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Maple Park Site Plan: Community Meeting 2

Meeting held at: Carroll Center, Park District of Oak Park
1125 S. Kenilworth, Oak Park, Illinois
Date: July 16, 2007 7:30 p.m.

The second public meeting was held at Carroll Center.

1. Mr. Gary Balling, Executive Director of the Park District of Oak Park opened the meeting. He welcomed the attendees, expressed his pleasure on seeing the high level of public attendance at the meeting, spoke about the overall planning process and gave background on the work to date including three Focus Group meetings and the previous public meeting.
2. Mr. Balling introduced the members of Altamanu Inc. and Terra Engineering Ltd. who were to facilitate the meeting, and also Park District Staff, members of the Park District Board and members of the Park District Citizen Committee who were in attendance.
3. Mr. Balling stated that \$425,000 had been allocated for improvements to Maple Park. When a master plan was accepted by the Park District Board of Commissioners, the Park District would apply for an OSLAD grant from the State, which potentially could double the funds available.
4. Mr. Balling then turned the meeting over to Mr. Mac Manus from Altamanu Inc.
5. Mr. John Mac Manus of the Altamanu Inc. facilitated the meeting and Josephine Bellalta and Mark Jirik of Altamanu Inc. took notes and also took part in the meeting.
6. Mr. Mac Manus asked how many of the public in attendance had attended the last public meeting. The result was that there were many more new attendees at this meeting than the previous one.
7. Mr. Mac Manus asked the attendees if they could wait to discuss the dog park issue which could be derisive until later in the meeting and first bring the new attendees up to date. In this way those who had not been at the last meeting could voice their opinions on the opportunities and concerns already identified. When this was achieved the meeting could then focus on the proposed dog park. The majority of the attendees were in agreement.
8. He then reviewed the park planning process and shared the information, opinions and concerns recorded at the Focus Group meetings and at the first community meeting. He also reviewed the drawings and aerial photographs of the park used at previous meetings.
9. The attendees voiced their opinions on the information presented on drawings and photographic aerials of the park.



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Topics Discussed at the meeting included the following:

Traffic and Parking

The Park District does not have jurisdiction over the streets that surround the park however, Mr. Mac Manus suggested that the community take this opportunity to voice their concerns and to make suggestions that the Park District could bring to the attention of the Village.

Public Comment - Bump outs

- Could we have bump outs by baseball diamonds to give more space for a path and for kids?
- They can slow down traffic and provide more space behind baseball dugouts
- But they take up parking space
- Bump outs do not slow traffic and are hazardous to bikers who have to ride around bump outs into street
- Maybe bump outs could allow for bikers to go over them?
- Maybe bump outs could go by existing tennis courts to give space for a path
- What about some speed bumps on Maple Ave.?
- Oak Park does not use speed bumps as they present liability issues
- No, they just make ploughing a problem

Public Comment – One way system

- Could the 1100 block of Maple be made one way going south?
 - It would prevent cars from speeding off of Roosevelt to the Interstate
 - Diagonal parking could be added to the park-side of the street
 - Would increase car traffic turning onto Wenonah
 - Might not increase traffic onto Wenonah that much, as it is farther from Harlem

General public comment

- Could the Village possibly buy up parking lots by Salerno's to solve parking issue?
- West side of Maple Ave. could be permitted to residents only.
- That's not allowed near public facilities
- There is a Roosevelt Road renovation plan going into development soon. What are they going to do?
- Gary Balling said a Village representative might attend the next community meeting to answer such questions and to ensure a coordinated effort.
- Do we want bike traffic through park?



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- It could be dangerous around little kids
- A stop sign needs to be added at Harvard – Maple intersection.
- There is a stop sign at Maple and Harvard. There are stop signs on Maple at Lexington

Recommendation for an ornamental fence, protected by a Colorado Rail or similar barrier and the planting of Ginkgo trees along the entire Harlem edge of the park, with a decorative entry feature welcoming people to Oak Park at the SW corner of the park:

Public Comment

- Good idea but who is going to pay for the fence – will it be expensive?
The fence would be expensive but we are planning for the long-term master plan of the park and it could be accomplished in phases over time.
- Would statue/obelisk be by the gas station or by the park entrance on Harlem?
By the NW corner of the gas station.
- Ginkgos would be nice if they aren't the smelly ones.
The species and gender would be carefully selected to avoid any unpleasant smells.

