

Memorandum Department of Planning & Public Works

To: Planning and Public Works Committee
From: Mike Geisel, Director Planning and Public Works
Date: 1/21/2010
RE: Dampier Site Update



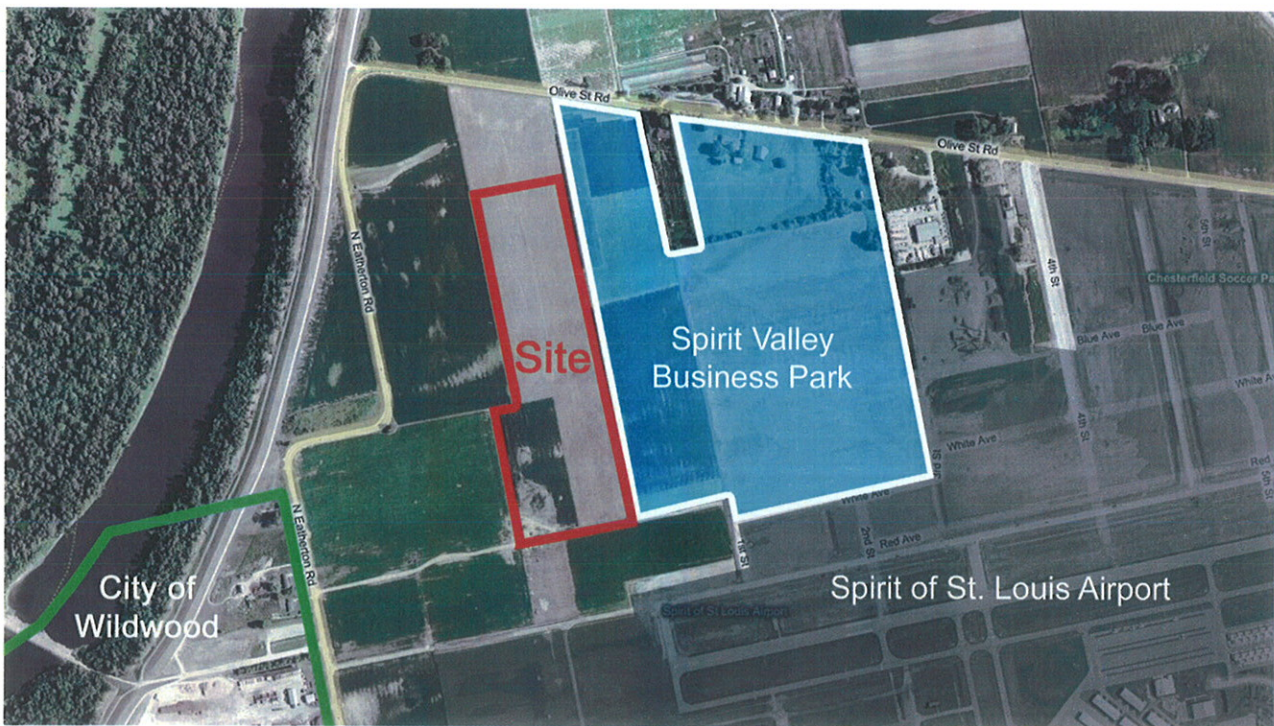
Summary

In 2008, the City of Chesterfield was working in partnership with the Monarch Chesterfield Levee District immediately northwest of the Spirit of St. Louis Airport to construct a stormwater reservoir in preparation for the future stormwater pumping station which is to be constructed in conjunction with 500 year levee improvements. The City had purchased more than 30 acres of ground for this purpose, with the intent of “selling” this land to the Corps at a later date. The Levee District had agreed to initiate excavation of the reservoir and simultaneously to add breadth and height to the levee at the west end of Chesterfield Valley.



In December of 2008, Mr. Stan Dampier retrieved items from the site which appeared to be historically significant. He then contacted the Archaeological Research Center of St. Louis. In January 2009, a preliminary search and survey of the site found multiple exposed cooking pits and additional items. After a contract for a survey and preliminary testing was made with the Monarch-Chesterfield Levee District and a contract was formalized with the Corps of Engineers, testing trenches were dug in February of 2009. Mitigation work on the site started on June 22, 2009. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided funding in the amount of \$150,000 to the Archaeological Research Center of St. Louis to conduct the dig. The site is approximately 1,500 feet long from north to south and at least 500 feet minimum from east to west.

The determination by the Archaeological Research Center of St. Louis is that this area had been a major Native American Mississippian era market center community. Mr. Joe Harl, Vice President of the Archaeological Research Center of St. Louis is the principal investigator for the Dampier Site. It is estimated that the site dates back to A.D. 1100 or 1200 which is the height of the so-called Cahokian period. The people who lived in this period were called the Mississippian culture, a people who thrived during the period spanning A.D. 1050 to 1400 and then mysteriously disappeared. Items such as house structures, storage and cooking pit features, copper pieces, decorative pottery, arrowheads, tool fragments, shell beads and ear spools are some of the items that have been found on the site. The initial search of the site yielded approximately 5,000 artifacts although many of them were just shards of items.



There remains one small area which still must be investigated. It should be noted that as the site is investigated, the artifacts are identified, catalogued, and transported for permanent archival. It should also be noted that under Federal law, when such historical artifacts are found within the limits of a federally funded project, a complete investigation and recovery effort is initiated. Once completed, the site is given clearance and construction can recommence. It is noteworthy, that obviously such historic settlements do not follow modern property lines. Private developments are not required to investigate and/or preserve such historic finds.

Cc: Michael G. Herring, City Administrator
Rob Heggie, City Attorney
Aimee Nassif, Planning and Development Services Director