

Date: September 16, 2010

Re: Lindberg Park Site Master Plan

Subject: Focus Group Meetings, September 14, 2010
Hedges Administrative Center

Attendees: Focus Group A: Buildings & Grounds, Safety & Security, Staff – 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Gary Balling, Park District of Oak Park (introduction only)
Doug Chien, Greening Advisory Committee
Dick McKinlay, Park District Citizen Committee
Craig Failor, Village Planning and Community Development
Ron Calloway, Safety Coordinator
Chad Druke Adult Athletics Supervisor
Neil Adams, Project Manager
Bobbi Nance, Recreation Manager
Matt Ellmann, Superintendent of Recreation
Henrietta Yardley, Oak Park Conservatory Manager
Mike Grandy, Superintendent of Buildings & Grounds
Maryann Birko, WSSRA
Ted Wolff, Wolff Landscape Architecture
Paul Blanding, Wolff Landscape Architecture

Focus Group B: Creative Play, Passive Space & Sports Area – 7:00 – 8:45 p.m.

Gary Balling, Park District of Oak Park (introduction only)
Dan Sullivan, Park District Citizen Committee
Dan Jordan, American Youth Soccer Organization
Tom Holmes, Memorial Trust Committee
Rob Hauck, Oak Park – River Forest Strikers
Beth Burdin, Greening Advisory Committee
Rob Ruffulo, Oak Park – River Forest Pony Baseball
Ted Wolff, Wolff Landscape Architecture
Paul Blanding, Wolff Landscape Architecture

Two focus group meetings were held at the Park District of Oak Park (PDOP) Administrative Center on Tuesday, September 14, 2010. A prepared list of questions and talking points was reviewed and then the floor was opened to other items. The discussion and points of agreement / disagreement were broken down into the following categories, and the discussion within each of those areas is as follows:

Focus Group A: Buildings & Grounds, Safety & Security, Staff – 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.

1. Park Entrances

- LeMoyné Parkway is the primary drop-off area for soccer and baseball; safety of children being dropped off in the street is a concern.
- Dense vegetation along park perimeter generally creates poor visibility conditions; children dart out unseen into the street from behind and between the shrubs.
- Tree removal should be considered only as a last resort for improving visibility.
- Soccer balls often stray into LeMoyné Parkway from the north soccer field.

- Traffic moves quickly along LeMoyne Parkway and Greenfield Street. Intersections at Belleforte and Forest avenues are not controlled by stop signs or other devices. Consider traffic calming devices such as speed tables to slow down vehicles and make a safer environment.
 - Consider designated parking areas and pedestrian drop-offs, either curb-side or within the park. Signage to regulate parallel parking on LeMoyne and Greenfield should be considered.
 - There is neither an entrance at the northeast corner of the park nor a walkway into the park.
- 2. Site Plantings**
- It was generally agreed that the prairie / native plantings are “weedy” and unkempt looking, due apparently to a lack of regular maintenance. It was suggested that removal of prairie plantings would likely be met with resistance from some members of the community.
 - Original community members involved in the installation of the prairie plantings are not perceived by the PDOP as having a continued interest in the upkeep of the plantings.
 - Prairie plantings could be incorporated into educational programming.
 - Consideration should be given to alternative uses and designs for these areas.
 - Some tree limbs have grown around light fixtures, reducing light coverage and creating dark areas which are perceived to be unsafe.
 - PDOP is able to manage the current tree maintenance requirements.
 - Number and diversity of trees is considered a major asset of Lindberg Park.
- 3. Concession Stand / Restroom / Storage Building**
- PDOP reports that the concession stand / restroom/ storage building is in good shape and working well.
- 4. Tot lot**
- Proximity to northwest baseball diamond poses safety hazard, as foul balls can land in the tot lot vicinity.
 - Proximity to concession stand / rest house and northwest baseball diamond is convenient for parents with multiple children of different ages.
 - Small size of lot, combined with fencing creates a “cage” feeling.
 - Play equipment for older children may or may not be desirable.
 - Current tot lot size / configuration / play equipment was determined by the last round of community input in 1999 or thereabouts. PDOP reports that the meetings were contentious and that many compromises were made before the current plan was adopted.
 - Any increase in play equipment would require an increase in overall tot lot size.
 - PDOP reports that the existing processed wood fiber soft surfacing material is adequate.
- 5. Presidential Walk and Commemorative Plantings**
- No changes were proposed by any party.
 - Commemorative plaques tend to sink over time and are a maintenance issue.

