

**Lindberg Park Site Master Plan
Community Meeting #1
September 22, 2010, 7pm
Mann School, 921 N. Kenilworth**

Introduction

Community Meeting #1 for the Lindberg Park Site Master Plan was held at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 22, 2010, at Horace Mann Elementary School. Representatives from Wolff Landscape Architects, Park District of Oak Park, the Park District Citizen Committee (PDCC), the Greening Advisory Committee (GAC), and approximately 25 members of the community were in attendance.

Gary Balling, Executive Director, PDOP, introduced the project. PDOP has been developing master plans for all its properties, and the Lindberg Park Site Master Plan is the eighteenth master plan undertaken to date. The Site Master Plan is intended to provide direction for the site moving forward as funds become available. PDOP has allocated \$450,000 in 2013 for improvements to Lindberg Park. The master plan will include the approximately 13.9 acres of grounds at Lindberg Park. Some of the items to be discussed tonight were suggested at the focus groups held in early September. Tonight's meeting is meant to continue this dialogue and collect additional input and ideas regarding the future of Lindberg Park. This site planning process, just like the previous 17 before it, is very important in that it provides an opportunity for public discussion about future park improvements. We want to hear what ideas you have as we develop a blueprint for future park renewal. Most of our plans have been divided into phases which are completed as funds become available in the Capital Improvement Budget. The Park Board has the final decision on acceptance of the plan.

Two focus group meetings were held on September 14th, 2010, with representatives from the following organizations: PDOP (building and grounds, safety and security, recreational and athletic programming, and other staff), GAC, PDCC, American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO), Oak Park – River Forest Strikers Soccer Club (OPRF Strikers), Oak Park – River Forest Pony Baseball (OPRF Pony), and the Memorial Trust Committee. Minutes from the focus group meetings are available on the PDOP website (www.oakparkparks.com). An online questionnaire was posted on PDOP's website on September 23rd and will be available until October 1st to seed additional public input. The presentation materials from this community meeting have also been posted on the PDOP website.

Project Overview / Summary of existing conditions / Site analysis: Problems and opportunities

Ted Wolff of WLA presented a brief history of Lindberg Park, Lindberg Park's mission statement, a photo inventory of current site conditions, a summary of issues, problems, and opportunities identified to date, and preliminary suggestions generated by the focus groups.

Discussion

Following the presentation there was an open discussion period, during which the following questions were posed to the audience to facilitate discussion:

- What role does Lindberg Park play within the Park District of Oak Park and the Village of Oak Park?
- What elements do you feel are missing and should be added to or incorporated into the park?
- What elements do you feel are inappropriate or unused and should be removed from the park?
- What elements do you feel are appropriate or valuable and should not be changed?
- What are your feelings about the landscape at Lindberg Park?
- Other thoughts, concerns, problems, or opportunities?

Responses to individual questions, questions to the PDOP and the consultants, and general discussion related to the individual questions are as follows:

