



## Scoville Park Community Meeting #3

Location: Oak Park Public Library – Veteran’s Room

Date: May 11, 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 and noted that Scoville Park is the seventeenth of eighteen parks to go through the process. Thus far, there have been six focus groups held where the design team received input on the current conditions of the park and neighborhood from Village and Park District Staff and officials. Mr. Balling added that the first questionnaire generated 70 responses and the second questionnaire generated 99 responses. Mr. Balling polled the audience, asking if this was anyone’s first time participating in a community meeting and only a few people responded that it was. Mr. Balling noted that depending on how consensus shapes up in this 3<sup>rd</sup> community meeting, a 4<sup>th</sup> community meeting may or may not be held on Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup> at 7PM. (It was decided later during the meeting that a 4<sup>th</sup> community meeting would be necessary.)

Mr. Balling 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 second questionnaire results, explain the emerging items of consensus, review prior and new design schemes for the park, and then open the floor to public comment.

The results of the first and second questionnaires are posted online at:

[http://www.oakparkparks.com/NewsandInformation/FuturePlans/futureplans\\_scovillepark.htm](http://www.oakparkparks.com/NewsandInformation/FuturePlans/futureplans_scovillepark.htm)

The results from the second questionnaire illustrated several points of emerging consensus. Some of these points of agreement include; the proposed fence along Grove Ave., the corner entry at Lake St. & Oak Park Ave., a path along the south edge of the meadow, and agreement that the ‘hangout’ should be removed while the existing library plaza keep the same approximate area.



The second questionnaire also revealed some points on which consensus has yet to be formed. Some of the items yet to be agreed on include; three possible schemes for the proposed peace plaza, two schemes for the northeast corner of the park and the idea of removing a tennis court to allow more park space.

Other comments that surfaced through the questionnaire included; support for the idea of removing the western tennis court in order to enlarge the tot lot, the need for a safer pedestrian crossing at Oak Park Ave. at the northeast corner of the park, and the desire to design the park for everyday use rather than single day events like Day in the Village.

Mr. Mac Manus provided a summary of items that had consensus along with a summary of items still lacking consensus and indicated that in general the respondents of the questionnaire wanted the park to be more open and inviting while discouraging loitering in problem areas.

#### Southwest Corner & Hangout

Continuing further into his presentation, Mr. Mac Manus discussed the current issues at the southwest corner of the park including the library plaza and the 'hangout'. There is more seating in and around the 'hangout' than anywhere else in the park and most of the views in and out of the space are blocked, creating a security problem. Mr. Mac Manus showed an image of the southwest corner in its existing condition, followed by an image of what it could look like with the proposed design. The proposed scheme would remove the existing 'hangout' and create a more open, inviting entry into the park.

#### Public Comment

This area used to be called the outdoor reading room, it sounded much better.

Where would the Kettlestring Monument be relocated to?

- Mr. Mac Manus responded that a committee should be formed with Redd Griffin and others that will address where sculptures, plaques, and other historical signage can fit into the template of the park.

I think the proposed idea is great because it brings more light into that area. Currently it's very dark and this makes it more open and inviting.

The entry seems very wide – is that in order to move all of the stage equipment?

- Mr. Mac Manus responded that this wasn't the intention and that the entry could be shrunk in scale.

That is a good point – if the current stage entry is changed this could become another means to move equipment in and out of the park.

#### Library Plaza

Mr. Mac Manus then discussed the existing plaza outside the library. The ownership of Grove Ave. was to be split in half between the library and the Park District, but there are heating coils underneath the concrete walk almost up to the seat wall that may cause problems with reconstructing this area. The edge of the existing plaza steps in and out like the building façade. The current path that comes into the plaza kind of leads to nowhere – it doesn't take you to the library entrance. Mr. Mac Manus presented a set of images showing a proposed scheme that straightens the edge of the plaza and provides a direct



link to the library door. The edge would include a small ornamental rail that would not be comfortable to sit on and would prevent pedestrians from trampling the groundcover planted there. Lights would also be added (not selected yet) and over time, benches could be added as well if so desired. Bike racks could fit underneath the library overhang and interpretive signage could be incorporated too.

#### Public Comment

The reason they had the stepped edge into the park was to help ease people into the park and provide a space to congregate. The straight edge seems a little harsh to me.

- Mr. Mac Manus responded that he thinks people have lived with this design and experienced how it works. The design lends itself to many of the problems related to the area and that this is a problem outside all libraries in dense, urban contexts.

You could design benches that are comfortable to sit on but uncomfortable to rest on, correct?

