

The property on which Mary and Marvin Leonard Park is located was originally donated to Fort Worth by the Leonards as the site for a school that was never built. Throughout the '50s, '60s and '70s the property was used as an unofficial neighborhood park. The only improvements in the park were the baseball backstop that still stands in its original location in the NE corner, plus a wonderful slide, swing set, and a kid-powered merry-go-round on top of the hill under one old withered-looking hackberry tree that managed to hang in there until it finally died in 2008 and was cut down.

In1982 it became apparent that a school would never be built on the location and the city returned (or sold) the property back to the Leonards. Long story made short: the RNA successfully convinced the city to save the park and purchase the property back from the Leonards. Although the Leonards planned to develop the property and build more that 20 homes on it, they were good enough to sell it back to the city for a fraction of its worth—80-some thousand dollars. Now Ridgmar *really* had a park.



Old Playground circa 1975



The Park layout today

The Park Department allowed the newly formed RNA Park Board to participate in the design of the park. After several General Membership Meetings to gain neighborhood consensus, it was decided that the park would be named Marvin Leonard Park and remain an open, bucolic area, primarily intended for walk-in use of neighborhood residents, with minimal improvements limited to a surrounding half-mile walk and playground area. The city raised funds through a bond to cover the purchase of the property and develop the park. Fun as the '50s era swing, slide and merry-go-round were, they didn't meet modern OSHA standards and everything except 2/3rds of the original swing set were removed in favor of the "safer" equipment installed in what we now call "the old playground area" near the location of the original equipment (and lone hackberry).

Unfortunately, the city only had enough funds to develop half of the park. Besides the playground, only the short south loop of the walk and the trees and irrigation system on the south half were installed at that time. The longer north loop was not installed until several years later—1984, I think—when sufficient funds became available. The trees and irrigation system in the north were not installed until the mid-Nineties, at which point the Park was re-dedicated to Mary and Marvin Leonard Park. At a cost well more than $50,000, the city constructed the fabulous new playground a few years ago.



New playground

The Fort Worth Park Department has been very responsive to resolving park-related issues such as replacing dead trees, repairing major breaks in the irrigation system, graffiti removal, and maintaining the playground equipment.

Since the development of the park in 1982, the Park Board has consisted of a group of residents that live across from, or near the park. This group of dedicated volunteers is involved with all park-related issues, operates and does all but major maintenance on the tree irrigation system, and often accomplishes quite a bit of park cleanup and refuse removal.

Park-related issues or questions should be referred to admin@ridgmar.net, or contact one of the Park Board Members.

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