



Scoville Park Community Meeting #2

Location: Oak Park Public Library – Veteran’s Room

Date: April 21, 2010

Time: 7pm

Minutes of Meeting

Mr. Gary Balling, Executive Director of the Park District, made the introductions to the meeting.

Gary Balling welcomed the attendees and introduced Park District Commissioners, members of the Citizen Committee and staff that were present. He provided a brief summary of the park planning process thus far noting that Scoville Park is the seventeenth of eighteen parks to go through the process. There have been six focus groups held already regarding park security, buildings & grounds, historic preservation, events & programs as well as with members from a local business association and Library staff where the design team received initial input on the current conditions of the park and future needs. Mr. Balling then confirmed the schedule for the process as follows:

Community Meeting #3 Tuesday, May 11th

A 4th meeting would be held if necessary.

There will be a second, follow-up questionnaire posted on the Park District website starting on April 22 at 5PM through May 5.

Website: <http://www.oakparkparks.com/>

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\$725,000 has been set aside for the first phase of the project but there may be other phases of work as this process is to produce a long term plan and coordinated vision for the park.

He then introduced the design team and handed the meeting over to John Mac Manus of Altamanu, Inc. Mr. Mac Manus presented a PowerPoint presentation and then requested comments.



The PowerPoint presentation can be viewed on line at Website: <http://www.oakparkparks.com>

Summary of the Presentation

Mr. Mac Manus began with a summary of what would be covered in his presentation. He would provide a summary of the first questionnaire results, explain the emerging items of consensus, present several design schemes for individual pieces of the park, and then open the floor to public comment.

The results of the first questionnaire are posted online at:

http://www.oakparkparks.com/NewsandInformation/FuturePlans/futureplans_scovillepark.htm

The results from the questionnaire provided several notes of interest. Firstly, the results illustrated that there are several proposed ideas that are almost equally divided for and against. Some of these ideas include the removal of one tennis court, the redesign of the existing formal flower beds, the installation of security cameras, the treatment of the plaza at Oak Park Ave. and Lake St., a permanent versus temporary stage, and the treatment of the library plaza.

Mr. Mac Manus then introduced some ideas that were mostly being agreed upon; the desire for a plaza or seating space adjacent to the monument, an expansion of the meadow to the north, a better connection between the library and the park, a better sense of security at the southwest corner, an improved plaza at Oak Park Ave. & Lake St., and a more usable space at the northeast corner.

Mr. Mac Manus provided brief summaries of Scoville Park's many roles within the community, its geologic history and history prior to development, the surrounding urban context and its relationship to the park. He then addressed the history of the park and its relation to noted landscape architect Jens Jensen.

Mr. Mac Manus presented an overlay of the 1913 Jensen plan superimposed over an aerial of the park today and discussed some of Jensen's design. Two of the several significant changes include the redesign of his paths and the addition of the monument to the park.

Mr. Mac Manus then addressed several pieces of the park in greater detail. He showed current context through photographs and diagrams and explained the issues in each before presenting alternate design solutions. Meeting attendees were then asked to comment. Mr. Mac Manus started by addressing the north edge of the park.

North Edge of Park Along Ontario St.

The lack of a walk along Ontario St. has resulted in a desire line/trench along the north edge of the park. Attendees of previous meetings and the results from the first questionnaire indicated that most were in favor of installing a new walk there.

Public Comment

Will the grades there present an issue?

Mark (of Altamanu) has walked it and thinks a walk is possible.



Edge of Park Along Grove Ave. & Northwest Corner of Ontario St.

In its current condition, the western edge of the park has several desire lines off of the existing concrete walks. The tot lot in the northwest corner is exposed to the street on the north and west boundaries. Mr. Mac Manus proposed an ornamental fence that would run on the western and northwestern edges of the park along Grove Ave. and Ontario St. After showing a perspective of what the fence could look like, Mr. Mac Manus explained that it would protect the park and tot lot, better define the street from public pedestrian space, and eliminate the desire lines.

Public Comment

As a user of the park I am one of the people that walk those desire lines. Why don't we accommodate those desire lines with paths?

If we paved all of the desire lines there would be concrete paths everywhere in the park. It is necessary to find a balance between paved paths and green space.

You can either end up with three paths or one path and a fence.

At the northeast corner there are perimeter plantings that deter people from walking desire lines so shouldn't that work here as well?

If you look closely there's also quite a bit of grade at the northeast corner that prevents users from cutting in. From my experience working with the park district kids will run through plantings alone.

So would the fence go all the way to the northwest corner?

Yes, and it would have an entry close to where the current one is. That entry is in the same location as it originally was in the Jensen plan.

So how are you going to direct all of the traffic at that corner through one entry? How is that going to work on Day of Our Village?

So that becomes the only entry on the west side of the park? There should be more entries.

The fence would protect the playground.

Would there be any entry to the corner from Ontario?

There could be.

