



Class of 2006 Senior Class Gift
Proposal for MLK Way
Submitted By: Commission on Racial/Ethnic Diversity (CORED)
September 7, 2005

Background

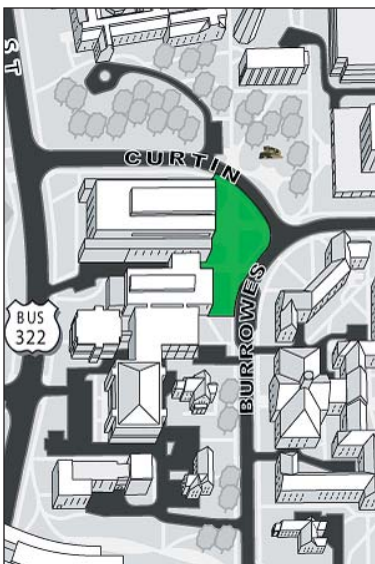
On January 21, 1965, just one month after his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize and two months before his historic march with 25,000 supporters to Montgomery Alabama to draw attention to the dramatic need for legislation to protect the civil rights of African Americans in the south, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. visited The Pennsylvania State University to deliver a powerful speech about the progress and remaining challenges of the civil rights movement.

The speech King delivered to 8,000 members of Penn State and surrounding community on January 21, 1965 recognized how far our nation had come in the struggle to eradicate slavery and segregation. But it also recognized how much more America and its citizens would be required to do to truly abolish segregation and discrimination against African Americans. Excerpts from Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech "The Future of Integration" at the University Park campus read "I know that there are still some difficult days ahead, that there is still much work to be done, and I know that some of us so often have to stand amid the surging movement of life's restless sea, constantly face chilly winds of adversity, but in spite of this I still believe that we will solve this problem. Oh, every now and then it becomes difficult to believe it, but I will never lose that faith."

In the fall of 2004, a number of University Park students asked Penn State administrators to commemorate the life and legacy of Dr. King by making Martin Luther King Day a University holiday. By closing the University, students would have a free day to spend with family and participate in community service projects in keeping with Dr. King's legacy. That request was approved by the administration and starting on January 16, 2006, Penn State will recognize the day as a University holiday.

Proposal

In addition to the closure of the University, Penn State President Graham Spanier asked the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity (CORED) to research additional ways the University might commemorate Dr. King's visit to Penn State. CORED, an advisory body to the Penn State President on matters related to racial and ethnic diversity, is composed of students, staff, and faculty members. During the spring semester, CORED gathered feedback from students across the University—collecting dozens of ideas for how Penn State might create a lasting monument to recognize Dr. King's legacy and his historic visit to Penn State.



While there were many ideas submitted by the Penn State community, we outline here the concept that drew the most support—a reflective garden that would be located outside of Recreation Hall, where King spoke to the Penn State campus and surrounding community forty years ago. Today, we request that you give thoughtful consideration to adding MLK Way to the ballot for your Class of 2006 Senior Class Gift. The approximate cost: \$100,000. Because 2006 marks the first year that Penn State will celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day by cancelling classes, it would be fitting for the Senior Class of 2006 to commemorate this historic event by selecting this class gift—a contemplative space that celebrates the past and the future and offers current and future Penn Staters year-round enjoyment.

The proposed reflective garden, surrounded by trees and flowers, would include benches for students to gather. Words from Dr. King's speech would be incorporated into the design as an inset to the walking area. The Office of Physical Plant (OPP) is willing to incorporate the sitting/reflecting area into their long term plans for renovation of the outside space surrounding Recreation Hall and confirmed

that the site fits into the University Master Plan for expanding green areas across the University landscape.



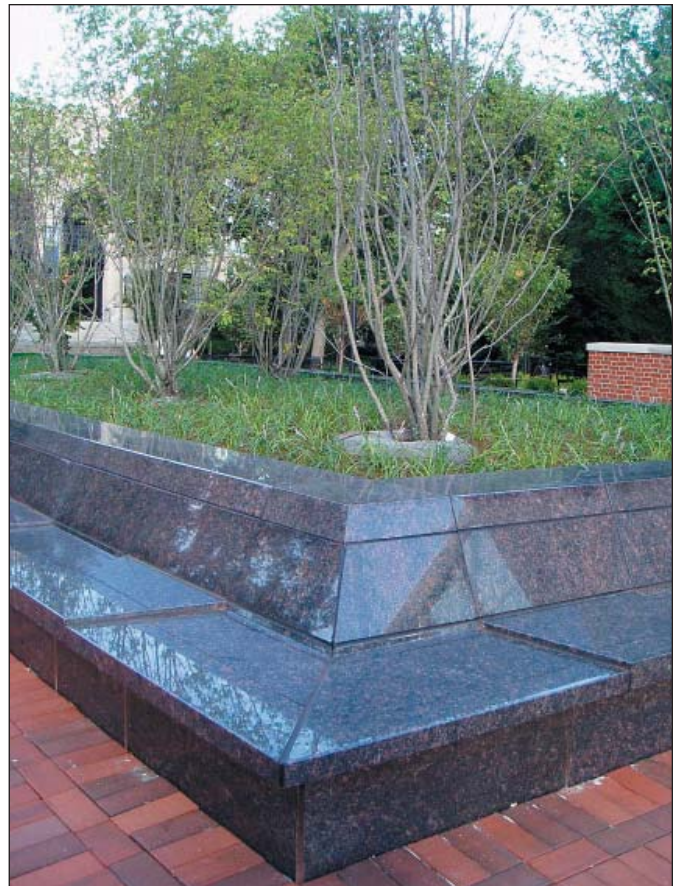
Proposed location, in front of Recreation Hall.



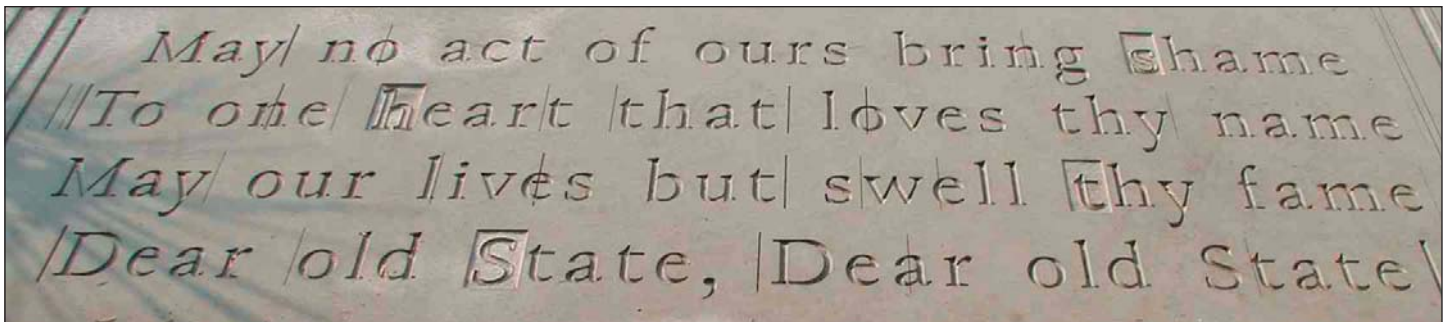
Sample garden.



Sample sitting area.



Sample sitting area.



Sample stone inset.