There was a consensus in favor of the fence, trees and entry feature but the assistance of the Village was suggested in paying for any entry feature.

Recommendation for a continuous multi-purpose path around the park

Public Comment

- A resident expressed his concern that a continuous path would facilitate an escape route for criminals/thieves. The park is currently fragmented and it helps to discourage bike thieves. The majority of the attendees did not support these comments.
- Current setup of Maple is dangerous in terms of pedestrian traffic as kids run around tennis courts and baseball diamonds into the street. We need a path for safety.
- Meandering or skewed path would be nice and would be well used by the public

There was a consensus that the path was a good idea.

Recommendations for relocating or altering the Tennis Courts as the current layout and fence form a barrier across the park.



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Public Comment

- The courts could be moved to south end to act as buffer from the gas station.
- The park by gas station is currently dead space
- There are many trees in that section of the park however many of these trees are older and reaching old age, some of the crabapples and pines are dying-off. Mr. Grandy of the Park District has been replacing them.
- Gas station already brightly lit at night the same as tennis courts
- Homeless would no longer sleep there
- Moving tennis courts or trees is not going to solve the homeless/teenage drinking, they will simply hide behind something else
- Panhandlers will always be at Harlem-Roosevelt corner and out of town teens will always come too
- Perhaps park could be designed so there is little to hide behind
- If courts stay at existing location they could be squeezed or one could be taken out leaving two courts and room for a north-south continuous path through park
- Perhaps east-most court could be moved to where the basketball pad currently is
- Could tennis be moved to the north end of the park?
- North end of Maple is 1 of 5 designated passive zones in our parks and we would like to keep it that way
- But kids and the Rangers use it for practice and pick up games
- Dust from Mohr Concrete would not work well with tennis either
- Residents who live at the southern end of the park were not in favor of moving the tennis courts
- Other residents stated that in their opinion
 - It could complicate parking at south end
 - Children using the existing playground like to watch the adults and teenagers play tennis; it creates good energy between spaces
 - Adults can play tennis and watch their children in playground
- Bathrooms need to be better available and easier to get to from playground
- When asked if there was a need for parents and kids who use the playground to use the restrooms to the south which were blocked by the tennis court fence, members of the public stated that they could “just go to their houses to use the restroom”. Mr. Mac Manus then stated that this was a good situation for local residents but all of our parks are regional parks. Many residents of Oak Park do not live as close to a park and they do and the Park District has to consider the needs of all residents of Oak Park and not just local residents.
- Bathroom is never open anyways
- I disagree every time I have used the park they have been open



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- Park District clean the bathrooms as part of a daily routine
- Could tennis be moved to the north end of the park?
- The north end of Maple is one of five designated passive zones in our parks and we would like to keep it that way
- But kids and the Rangers use it for practice and pick up games
- Removing one tennis court would give enough space for a path.

There was no consensus on this issue and Mr. Mac Manus stated that Altamanu Inc. would prepare a number of options to consider at the next meeting.

Recommendation for relocating the Existing Playground and/or adding a new play ground

- The existing playground is about 8 years old
- Good shade from the big trees
- There is too much shade
- Shade and hills limit visibility, especially at night and it is a hang out
- The location is fine – it should not be changed as it is safe
- It is too close to Harlem – easy for children to run out into street or for people to enter unseen
- Add a gate to prevent children from running onto Harlem
- But make the gate ADA compliant
- Parents should take some responsibility in watching their children closer
- Add a smaller playground by baseball diamonds
- Why have two?
- It is becoming standard practice to have a playground near baseball facilities so that parents have the ability to watch their children engage in sports while they watch their kids in the playground.

There was no consensus on this issue and Mr. Mac Manus stated that Altamanu Inc. would prepare a number of options to consider at the next meeting.

Recommendation to add a Shelter

- A shelter could be added to the existing comfort station
 - Would that mean barbequing would be allowed and more people attracted to the park

The attendees did not favor adding a shelter but some did recommend improving the existing restrooms.



