, and a few green spaces that are so tiny that the park has only a couple of picnic tables. I walk the paths at Scout Lake about four times a week in the spring, summer and fall. The paths are heavily used by children, families, individuals (particularly women), and the elderly. Many people exercise by walking or jogging on the forested path around the lake. Families fish in the lake, where children run from one spot to another fishing in various openings along the wooded edges of the lake. The length of the path around the lake and in front of the warming house is only a half mile. So a two mile circuit requires a person to pass the warming house four times.

The size of Scout Lake Park is small and not even close to the size of Estabrook Park where there is currently a beer garden. It is so small, that the footprint of Scout Lake when compared to Estabrook; is like a postage stamp to an envelope. The beer garden at Scout Lake would dominate a park of this size, and severely limit its use.

2. Safety;

The only place for the beer garden in Scout Lake is at the warming house, placing the people drinking outside right next to the walking path or on both sides of the path. When I walk, I would have to past or go through the people drinking 4 times then go through the woods on the side and in back of the beer garden to take the hidden trails home. I currently feel very safe walking around the lake and taking the forested trail to and from my home and Scout Lake. That will change if we have people sitting around drinking while watching the park visitors use the paths. I would even consider obtaining a concealed carry permit for my own personal safety, and here is why;

I am concerned that a beer garden at Scout Lake would be an attractive environment for robberies and sexual assaults. It would provide a perfect location for potential criminals and stalkers to frequent the beer garden to find easy targets. They could come often to watch the daily patterns of women and children fishing or walking and jogging past them by simply having drinks outside at the beer garden.

The woods of Scout Lake allows for someone to easily hide or follow a person or a child into the woods along the paths. It would be simple for a stalker to catch a person off guard pull them off the path to attack or assault them, in the cover of the woods and out of view of others. It would be difficult to hear and respond to a call for help within the woods. Walking the lake trail and wooded paths would no longer be safe.

Also, drinkers will be curious and follow the paths through the woods which will take them into neighborhoods next to backyards where kids would be playing.

Would you feel comfortable having your wife, daughter or teenager walk alone on the wooded paths in Scout Lake if there was a beer garden on the path? What parent is going to feel safe walking or fishing with their kids within sight of people drinking and partying outside?

Additionally there will be a safety issue with children walking the bridge across Loomis Road. Year round the elementary children at St. Alphonsus and Cantabury schools use the walking bridge to go between their home and school. That bridge exits within view of the beer garden into the parking lot of Scout Lake where people under the influence would be driving.

Patrolling the area effectively would be very challenging, if not impossible. Police would have to patrol the wooded paths around the beer garden on foot many times throughout the day. The paths are hidden and cannot be seen from the road, so law enforcement wouldn't be able to just drive by and do watch patrol from their cars, as they can for other beer gardens.

Taxpayers may have to purchase police call buttons, like those used on college campuses and install them throughout the network of paths for the protection of the citizens. Because one cannot quickly run to safety on the narrow paths in the woods.

Taxpayers should not have to go to such lengths to keep a neighborhood park safe. But if you bring a beer garden into a park like Scout Lake, you will be inviting trouble.

I hope you can see that it would be nearly impossible to keep this area safe, and it would be very costly to try.

3. Noise and litter;

The park is a quiet neighborhood woodland with hidden forested trails. It is small enough that the sounds of the people drinking, eating, partying, with possible music outside in the beer garden will permeate through the entire park. The noise will disrupt the peaceful feeling, and interfere with birds and wildlife that are plentiful in the park.

The area will become littered with bottles, plastic cups, utensils and paper products scattered into the lake and woods by careless people and windy days. It is much more difficult to pick up litter from a wooded area than open green spaces. Clean-up costs and environmental costs to the animal habitat will be very high.

Other suggestions for a beer garden;

I am not opposed to beer gardens in parks, but there are so many reasons why Scout Lake is not an appropriate location for this type of high-traffic use.

If you need the revenue of a beer garden, Whitnall Park or Grant Park would be much more suitable options. The size of these parks is similar to Estabrook where the beer garden would not encroach on families and others who want to use the park. They have large green spaces where families can gather away from the beer garden. Both Whitnall and Grant parks have a clubhouse, and it seems to me, that these areas could easily be transformed into beautiful beer gardens. The view from the beer garden in Whitnall would overlook a much larger lake with high spacious views, and police could easily monitor the area without getting out of their cars.

For more than 60 years, Scout Lake Park has been a hidden gem. It provides a small, but beautiful respite from the hustle and bustle of city life and allows surrounding neighborhoods to easily enjoy a bit of quiet nature. The character of the park would be sadly obliterated by the number of people a beer garden would attract. Please don't turn this small unique park into a single use park for adults where a private enterprise would be benefiting at the expense of the taxpayers.

This is not a trivial matter. I urge you to please give careful consideration to all of my comments and concerns before making a decision on this proposed project.

Thank you for your attention,

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