- Yes, the benches include an arm in the middle that aids in a disabled persons being able to slide onto the bench and it makes it very uncomfortable to lie down on.

I think the scheme is a good idea. Now, a handful of skateboarders show up and sooner than later it's a whole lot. Other people using the park in the area pack up and leave within 20 minutes or so because of the noise and skateboards shooting in all directions.

- Mr. Mac Manus responded that the concept is to put the majority of seating in the center of the park versus at the edges. The edges, especially in this zone, border commercial, civic, but mainly residential and that creates a local edge when the park is really regional.

I hope that someday, and I'm not suggesting now, that the concrete is replaced with something nicer like brick.

You've moved the bike racks in your scheme but they would also work underneath the library overhang.

You could put pots along the plaza edge to make it nicer.

So the proposed fence you have been talking about would be here?

- No, this would be a low ornamental rail and groundcover. The proposed fence would run along the boundary of Grove Ave. farther north.

I like the design but if you're using cast aluminum for the rail the aluminum might very well end up getting recycled.

- Yes, we could look into using steel instead.

A groundcover wouldn't survive there. It would get trampled.

- Mr Mac Manus responds that he's discussed using ivy or boxwoods which would work there. There could be desire lines which would have to be taken care of. The desire line there now goes from the library entry to the sidewalk in the park around the existing seatwall.

Would the proposed path from the plaza into the park be the same width as the one there now?

- Mr. Mac Manus responds that we were thinking it would actually be wider, maybe 8' or 10'. The original thought was to incorporate a small plaza there but the consensus seemed to be to keep the plaza the same area as it is now.

If the idea is to create a subcommittee for historic figures, events, places, etc. I feel that other parks could benefit from the same thing. They could also provide a means of interpretive signage that could be constant throughout the parks.



There is an existing tree that blocks the lettering “Oak Park Public Library” on the library.

- Mr. Mac Manus indicated that this is outside the park’s scope, but that we could make that suggestion to the library.

#### Entry at Oak Park Ave. & Lake St.

Mr. Mac Manus presented the fourth scheme for the entry at Oak Park and Lake from the prior community meeting as the scheme that was most popular. The scheme addresses better pedestrian flow, provides ample seating in sun and shade, includes a flower display, provides better views into the park, and removes some clutter. If it remains, the fountain may no longer be accessible as a drinking fountain but in another option it could also move to its historic location on Lake St. The raised oval planter could include seating and could possibly be prefabricated. Mr. Mac Manus presented several conceptual sketches that illustrate what the proposed entry would look like and asked for comment.

#### Public Comment

If the fountain stayed where it is now could it still be a drinking fountain?

Maybe it still could be a drinking fountain from the backside.

If the fountain moved back to its historic location would you still include a drinking fountain at the corner?

- Yes, most likely, since we also know there’s a water source there.

I like either of these schemes.

Seats don’t work well with flowers behind them.

- Yes, Josephine Bellalta (of Altamanu) designs the flower pots downtown and knows the flowers often get squished with people sitting or leaning back on the containers. By deepening the bench or providing a back the hope is that it wouldn’t happen here.

You could have the bench wrap all around the planter.

Why did they move the fountain from its original location?

- Mr. Mac Manus responds that he thinks they moved it for ease of parking. At the same time they moved the planter the village also removed all of the street trees. New street trees will actually be replaced along Lake St. by the village now.

I like having the planting bed with the fountain in it. It makes the entry stand out more. But would raise the fountain or bury the bottom as is?

- Mr. Mac Manus responds that we would raise the ground around it.

How would you access it then?

It was never supposed to be a fountain for people.

Why do you really want to keep it?

It creates a unique entry into the park that is separate from the rest.

I like the scheme with or without the fountain there because this proposed entry opens the view to the monument which is really nice. Moving the fountain back to its original and historical location would be a bonus.

I like the fountain here because a lot of people walk by it on the way to the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio and it creates a stopping point of interest.



I like it there because it's used as a landmark for the cycling club. I don't know why we can't just hardscape around it though. In all of our parks we always try to plant in these areas and it just gets run over and looks terrible.

If the fountain moves would it survive?

- Mr. Mac Manus says he doesn't know and can't say if it would be damaged or not. He hopes not.

Since there is water there now, there could be a drinking fountain installed, yes?

- Yes there definitely could be.

I think bike racks would be nice at that entry too.

Is this the original fountain?

- No, this is a replica produced in 1969 of what was originally a collaboration piece by sculptor Richard Bock and Wright. Some question whether or not Wright actually had anything to do with it though.

Are we allowed to move the fountain with the park's designation on the national registrar of historic places?

