

Date: April 10, 2006
Project: Field Park Master Plan
Public Meeting Date: Wednesday April 5th, 2006
Second Public Meeting Held: Field Center, 7pm

Minutes of meeting

The 2nd public meeting for the Field Park Master Plan was held at the Field Center.

1. Mr. Gary Balling, Executive Director of the Park District of Oak Park, opened the meeting. He spoke about the overall planning process and gave background on the work to date. He introduced the members of Altamanu Inc. who were to facilitate the meeting, Park District Staff, members of the Park District Board and members of the Park District Citizen Committee who were in attendance
2. Mr. John Mac Manus of the Altamanu Inc. facilitated the meeting and Josephine Bellalta of Altamanu Inc. took notes and also took part in the meeting.
3. Mr. Mac Manus reviewed the information and opinions recorded in Park Surveys that had been returned to him. There was consensus on a few items including the following:
 - i. The need for a splash pool, but small in scale and fenced off
 - ii. Do not add new fields, improve what we have
 - iii. The programs held in the Field Center are important but could be held elsewhere in the park/school.
 - iv. There was no consensus on the rehab or demolition of the Center
 - v. Replace the chain link fence with ornamental fence
 - vi. Add proper entry ways to the park
 - vii. Kids will cross Division at mid-block so formalize the entryway and make crossing safer
 - viii. Add a multi use trail/path all the way around the park
 - ix. Enlarge the quiet areas
 - x. Add Educational or Butterfly gardens
 - xi. Dogs off-leash are a problem in the park
 - xii. Owners should use other spaces where there are not so many kids
 - xiii. Police should ticket dog owners who let dogs off leash
4. Then Mr. Mac Manus reviewed the minutes from the last public meeting to ensure that the participants shared a common understanding of what had occurred.
5. Mr. Mac Manus led the meeting through the drawings that were produced at the last public meeting and presented the 4 options (plans) that were developed from those drawings. These options were discussed at length by the attendees.
6. Scheme #1
 - a. The play grounds are too far away from each other. Difficult for a parent who has to watch more than one child.
 - b. Moving diamonds away from each other will spread out intensive use and hopefully improve the condition of the soil

- c. The Baseball Fields take up the entire central area. Couldn't we have one large and one small one?
- d. So that the SW side of the park can still be used for soccer practice
- e. The center of the park is dark at night. Add lighting for safety.
- f. Replacing the parking in the north with a baseball field would be good.
- g. Parking could be moved south
- h. This was not a popular scheme

Scheme #2

- a. The parking was moved to the SE corner. It is reduced in size. Could the parking be expanded in that location so that we have the same numbers?
- b. I am against losing an inch of green space for parking.
- c. The Village policy is to share parking
- d. Concern over loss of large Black Locust tree
- e. Potential to move fields in to save tree.
- f. This is a long term plan; the tree could die in a few years. Why not decide on the plan and then if necessary wait for the tree to die.
- g. No matter what we do we must plant more trees. (Josephine commented that she believes in the plans, three trees would be planted for every one tree removed.)
- h. Why didn't the Park District take the Center out 10 years ago?
- i. Some of us would like to see it stay.
- i. I am tired of taxes going up. Who is going to pay for a new building?
- j. The School District is going for a referendum because they need more funds. They are not going to be able to pay for a new Center.
- k. Distance from parking is an issue. There is no parking at the Center now and the only vehicular access is from the alley. It is not safe.
- l. What about putting parking just south of the Center and getting rid of the other parking lot.
- m. That lot is for teachers and should be near the school.
- n. New parking areas will add to the need for sewers and will change traffic patterns.
- o. Field Center itself is in poor condition. Should we retain it, rehab it, or build a new facility shared with the school?
- p. The Park District staff has done their best to maintain the structure with limited funds and dealing with a building that was originally a stucco building.
- q. Mr. Grandy addressed the reasons he would like to see a new Center attached to the school
These included the following:

Historic Significance

The existing structure, designed by Van Bergen in the 1920's, had historic significance at one time, however, the building has been radically altered over the last 50-60 years and as was noted by the Architectural Historian who attended the last public meeting, "the building has been compromised beyond any historic significance"

Building Changes and Current Condition

Field Center is a "tired" building

The building was originally constructed from wood and stucco. The regular deterioration of the stucco led to it been covered with a brick veneer in the 1960's.

Part of the original stucco can be seen at the SW side of the building where the brick veneer has cracked and fallen away.

There has been uneven settling of the concrete slab floor over the years to the degree that there is a noticeable change in elevation across the length of the main room. Several times in the last 10 years, tiles have split, broken, and needed replacement due to this shifting. Evidence of this may be witnessed by comparing the different colors of tile in the main room.

Several past roof leaks can be noted by discolorations of the ceiling tile. One main roof joist was so badly rotted out that a semi-permanent brace had to be positioned to insure that the roof remained stable.

It was determined that the repair-replacement of the rotted joists would require removal of about a third of the roof in the main room.

Changes to the Park and the Effect on the Building's Location

Originally Woodbine Avenue separated Field Center from Mann School. Field Center was in the middle of the park with easy access to/from Woodbine Ave. When Woodbine Avenue was removed, access to the Center was either from across the park or from the alley. Access to the building is therefore limited and tedious for both program participants and staff. Furthermore, auto traffic associated with the Center that once used Woodbine, now uses the alley. This alley is the narrowest alley in the Village and is not suited for this extra traffic.

Cost of Rehab or Reconstruction

Major problems and changes to the fabric of the original structure could all be corrected, but at what cost? Even if restored the center will still not provide what today's community is telling us they want. A multi-room structure directly attached to Mann School would solve a large number of community needs including additional space for school use during the day, a larger gym with other associated spaces for multiple activities for the community in the afternoon, evening and weekend. A facility attached to the school would bring benefits to the community by allowing economies of scale by using the existing heating plant and access to existing school utilities. My concern is that we could fix the structure but after doing so, would only face the frustration of having a building that does not satisfy community needs.

7. Mr. Mac Manus asked whether it would be better to examine all the schemes for what we all liked and try to find consensus.
8. All agreed on the following:
 - i. multi use trail
 - ii. Do not plan the future of the park around one tree
 - iii. Plant lots of new trees
 - iv. If the parking is moved to the south, use the vacated space as green space
 - v. Use that space for soccer practice
 - vi. When parking is moved to the south have it for teachers only during the school day to reduce problems of drop-off and traffic jams
 - vii. Use a key card or remote for access.
 - viii. Have 3 playgrounds as school kids dominate the main playground

- ix. Leave Center for the moment and keep the two potential sites attached to school for relocating center, one at the north end and one at the south end open.
 - x. Add a small drop off to the Center but remove old concrete pad
 - xi. Expand the quiet zone
 - xii. Add formal entryways and decorative fence
9. The group decided that Scheme # 2 was the most flexible and also expanded green space. Mr. Balling also believed that it could be phased easily.
10. The attendees decided on Scheme #2 with the modifications mentioned in number 8 above. Please note that Scheme #2 has to be altered to reflect the requests made by the public.
11. Mr. Mac Manus stated that Altamanu Inc. would make the recommended changes and present a final scheme to the Park Board
12. Mr. Balling thanked the attendees.

END OF MEETING NOTES