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Discussion on kid's Soccer

- Could soccer be added to north end of park since it's becoming a more popular sport
- North end is a passive zone
- Soccer is already played at north and south ends
- A pee-wee soccer field could fit at the south end for AYSO
- Soccer players could use the base ball outfield

Baseball/T-Ball

- Could batting cages be put where concrete pads are?
- T-Ball should not be the major use in the park
- One diamond could be flipped to the far south-end in order to create more open space and space for a playground
- What about the trees at south end - come into question
- A path could be added around the two diamonds if one is moved to the south end
- Bathrooms could be placed closer to those diamonds and possible additional playground
- Moving one diamond would open up more green space

Dog Park

Mr. Mac Manus summarized the recommendations for a potential dog park at Maple Park adopted by the Park District Board of Commissioners at the meeting on May 18, 2006. The Park District should establish a temporary dog park in Maple Park and determine as part of the Park District's master planning process whether that dog park should be made permanent.

General discussion

- Why couldn't the dog park be on Garfield next to the Post Office?
- The owner of the property wasn't interested in selling at that time
- He/She should be tried again to see if he would sell now
- Majority of residents facing Maple do not want dog park
- Why put the dog park so close to the Forest Park dog park?
- Why couldn't Mills Park be used for the dog park? It has lots of green space
- The building and Park has historical significance and there are plans for its restoration
- It is also one of Oak Park's five passive zones



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Mike Farley, a member of Friends of Oak Park Dogs, gave a detailed description of the operation of the dog park at Ridgeland Commons and the regulations used in its governance.

- A dog park at Maple would be for Oak Park residents only
- All dog park users have to obtain a permit from the Park District and their dog has to be inoculated.
- No one under the age of 11 is allowed in the dog park
- Residents must stay with their dogs
- The dog park is open seven days a week from dawn to dusk
- Self policing by dog owners has been very successful i.e. picking up waste, behavior etc.
- There are spot checks by Park District employees to see if all users are in compliance with the regulations
- Mr. Balling stated that the dog owners say that they are privileged to use the park and he has found that the dog owners have been extremely good at policing themselves and other dog owners
- Ms. Diane Stanke of the Park District stated that the dog park regulations are available on the Park District web site

General Discussion

- Users have to wear a tag around their neck. It goes on the owner not the dog.
- There is a double gate system (a full air lock styled gate system) to prevent dogs getting loose.
- Is there a budget for a permanent park district employee to supervise the dog park?
 - Mr. Balling stated that he did not think there would be one as the dog park at Ridgeland Common is self regulating and the same system should apply in Maple Park.
- Police do not give tickets to irresponsible dog owners
- You have to request them to do so.
- People do not want the hassle
- There are lots of dogs and dog owners at Maple anyway
 - Not all of them are responsible
 - People from Berwyn use the park a lot too
- The attendees were encouraged to check out the facility at Ridgeland Common
- No exact dimensions for the dog park were set as of yet; they will be discussed at the next meeting. The original proposal was for a dog park south of the existing tennis courts on the existing concrete pads including the unused basketball courts that are currently used for storage.
- There is not enough storage capacity in the Park District system and any space for storage is valuable and therefore the empty pad is used.



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- There are a few potential layouts for the dog park including a possible L-shape configuration by the bathrooms and concrete pads with landscape added as a screen on the Maple side. Trees inside the dog park would be protected and more trees added. Water is available by the restrooms which also makes it a good location as both owners and dogs will need water
- Could the dog park be placed at the south end of Maple?
 - Providing water would be more difficult and more expensive at the south end?
 - Is there water at the Ridgeland Common dog park?
 - Dogs need water
 - The Forest Park Dog Park has water available but has no shade which is a problem for the dog owners
 - Water would be turned off in the colder seasons
 - Lincoln Park has a great example of a working dog park near Lawrence. It has an ornamental fence and trees.
- The dog park should be kept along the Harlem edge wherever it may go in Maple
- Ridgeland Common dog park has a 6ft high fence – a 4ft high fence is regular

After discussion, a show of hands indicated that the majority of those present favored a dog park at Maple Park.

Other Notes

- Residents should get first say in what should go into park if cost is permitting

Mr. Balling summed up, thanked the attendees for coming and participating and reminded all to fill out the questionnaire provided by the park district and to please attend the next public meeting on August 6th at which time three concepts for the park, based on comments made by the public and at the focus group meetings, would be presented for discussion.

End of the summary minutes prepared by John Mac Manus of Altamanu Inc.