Whitmer Park

Park and Recreation Board...Did You Know?

September 18, 2018
Whitmer Park

• Whitmer with an “H”
  – It is often misspelled or confused with the other Witmer Park in Des Moines…without an “H”
Whitmer Park

- Total Park Area
  - ½ acre

- Site Amenities
  - Playground
    - Installed 1994
    - 4,200 sqft
  - Seating area
  - Park signage
  - Open lawn space
Site and Area History

- Land for park is believed to have been acquired in 1960's

- Fell within the River Hills Urban Renewal Project Area

- MacVicar Freeway – "I-235"

1960's aerial photo

1970's aerial photo
Whitmer Park

- Site was recommended to be renamed after George C. Whitmer in 1974
  - Former Des Moines Mayor
    - 1965-1967
  - Public service and city government career that spanned more than 40 years
George C. Whitmer

- Born 1895 in Clay County
- Attended Des Moines Schools
  - Grammar school on eastside
  - East High School
    - All state honors in football
    - Helped faculty move from old location to new location
- Played football at Grinnell College
George C. Whitmer

• First draftee processed at Camp Dodge, Sept 5th 1917
  – Played football for 88th division

• Overseas for 8 months during the World War I

• Working career with the Iowa Insurance Inspection Bureau
George C. Whitmer

• Public service career started in 1936
  – planning and zoning commission

• 40 years of public service and government work included:
  – Des Moines Water Board (18 years)
  – Polk County Selective Service Board (25 years)
  – Playground and Recreation Commission (8 years)
  – Des Moines City Council (3 separate terms)
  – Des Moines Mayor (1965 – 1967)
George C. Whitmer

• Member of local charitable and civic organizations:
  – Baldwin-Patterson American Legion Post 274
  – Veterans of Foreign Wars 738
  – Home Masonic Lodge 370
  – Scottish Rite
  – Za-Ga-Zig Shrine
George C. Whitmer

• Considered an expert in matters of history on the City’s east side

• George C. Whitmer’s life, work, and public service experience within the Des Moines area spanned over 80 years

• Passed away on April 15th, 1985
  – Buried at Laurel Hill Cemetery
Whitmer Park

• “I firmly believe everybody owes something to his community. Service is the price we pay for the space we occupy”
  – George C. Whitmer

• Quote after he was named winner of The Des Moines Tribune Community Award 1967