6. Baseball Fields

- Recreation department representatives report that baseball diamonds should not be eliminated or reduced in size because they are well used and programmed for use almost constantly during the season.
- Athletic field lighting for nighttime play would greatly increase field use.
- Bleachers are in poor condition. Bleachers are sitting on grass and earth, resulting in warping and sinking into turf. Sharp corners on the aluminum benches are hazardous and a safety risk.
- Bleachers are not compliant with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

7. Soccer Fields

- Recreation department representatives report that soccer fields should not be eliminated or reduced in size, especially the south field, which is the only regulation size soccer field in Lindberg Park.
- Consideration should be given to the feasibility of artificial turf, though this may conflict with use of baseball diamonds. Concerns were expressed about the aesthetics of artificial turf.
- Athletic field lighting for nighttime play would greatly increase field use.

8. Tennis Courts

- Tennis courts are used heavily by the public.
- Dominican University reserves 2 courts regularly for practice space; one court is left open to the public at all times. Fenwick High School also uses the courts.
- Courts do not meet regulation size requirements, making them unsuitable for competition or anything other than practice and casual play.
- Existing asphalt pad extension to the west of three courts was once a basketball court, but rims were frequently stolen, so the court was abandoned. PDOP would consider reinstating basketball at this location, but only if removable rims were used.
- Lighting for nighttime play would greatly increase court use.
- Storage facilities should be considered; this should be a shed or small building of some kind, not a small storage lock box or similar, in order to provide adequate additional storage capacity.
- Signage or bulletin boards would help organize court reservation procedures; whatever is proposed, if anything, has to be durable, as other measures in the past have not survived the test of time in the park.
- A new version of tennis for beginners, Quick Start, is gaining popularity, and the opportunity exists to be an early adopter of Quick Start courts using either the existing courts on a temporary basis or the former basketball court area on a permanent basis.

9. Safety and Security

- The area around the flagpole is hidden from view and has attracted some undesirable activity; broken bottles frequently litter this area after weekends; graffiti does not seem to be much of a problem.
- In general, park lighting should be studied and revamped as needed.

10. Walkways

- Park should have a complete loop or circuit; currently there is no path through or around the northeast quadrant of the park, therefore a path or paths should be added to the north and east sides of the park.
- All paths seem to get heavy bike use, which was perceived to be a safety hazard especially in the passive recreation area (west portion of the park) where the paths are generally curved and where landscaping can obscure views along the curving paths.
- Paths are perceived to be too narrow; consideration should be given to increasing the width of the main path to eight feet.
- Additional paths and types of path to accommodate multiple user groups (cyclists, joggers, etc.) should be considered; PDOP ordinance currently disallows bikes in parks; this ordinance should be examined more closely.
- Path connecting concession stand / rest house and LeMoyné Parkway is flanked by two feet of "turf stone" drivable grass surface; PDOP reports that this is performing well, and could be considered for use in other areas of the park.
- Curved paths contribute to aesthetic quality of the park, but pose maintenance difficulties, particularly for snow plowing.
- Consider adding distance markers on the main path for the benefit of exercise walkers and others.

11. Other Considerations

- Informal gathering space, such as a council ring or storyteller's corner should be considered; this could benefit camp programs and other educational activities, and could dovetail with the native plant program.
- Consider addition of a shelter or other facilities for small events, camp programs, etc.
- Dog runs are available in other areas nearby, and should probably not be considered at Lindberg Park.
- Community gardens should be considered; these could dovetail with native plants program and other educational programs, summer camps, etc.

Focus Group B: Creative Play, Passive Space & Sports Area – 7:00 - 8:45 p.m.

1. Park Entrances

- Main sports drop-off is off LeMoyné Parkway near the Belleforte Avenue intersection.
- Mix of traffic and player drop-off on LeMoyné is perceived to be dangerous; traffic-calming devices, such as speed bumps and stop signs, should be considered.
- Dense vegetation and lack of sidewalk along LeMoyné prevent safe or convenient curb-side drop-off, which encourages passengers to exit from the driver's side of the car into traffic, which is perceived to be a safety problem or hazard.
- Alley along eastern edge of park was once open for use as a drop-off / loading area; complaints from neighbors ten years ago resulted in the installation of gates; this should be reconsidered.
- Designated drop-off areas should be considered along LeMoyné.

