

Date: December 3, 2009
To: Park District of Oak Park (PDOP)
From: Wolff Landscape Architecture, Inc. (WLA)
Re: Cheney Mansion Site Master Plan

Subject: Community Meeting 2, November 24, 2009, 7pm
Cheney Mansion, 220 N. Euclid Avenue

1. Introduction

Community Meeting #2 was held on Tuesday, November 24, 2009 at 7:00 pm at the Cheney Mansion. Representatives from Wolff Landscape Architecture, Inc., the Park District of Oak Park, the Park District Citizen Committee (PDCC), and approximately thirty members of the community (approximately half of whom had attended Community Meeting #1) were in attendance.

2. Project Overview

Mike Grandy, Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, PDOP, introduced the project. The Site Master Plan process and history to date were reviewed.

3. Project Overview

Ted Wolff of Wolff Landscape Architecture, Inc. (WLA) presented a brief history of the Cheney Mansion, and a review of the items covered at Community Meeting #1.

4. Areas and Options

The Cheney Mansion grounds were organized into twelve (12) separate areas or elements, with from one to five options for improvements in each area. These areas are summarized on the Options Matrix (attached). All of the areas and options were first presented with no public comment to ensure that all areas and options would be covered and that the project overview was clear to the community before engaging in discussion of individual areas and elements. Subsequently areas and elements were reviewed again with discussion and comments from the community. The public's comments by area are as follows:

Area 1 – Entry Identity / Signage

Option 1 blends with the residential character of the neighborhood, where Option 2 and 3, with the sign in the parkway, does not blend with the neighborhood character.

Option 3 gives identity

Can Options 1 and 3 be combined?

Look for a handicapped spot where the driver can exit the vehicle without being in the street

Option 1 is preferred if the sign on the fence is visible, especially if there is a handicapped space (which will probably be open) striped on the street in front of the sign.

Area 2 – Erie, Euclid and Ontario Sidewalks

The bluestone sidewalks are historical, not historic

Possibly do Option 4 if any

Bluestone helps identify the site

If bluestone is too expensive, colored concrete is the next best option

Area 3 – Entry Landscape

Opening the view will help improve the identity

Area 4 – Accessible Route

Option 1A is discreet and leaves the original fabric in place

Option 1A is too close to the veranda, Option 1B's location is nice, but path should be enclosed by the landscape like Option 1A

Dislike Option 2 because of the heavy presence in front of the mansion, and the altering of the terraces.

The 19th Century Women's Club raised their driveway eight inches and were able to avoid a ramp. Is that possible at this site?

Area 5 – Garden Walkway

Option 1 is preferred

Area 6 – South Access Point

Additional entrances on the south would make it harder for staff to monitor the site.

A south entrance could turn the gardens into a cut-through for the high school students.

If there is a gate the location on Ontario is nicer than another gate on Euclid.

Area 7 – Greenhouse

The Cheney Mansion has to have a greenhouse

The cost of restoration vs. replacement needs to be studied further

There needs to be a "Friends of the Cheney Mansion Greenhouse" group established to help raise funds for the replacement / restoration

Regarding the bins, Option 2 is preferred

Area 8 – South Garden Room

The fence should be replaced

Area 9 – Water Feature

There was support for Option 3, possibly with a "Friends" group or a donor

Fill in the water feature and replace with a new water sculpture

Area 10 – Vegetable Garden

The community liked the option presented

Area 11 – Driveway Alley Entry

There were no strong feelings about any of the options for this element

Area 12 – Lighting

Trees could have uplighting, but there should be no “moonlighting”
No flood lights

Other Items

One audience member stated that the PDOP should not own and operate the Cheney Mansion at all, and that the Mansion should be sold. Park District President Mark Gartland, who was present in the audience, referred this question to former PDOP Board member Tim Kelly. Mr. Kelly stated that in the late 1990s the Park Board considered selling the property, but stated that there was no clear majority of the Park Board leaning either way. It was suggested that if the audience member wanted to discuss this further, this should be done at a Park Board meeting, with this issue on the agenda, as the purpose of this Community Meeting was to review options for the Site Master Plan, which assumes that the PDOP will continue to own and operate the Cheney Mansion.

5. Next Steps

Community Meeting #3 will be held on December 15, 2009 at 7:00 pm at the Cheney Mansion. The purpose of this meeting will be to review a single Schematic Design based on comments from the previous meeting.

If necessary Community Meeting #4 will be held on January 12, 2010 at 7:00 pm at the Cheney Mansion, if there are outstanding unresolved issues.

The attendees were encouraged to attend the future community meetings and to invite their friends and neighbors.

Prepared by Ben Baker and Ted Wolff of WLA. The foregoing represents the writers' understanding of the matters discussed and the comments and directions given.