- The park was described as having a beautiful “garden feeling” and as being “Thoreau-like.” It was generally agreed that these qualities should be preserved.
- The asphalt paths were described as being bumpy and in generally poor condition.
- The Prairie Trial Gardens were described as having an attractive “botanic garden look,” but it was generally agreed that the maintenance of these areas has been inadequate.
- It was suggested that more volunteers would make themselves available for garden maintenance if the need were more actively publicized. PDOP responded that the ideal situation would be one in which a single community member would be in charge of organizing maintenance efforts, similar to what has been done by Ms. Vanderveer, GAC volunteer steward at Field Park.
- Lindberg Park currently provides habitat for wildlife, especially monarch butterflies and nocturnal birds such as owls, nighthawks, and others.
- It was suggested that, since Lindberg Park is the largest park within Oak Park, it should be the “crown jewel” of PDOP. It was suggested that “immaculate” playing fields would be essential to achieving this goal.
- Demand for active recreation in the area is extremely high, and inadequately served. It was suggested that park-by-park master plans are insufficient in and of themselves to address this problem, and that PDOP should consider creating a village-wide master plan for parks, or the sports facilities within the overall park system. It was noted that such a plan falls outside the current scope of work.
- The usefulness of the athletic fields at Lindberg Park is limited by the inability to use them in or after rainy weather, sometimes for not just hours but even several days after a heavy rain event. It was suggested that this problem could be solved, at least in part, by installing synthetic turf in one or more fields in the park.
- The suggestion continued, instead of installing synthetic turf at Lindberg Park, the ideal location would be to install it at Taylor Park. At that location there would not be an overlap with baseball fields. Taylor has an existing large and heavily-used soccer field that when transformed to synthetic turf, would fit the community’s needs well.
- Uneven playing surfaces inhibit game play and create unsafe conditions for athletes, officials, and even for pedestrians. It was suggested that this could be solved by installing synthetic turf in one or more fields in the park. It was also suggested that this could be addressed, at least in part, by shifting the boundaries of the soccer fields to allow heavily-used areas to rest and regenerate, but that this would require a larger athletic field area to allow such flexibility.
- Synthetic turf increases flexibility because it can be striped with different colors to allow for multiple field configurations.
- Synthetic turf does not require irrigation.

- The usefulness of the athletic fields at Lindberg Park is limited by the inability to play past sundown. It was suggested that this problem could be solved and the capacity of the fields could be increased by installing athletic field lighting for one or more fields.
- PDOP and members of the community were asked to visit and observe Freedom Park in Berwyn as an example of a high-quality field which has synthetic turf and lights for nighttime play.
- The athletic fields at Lindberg Park are full of weeds. It was suggested that this problem should be solved by applying herbicide. PDOP responded that current policy prohibits use of herbicide on playing fields, and that the strong weed growth is a result of overuse, which causes the soil to become compacted and hostile to turf grass. Members of the community suggested that PDOP observe the fields at the parks of River Forest, which are reported to be in excellent condition.
- Inadequate space for active recreation poses a public health concern.
- Poor visibility around the flagpole area has attracted undesirable activity.
- Lindberg Park lacks paths on the north and east sides, and that this creates safety problems on the north edge of the park, where pedestrians must walk in the street, and also limits the ability of pedestrians to make a longer “loop” or circuit within the park.
- Dense vegetation along the park perimeter creates safety problems due to reduced visibility.
- Vegetation along the north side of the park prevents people from exiting their vehicles on the curb side of the parking lane, forcing them to exit into the traffic lane instead.
- The close proximity of the north soccer field to LeMoyné Parkway causes soccer balls to enter the street frequently, which is a hazardous situation.
- Some park users have been allowing their dogs to run through the park off –their leads or leashes. It was suggested that this problem might be alleviated by completing a walking path loop around the entire park.

Next Steps

The first on-line questionnaire will be posted on September 23rd and closed on October 1st.

Community Meeting #2 will be held at 7:00 p.m. on October 13th at Horace Mann elementary school. The purpose of this meeting will be to review three alternative schematic designs based on information generated at the focus group meetings, the first community meeting, and from the first on-line questionnaire.

The second on-line questionnaire will be posted on October 14th and closed on October 20th.

Community Meeting #3 will be held at 7:00 p.m. on November 3rd at Horace Mann Elementary School. The purpose of this meeting will be to review a single schematic design based on comments from the previous meetings and questionnaires.

Community Meeting #4, if necessary, will be held at 7:00 p.m. on November 17th at Horace Mann Elementary School if there are outstanding unresolved issues from the previous schematic design review.

Attendees were encouraged to participate in the on-line questionnaires, to attend the future community meetings, and to invite their friends and neighbors.

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Meeting Minutes, Community Meeting #1, September 22nd, 2010
Prepared September 23rd, 2010
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Prepared by Paul Blanding and Ted Wolff of WLA. The foregoing represents the writers' understanding of the matters discussed and the comments and directions given. Please contact Paul Blanding (pblanding@wolfflandscape.com) within three (3) calendar days from the date of the minutes with any corrections, additions, deletions, clarifications, or other changes.

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