Maybe the entry could be just west of the tennis court

There was a fence around the park in the '40s. A fence could add dignity to the park and I think it would be worth getting rid of a few desire lines.

The historic plan had no corner entries.

Library Plaza & Southwest Corner of Park

In previous meetings and focus groups the southwest corner of the park and the library were both regularly identified as problem areas. It was asked that any redesign reconsider the connection from the library into the park, improve security and safety in the southwest corner (also called the outdoor reading room or hangout), and address the issue of problematic user groups. Mr. Mac Manus explained his opinion on why the hang out should be removed and offered alternative design solutions to the area. In his first scheme the existing path that leads to the library plaza is removed and replaced with a larger plaza space that opens up more to the park. The second scheme, more minimal, reworks the existing path so it comes closer to the library entry while the hangout and path to Lake St. are removed. When



Mr. Mac Manus asked if anyone would object to removing the existing entry to the hang out from Lake St. no attendees objected.

Public Comment

The current path to the library plaza is the connection for food vendors on Day of Our Village. The enlarged plaza would allow for a better booth layout.

Plaza at the Monument

Mr. Mac Manus explained the reasoning behind an emerging consensus on the addition of a plaza adjacent to the memorial. Currently there is no direct access to the plaza and there is a lack of sufficient seating by the monument. Mr. Mac Manus illustrated pedestrian flow through the park and explained that a plaza could help consolidate pathways and provide seating. This would increase green space, activate the plaza, and bring back the sensuous feel of Jensen's original path layout. Mr. Mac Manus provided a brief history of Jensen's trademark council ring noting that it could be interpreted here in the form of seating. The formal flower beds could be replaced with swathes of grasses, groundcovers, and flowering bulbs that surround the plaza. Mr. Mac Manus proceeded to show four alternate schemes for the plaza and asked for comment.

Public Comment

The current layout of the paths is more French, rational, and symmetrical while Jensen's style was more English and asymmetrical. Would you have any problem trying to blend the two?

The park gets a lot of usage. Would those spaces be large enough to accommodate a lot of people and not obstruct sight lines?

I think you could get a lot of people into these spaces.

All of the benches in your schemes are facing east/west. I would like to see more that are facing north/south. I like to sit facing the meadow and watch the activities like kids playing Frisbee and so on.

I agree, there would also be some seating off the paths next to the plaza that look north/south. The enlarged meadow could be used as additional seating as well.

I like the scheme that is slightly less formal.

Maybe there should be more entries into the plaza.

I like that the paths bring people through and up to the monument.

Looking at these in plan view, because I'm having a difficult time telling, how much concrete would be added?

It can look like a lot in plan but in reality, if you stand in the space, the monument is so big it really isn't as large you think. And the plaza doesn't have to be all concrete. There's thought to using a softer material, like chipped granite, which would impede the skateboarders from using the area, or using permeable pavers.

There's an opportunity to create something nice opposite the monument on the south edge of the park. Facing north you would look at the monument and history and facing the opposite way you could be looking at something more contemporary.

If you're bringing chess and tables into the plaza and also drawing people through it, couldn't it get tight?

Yes, it will be very important to find a balance in the space that works.



I like the scheme with the oval without the chess tables. I could see the chess tables in the park instead.

Whatever materials you decide to use, they should already be a part of the Park District portfolio. A new material would make more work.

I like the first two schemes (ovals) but not the second two (circle and rectilinear).

I don't think it needs to be a perfect oval if the rest of the park is curved lines.

It is a symmetrical monument though and a perfect shape would make it easier to construct curved benches, seat walls, etc.

There needs to be access to all sides of the monument because of the plaques.

Why isn't the monument in the middle of the oval?

The oval would have to be huge in order to be pushed back and still provide a means of consolidating the paths.

The north side of the monument is underutilized.

Designing what is green space versus concrete is a balancing act.

What is the limitation in size for the plaza around the monument?

We want it to work so it functions as a space and still serves the flow of pedestrian movement.

I think you need to be careful so that you don't get too close to that large tree.

I think the circle is the best way to go. It is more in line with what Jensen would have designed.

Generally with memorial services attendees stand to the left, right, and front of the monument.

I think the circular plaza would work better for memorial services because it could fit more seating.

Couldn't the layout of the ceremony be changed to accommodate the shape that is designed?

The seating doesn't have to be rectilinear.

The paths pushed north would impact the locations of booths on Day of Our Village.

Let us see (Altamanu) if we can get the tent or booth sizes and overlay them onto the plan.

I think the third scheme (circular) is the least efficient because it includes more paths around the plaza. That adds more concrete and I think the first two avoid that.

Altamanu will take a closer look at the circular scheme and see if we can integrate more of those paths into the plaza.

I think the monument is the most prominent feature in the park and circle really puts it in the middle.

Plaza at the Corner of Oak Park Ave. & Lake St.