- Yes, but if the element that is being changed or moved is listed as a contributing factor in the designation then no federal funds can be allocated towards that. When I worked with the Chicago Park District we updated Grant and Jackson Parks with major upgrades while both parks were registered.

I like the fountain removed from its current location because it opens the view to the Peace Memorial.

At one point the fountain had bubblers but that was then changed for a push button. There was the problem of the water collecting creating a layer of green algae. The fountain as it is today is not handicap accessible and if moved, a new fountain that is handicap accessible could be placed nearby.

If the fountain was relocated to its original location it could become a drinking fountain for bikers riding by.

There are a lot of people that wait for the bus there.

What about adding a bus shelter?

- Mr. Mac Manus responded that we have talked about it but we're afraid that the space will become overcrowded between the seating, the newspaper boxes, trash receptacles, and the possibly remaining fountain and planting bed.

It could be off of the sidewalk farther north along Oak Park Ave. It's a legitimate need considering the amount of people that use public transportation at the corner.

The bus shelter may be better situated on Lake St.

Is that something the Park District or village is responsible for?

I think they're paid for by the RTA.

Yes but those shelters are paid for with the advertising that comes with them. That may not be something we want at this corner or in the park.

I would be concerned with something like a bus shelter because it would impede views into the park.

If the bus shelter was to be put off of the sidewalk, it would fall under Park District property.

Typically those bus shelters require an 8'x10' minimum space and there isn't enough room in



the right of way. If it was on the Park District property it creates an issue of liability if anyone was to get hurt in or around it.

I'm not envisioning an 8'x10' shelter though.

We could always add some form of canopy.

All of the existing bus shelters around Oak Park are terrible. This could be more of a passive shelter.

It could be one bench with a canopy over it.

The shelter or bench couldn't encroach onto the sidewalk because it is already very tight for wheelchairs and strollers.

The transportation committee is already looking into bus shelters so there's the possibility of some synergy.

You could create something circular with more of a Victorian garden feel that has a canopy within the plaza.

I'd propose adding flowers to the plaza since they could be irrigated with the existing water source. I don't want to lose the showcase of color the annuals bring into the park.

When asked if the design team should continue to explore some sort of bus shelter about half of the audience responded yes.

When asked if there was a consensus on the overall design of the southwest corner the majority of the audience agreed.

About half of the audience favored the idea of relocating the horse fountain from its present location to its historic location along Lake St. when asked.

#### Proposed Plaza at Peace Memorial

When a significant event occurs, residents often assemble in front of the Peace Memorial. It is a central feature of the park, however its current layout provides no places to sit and it's almost difficult to get to. At the last meeting we presented four conceptual schemes in which we brought the paths through the space and added more seat walls. Each concept also included flower beds around the perimeter of the plaza to replace the ones there today. There are still 3 schemes in the running. The first scheme incorporates a larger oval, the second scheme incorporates more of an egg shape, and the third incorporates a circle. The circle is more reminiscent of Jensen's council ring and Frank Lloyd Wright often used the circle.

#### Public Comment

The chess tables could be added to any of the plazas? And would they be permanent?

- Mr. Mac Manus responded that they could be included in any of the schemes and there are several different types of chess tables available.

I think it makes sense to have the chess tables but I think it makes more sense to utilize some of the wasted space in the park instead. They could go in the grass too.

People also use chess tables for checkers and to sit at for lunch too.

Have you considered putting the chess tables behind the monument?

The plaza should be a space for talking and walking.

Why wouldn't the chess tables go by the library plaza? I don't like them here.



- Mr. Mac Manus responded that there have been previous issues with tables in front of the library. The café used to put tables and chairs outside which was wonderful but the tables started to be overused by the homeless and so the café stopped putting them out.

I like the circular plaza.

I like the circle plaza too.

Why are the paths so busy in the circular scheme?

- Mr. Mac Manus responded that the paths in that scheme are more similar to the paths that exist there today. We could try to bring those paths into the space instead.

Because there are people honored on the back of the memorial as well I like the circle because it is centered.

But the living people who would be using the space would be standing in front of the monument.

I prefer schemes 1 and 2 because they bring the paths through the ovals across the park.

I like the oval because it affords more seating.

I think the oval also uses less hardscape.

The oval seems appropriate for gatherings with a speaker. If the plaza is a circle how is the speaker going to address the entire audience unless he stands on top the monument?

I could live with all three designs but I prefer the circle. If we design for an event with a speaker isn't that the same as designing the park for a Day in Our Village?

