

Wishing Bench Will Rise From Ashes

You have very likely heard about the tragic burning of our Wishing Bench over the weekend of August 15th, 2021. The fire is still under investigation, but plans for repairs are underway.

As “owner”, ELNA’s Board has approved a plan for helping our Wishing Bench rise from the ashes. ELNA deeply appreciates many generous offers of help and money from the community, including one from the NR Hamm Company’s Community Service Team which recently opened an office around the corner from the Wishing Bench on Pennsylvania Street. The Hamm’s folks are able to help us repair the Bench quickly at its current location in a basic manner -- repair the deck which burned, get a new roof on to replace the burned fiberglass roof, clean some of the soot off the frame and make it accessible. There will be no major changes to the character and context of the Wishing Bench. We will not be making the metal frame look all shiny and new. The fire is now part of the Wishing Bench’s story. Eventually, the Wishing Bench will need to be moved from its current site. The Flint Hills Holdings group, owner of the location, has plans to develop the land in the next 2-5 years. Since we are having an extensive review / re-do of our Neighborhood Plan next year, we will have a discussion of public art as part of the Plan, and can decide on good locations for a new home within that larger context, after extensive community engagement. In the meantime, the Wishing Bench will be able to continue its role as a canvas for grassroots community on a safe and accessible platform. The best news is, all signs point to the Wishing Bench repair work being done before our Block Party on September 25th! A rededication / celebration for our Bench, beginning at 4pm at the Bench, is in the works!