Another point of emerging consensus is the thought of upgrading or redesigning the existing plaza at Oak Park Ave. & Lake St. Mr. Mac Manus presented a brief overview of the current condition commenting on the Horse Fountain and unwelcoming layout and entry into the park. Mr. Mac Manus would like the plaza to open up more to the park and provide more seating and a flower display. He proceeded to show five schemes and then asked for comment.

Public Comment

If the fountain stays there I think it could become the architectural corner. The corner of the park near the library could become the literary corner.



I appreciate the idea but that corner is the library's property – we could certainly make a proposal though.

You are totally exposed to nature if you are a transit user and it begins to rain. The plaza serves a lot of bus riders. I think you should provide a little shelter.

What about a bus shelter?

Anytime we put a roof in the park it can become a hang out spot and a concern.

I want to be exposed to nature – it is a park after all. As long as it isn't a lightning storm, trees can provide decent cover.

This corner is hardly nature.

I think it is a valid point to consider public transportation.

This is really two bus stops because there's the line that goes west and the line that goes south. It's an important design consideration.

Path Along Southern Edge of Meadow

Mr. Mac Manus introduced the concept of adding a path along the southern edge of the meadow. The path would provide a more direct and accessible route to the library from the corner. In addition, the path would serve as an alternative to walking on Lake St. (Several attendees of previous meetings had commented on their dislike of walking on Lake St. by the park) The path would also provide a new walking experience in the park and complete a loop around the meadow.

Public Comment

That space is often used by kids that play Frisbee so I think there has to be a space consideration.

The proposed path would skirt the existing plantings so as to not cut far into the green space.

I like the idea of the path but it should not curve out into the meadow. It can be more straight or utilitarian.

I really like the idea.

North Side of Scoville Park

Mr. Mac Manus then addressed the north side of the park. The playground needs to be updated and will most likely need to expand in order to accommodate for the modern play pieces' larger fall zones. The comfort station will eventually be updated and upgraded. The tennis courts will also need to be updated and the northeastern corner of the park, which came up often on the questionnaire as underutilized, should be activated. Mr. Mac Manus explained that there is the possibility of removing one court in order to do more with the northeast corner and continued on to present 4 different schemes.

Public Comment

I think the question of removing any tennis courts needs to consider the entire village. My impression is that these courts are often used and there's a scarcity of courts in the village.

I agree.

People can picnic in the northeast corner and watch tennis.

What are the path dimensions in the path?

The current paths are 5' wide and any new ones would be 6' wide.



What if the tennis courts were flipped?

Tennis courts have to be oriented north/south.

Are the current courts sized correctly?

The existing courts are a little tight. If replaced, the footprint would have to get a little bigger.

If you added benches to the northeast corner, wouldn't that present a new hang out and simply relocate the problem? More benches mean more hangouts.

The northeast corner is more prominent and less hidden than the southwestern corner.

Is there a demand for a second meadow in the northeast corner? I just hope it would be used otherwise you've lost a tennis court for nothing.

What if the courts shifted all the way to the northeast corner?

The numerous existing trees are an issue.

What if you showed a scheme with the western court removed instead of the eastern court? At Longfellow it went from three courts to two and resulted in a nice space where families could sit and picnic. I think it could be a nice space here.

It could be a nice picnic space if the western court was removed.

The playground and the tennis courts are both natural attractions so it makes sense.

Altamanu will show a scheme with the western court removed for the next meeting.

There are only 9 usable lit courts in Oak Park. Remove one and that's 11%. We've seen a 20% increase in tennis play recently.

Stage

The concept of creating a permanent stage versus using a temporary one had been brought up often in prior meetings. The temporary stage, as it is now, has issues of liability, cost in labor, it can be unsafe, and it needs to be stored somewhere when not in use. One suggestion was to create a permanent stage in the southwest corner. Mr. Mac Manus presented a conceptual scheme of the idea but noted it too would have issues. There are many existing trees towards that corner that would impede views, the direction of sound would travel across the park towards apartments, and the slope of the hill would make sitting while looking cross-slope awkward. Mr. Mac Manus presented another concept in which the stage remains in its current location but is raised with earth and graded up to.

Public Comment

The second idea is unobtrusive.

I like it as long as it isn't obtrusive to the meadow area.

The current stage is probably 3'-4' off the ground. How high would this stage be?

The stage would be graded 2'-3' up.

The surface could be paved stone.

I like it – it could also act as a plaza.

Misc. Comments

I have not yet heard this suggested. This village is internationally recognized and this park is also a place for international visitors. The peace plaza could be deemed an international peace plaza. Perhaps it could include a mosaic of the seven continents or of world flags. This is our village



green but it could also be a shared, international green as well. This is the best opportunity to think about international visitors and we need to think big.

There should be a water feature in the southwest corner. Water is a universal feature of great parks and we should add a feature here if we can get past the lawyers.

With the time nearing 9 PM Mr. Balling made some closing remarks and noted that the monument would most likely be rededicated on Veterans Day instead of Memorial Day. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, May 11th and additional information will be available on the Park District website. Mr. Balling thanked the attendees for coming and encouraged them to tell others about the next meeting.