In 1984 people were afraid to come up the monument because of the type of park users that would hang around there. That changed when we added the flower beds and benches and people took that part of the park back. That's something to consider.

Don't let skateboarders go up there.

I think it would be helpful for the next meeting to include more views of what the plazas would look like without more bird's eye views like you did for the plaza at Oak Park Ave. and Lake St. It's hard to envision what each of these would really look like.

It would also be nice to see the circular scheme with the paths incorporated into it.

It's important to keep in mind that there is a huge existing tree that really limits the shape.

One of the reasons you got into designing the plaza into an oval shape was because it allowed people to transverse the park on the diagonals. Keeping the circle it's harder to do so and the circle scheme looks like a road map now.

I like the path going from the plaza to library better in scheme 3.

- Yes, we liked that as well. It may mean we have to include some root pruning but it certainly seems possible.

With a raise of hands 4 attendees were in favor of scheme 1, 6 attendees were in favor of scheme 2, and 8 attendees were in favor of scheme 3.

### Tennis Courts

Mr. Balling provided an overview of the village-wide tennis facilities and indicated where the courts are located and whether or not they remain lit in the evening. Mr. Balling then introduced Larry Christmas who had conducted some counts at the Scoville and Taylor Park tennis courts with the help of other



volunteers. Mr. Christmas explained the method conducted; for seven days he and volunteers counted the players and amount of courts in use four times a day. He then prefaced his findings by noting that this is not high season for tennis players and that tennis is a sport whose popularity can ebb and flow over time, so for the sake of a 20-year master plan the findings may not be the best foundation to make a decision on. Weather also played a factor over the course of the week's study. The study revealed that very few people played in the early morning, play was more popular at Taylor in the late evenings because of training sessions, and that the early evenings had almost identical numbers in both parks. Over the week all three courts were only seen used simultaneously twice.

Mr. Mac Manus summed up some discussion on the tennis courts from previous meetings. The existing courts are in poor condition and need to be upgraded. The courts and fence block views in the park and impede linkages of space on the north side of the park. There is a possibility to remove one court in order to create a better space outside of tennis. Mr. Mac Manus presented three schemes; the first with all three courts remaining, the second with the western court removed and an expanded play area with new roll hills, and the third with the eastern court removed for what would become a meadow-like space in the northeast corner. In all cases there would be a path along Ontario and a fence in the northwest corner by the tot lot.

#### Public Comment

I'm not a tennis player but speaking for friends I know that these are the most convenient in town so I think all three should remain.

I play tennis but I also have kids so I like scheme 2. The playground is used year round when the tennis courts aren't even being used now.

The path on Grove Ave. needs to become wider. It's unsafe with the cars overhanging the walk and with kids darting in between parked cars.

The third scheme could allow for people to play Frisbee and activate that corner.

During the summer you have to wait to get a tennis court so I'd prefer to keep all three but otherwise the tot lot should be enlarged.

The people who would want a meadow there could go to Austin Gardens.

I agree, if we had to lose a court I think it should be to enlarge the playground.

I see all three courts being used and the playground never really seems to be overcrowded.

I like the fence because it adds a protected edge around the playground.

What if the tennis courts were to shift to the dead space?

- o John Mac Manus pointed out that there are many existing mature trees there.

How many 2-5 playgrounds are in the area of Scoville Park?

With a raise of hands 5 attendees were in favor of scheme 1, 10 attendees were in favor of scheme 2, and 1 attendee was in favor of scheme 3.

#### For Next Meeting

Mr. Mac Manus said that the following items would be addressed for the next meeting:

The proposed plaza at the Peace Memorial with the circle scheme will be revisited and more perspective views of what it would look like will be prepared.

The Oak Park Ave. and Lake St. plaza will be revisited with the thought of including some type of shelter.



The northwest corner will be revisited.

#### Other Comments

I would like to see more flower beds in front of the proposed plaza. The idea is to use that color in order to bring into the park off of Lake St.

You do not see a Victorian memorial in the middle of a prairie. I think everywhere else in the park the more sustainable idea of planting is okay. The monument lends itself to formal planting beds.

The Village will be putting new street trees along Lake St.

I was at a park over the weekend in Lake Hills and there were kids climbing all over the boulders there.

- Yes, there's some at Barrie Park now that the kids really enjoy climbing on.

The boulders could also relay history with the example of Finlay's stones.

What's been decided along Oak Park Ave. with the gradient there?

- Mr. Mac Manus responded that there are lots of tree roots in that area in addition to the grades so it would be hard to do much.

With the time nearing 9 PM Mr. Balling thanked the attendees for coming and announced that the next meeting would be on Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>.