2. Park Plantings

- Large elm adjacent to the southwest baseball diamond near third base interferes with game play, making it unsuitable for tournament play; consideration should be given to removal of this tree.
 - Deferred maintenance falls on sports organizations.
 - Turf grass was perceived to be the wrong mix of species and varieties for sports fields.
 - Weeds in playing fields are an embarrassment to sports organizations hosting teams from out of the area; PDOP has forbidden sports organizations from applying herbicides. Nearby municipalities incorporate herbicide treatment into their turf maintenance program, and it was suggested that Oak Park's position or policy on this issue should be reviewed and reconsidered.
 - Beautiful views are appreciated by users and visitors.
 - Memorial plaque program faces a shortage of trees, as the demand for memorial plaques is ongoing while the number or supply of trees is limited by park space.
- 3. Concession Stand / Restroom / Storage Building**
- Concession stand / restroom / storage building was perceived to be in poor condition; broken windows, screens, and deteriorating chimney were cited.
 - Interior concession area space is narrow to accommodate movement of concession stand workers.
 - Interior of building is poorly ventilated and uncomfortably hot.
 - Storage space for baseball equipment and materials is inadequate.
 - Storage space for PDOP is not used efficiently.
 - Soccer organizations do not require storage space in the concession stand / rest house.
 - Visibility to / from bathroom entrances is limited which, combined with their location facing the tot-lot, creates an unsafe or potential "grab-and-go" situation.
- 4. Walkways**
- Baseball and soccer advocates opposed the addition of a path along the north and east sides of the park if it either reduced the size or number of existing fields or limited future increases in size or number of potential fields.
- 5. Other Baseball-related Considerations**
- Dugouts are too small; players' bench accommodates ten players or less. Dugouts should be increased in size such that they accommodate a typical traveling team.
 - Bullpens / warm-up areas interfere with spectators, pitchers are forced to warm up in passive recreation areas, causing safety hazards (passers-by have been hit).
 - Grading interferes with game play, particularly at third base in the northwest diamond.
 - New "mushroom backstops" which cantilever farther over the home plate area should be considered; although these interfere with game play, insofar as foul balls in the vicinity of home plate are reduced, they also perform better at controlling foul balls and reduce the number of foul balls leaving the field of play.
 - Athletic field lighting for nighttime play would greatly increase field use.
- 6. Other Soccer-related Considerations**
- North fields are constrained by elms to the east, slope to the south, light pole to the west, and LeMoyne Parkway, including shrub and tree planting at the street curb, to the north.

- North field should be considered for artificial turf area.
- Consider re-grading and clearing trees and shrubs as required in order to realign the north field to accommodate two fields oriented north-south and one field oriented east-west.
- While the field orientation is not good (fields should be oriented north-south, not east-west) greater consideration should be given to overall capacity and flexibility than to field orientation.
- Fixed goal size and field layout reduces flexibility; fields sometimes sit empty while demand remains high because field sizes cannot be reconfigured mid-season.
- Sprinklers interfere with game play.
- Storm drain near southwest corner of field area is in field of play; it is now covered with a patch of artificial turf, which helps reduce safety risk, but is not considered to be a good long-term solution.
- Uneven grading / lawn surface interferes with game play.
- Athletic field lighting for nighttime play would greatly increase field use.

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@wolflandscape.com) within three (3) calendar days from the date of the minutes with any corrections, additions, deletions, clarifications, or other changes.

Distribution

Attendees
File (10005)

Date: September 14, 2010

Re: Lindberg Park Site Master Plan

Subject: Focus Group Questions / Talking Points

What are your thoughts regarding:

- The entrances to Lindberg Park?
- The landscape at Lindberg Park?
- Elements on site you feel cannot be altered?
- Elements on site you feel need to be renovated or removed?
- Elements you would like to see added to the site?
- The native prairie plantings?
- The concession / rest house?
- The tot lot?
- The "Presidential Walk" and associated commemorative tree plantings?
- The baseball and soccer fields?
- The tennis courts?
- Any safety and security concerns with the park?
- The existing park lighting?
- The existing walkways: path widths, materials, number of paths?
- The accessibility of the park and its amenities?
- How the site meets the needs of the neighborhood and the community?
- How your group uses Lindberg Park?
- How the current landscape enhances or is appropriate for Lindberg Park?
- Any other issues, areas, or experiences that you would like to see addressed in the park planning process?