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Rebirth of Old River

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The University of Dayton and Dayton History will close Old River Park this summer as the University makes capital improvements and develops a park master plan to restore its original character, guide future development and provide for its stewardship.

The 45-acre park opened in 1939 for NCR employees and their families. It closed in 1998, but reopened weekends in the summer of 2009 under the management of Dayton History. The University of Dayton assumed ownership in December 2009 when it bought NCR's former world headquarters and 115 acres of land.

University and Dayton History officials have reviewed maintenance and safety issues at Old River and support closing it in the summer to make repairs and develop a plan for its use for future generations.

"Old River is a treasure," said Daniel J. Curran, president. "We are committed to its rebirth. We want to preserve its natural beauty and create a high-quality recreational and educational venue."

Brady Kress, president and CEO of Dayton History, agrees: "Old River deserves this time to develop some well-thought-out strategies advancing its conservation and revitalization -- a workable plan everyone can be proud of."

Under the direction of the Olmsted brothers, the famous landscape architects who designed New York's Central Park, Old River Park was the vision of Col. Edward Deeds, then president and board chairman of NCR. An oasis in NCR's backyard, it became a model for employee recreational parks. The company shut the park in 1998 in a cost-cutting move.

Today, a 1.5-mile scenic lagoon, miniature golf course, oversized checker boards, playground and two miles of walking paths still populate the park. The University of Dayton will soon begin rebuilding a bridge within the park to improve accessibility on the site.

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