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Maple Park: Community Meeting 3

Meeting held at: Park District of Oak Park, Carroll Center
1125 S. Kenilworth, Oak Park, Illinois

Date of meeting: August 6, 2007 7:30 p.m.

The third 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 two public meeting.
2. Mr. Balling went into detail on how the Park District had advertised the community meetings. This included approximately 800 fliers distributed in the neighborhood, announcements in the local newspapers, posters put up in the park and at other Park District facilities, information on the Park District web site and direct emails to all local community members that provided their email addresses to the Park District at previous community meetings.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Mr. Balling then turned the meeting over to Mr. Mac Manus from Altamanu Inc.
6. Mr. John Mac Manus of the Altamanu Inc. facilitated the meeting and Josephine Bellalta of Altamanu Inc. took notes and took part in the meeting. Jamil Bou-Saab from Terra Engineering also took part in the meeting.
7. J. Mac Manus read excerpts from some of the emails received by the Park District from some residents in order to create a baseline of accurate information for the entire meeting group.
8. Mr. Mac Manus briefly outlined the traffic and parking issues that had been raised at all previous meetings and stated that these issues were outside of the purview of the Park District and that Mr. Balling had invited Mr. Jim Budrick, Village Engineer of Oak Park, to this meeting. Mr. Budrick had graciously agreed



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to attend the meeting to discuss these matters with the community. Mr. Mac Manus then turned the meeting over to Mr. Budrick who explained the Village's standards as related to cul-de-sacs; one-way streets; stop sign installation; traffic patterns and counts; possibility of bump outs on the park side of Maple Avenue; parking; and future work along Roosevelt Road.

9. Mr. Budrick stated that the Village would be delighted to work with the community separately on parking and traffic issues and answered questions raised by the attendees. He also stated that if residents petitioned the Village for additional stop signs or other traffic calming strategies, the Village would consider their requests.
10. The following topics were raised by the attendees and discussed with Mr. Budrick:
 - a) Amount of traffic on Maple and Lexington
According to a survey done in 1999, approximately 800 cars per day use Maple and 1400 cars per day use Lexington.
 - b) Right turn lane west bound on Roosevelt at Harlem. IDOT put in the right turn lane on Roosevelt for west bound traffic to reduce traffic congestion on Roosevelt at Harlem. Residents stated that this has caused additional traffic on Maple as drivers use Maple to avoid the intersection at Harlem. Mr. Budrick suggested that a no right turn during the morning and afternoon rush hours could be placed at the intersection of Maple and Roosevelt. Jim stated that compliance with such signs is approximately 85%.
 - c) Cul-De-Sac Maple at the alley north of Roosevelt. Mr. Budrick stated that blocking traffic at one intersection just moves the traffic to another location. In this case it would be moved to the next street east, Wisconsin, and residents would probably object. If Wisconsin were turned into a one-way street, additional traffic would move to Home. Home is a collector street and collectors are important for the overall flow of traffic. They are placed at ¼ mile spacing through the Village. For instance East and Lombard are collectors. Some attendees believed that drivers would probably not use Home because it is too far from Harlem.
 - d) Make Maple one-way southbound from Fillmore to Roosevelt. Mr. Budrick expressed his concern that traffic would then move to the alleys which had been a problem elsewhere in the Village.
 - e) Add stop signs on Maple at Harvard. Mr. Budrick stated that if there were accidents at an intersection the Village would put up a stop sign. An attendee stated that a serious accident involving a child had occurred near this intersection. Also mention was made of the speed of cars between Fillmore and Lexington, both of which have stop signs on Maple. If the residents petition for stop signs on Maple at Harvard, the village engineer said he would work with the residents to obtain one. He also cautioned them that increasing the number of stop signs in a given area reduces the compliance with the stop signs which can lead to further accidents.



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- f) Install speed tables at intersections. A speed table is a raised section of street, in this case placed at the intersection, which calms traffic and allows residents to cross.
- g) Enforcement of speed limits on Maple. Mr. Budrick stated that resident should contact the police if they see drivers speeding. Residents stated that the police did nothing about this issue. The interim beat officer, Officer William Haupers, invited concerned residents to public meetings he holds on the second Tuesday of each month at Barrie Park to discuss such issues and to redemptive measures.

General comments made during this part of the meeting were as follows:

- It is an issue of quality traffic. She goes south on Maple, right onto Roosevelt and left onto Harlem in a.m. and the intersection is always blocked.
- Would you consider one way going south?
- (J.Budrick): Businesses need to flourish and the Village has to support them. They need access for visitors to the neighborhood.
- Salerno's employees are parking in the alley.
- (J.Budrick): A meeting is being set up between Village and Salerno's
- Why put a dog park in the park if traffic/parking issues are already difficult?
- There are always parking and traffic issues. It is an urban area. Whatever we do in the park will not make that much of a difference.
- Could there be a stop sign by the playground to keep the kids safe?
- Cars speed along Maple.
- Could we have striped lines on the road and or flashing yellow lights?
- (J.Budrick): Speed tables are being considered by the Village. The road comes up to sidewalk levels and slows traffic.
- I have lived on the corner for 35 years. - do we need to wait until something happens to get a stop sign?
- (J.Budrick): A street like Maple Ave is a straight run and we have a 30-40% non-compliance at stop signs in general. Additional stop signs could be dangerous.
- Which are more important, kids or cars? We should force people to drive slowly? Use speed bumps or a cobble street.
- What about a temporary stop sign?
- (J.Budrick): The Village needs a petition from residents.
- Regardless of the Master Plan; Traffic plus Parking issues have nothing to do with park improvements. There will always be traffic problems because we are close to Roosevelt and Harlem.
- Drivers blow stop signs and no tickets are being given.



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- Likes more green space/how realistically are tennis courts used?
- Tennis courts are very well used.
- Should one tennis court come out?
- Could squeeze down courts – the three of them
- Positive for bump outs at park for kid's safety.
- Path entry @ playground. Moved/fixed for safety
- Bump outs- 4' max for bike safety.

11. J. Mac Manus then reviewed the park planning process to date and shared the information, opinions and concerns that were recorded at the Focus Group meetings and at the previous community meetings. He also reviewed the drawings and aerial photographs of the park that were used or created at previous meetings and pointed out suggestions on which there had been consensus. These included the following:
A decorative/ornamental fence with a protective rail along the entire length of the Harlem edge of the park.
A continuous double row of Gingo trees planted along the Harlem edge where spacing between the existing trees would allow. A potential gateway at the SW corner of the park, and a continuous multipurpose path/track around the periphery of the park. The mention of this last suggestion prompted a resident who had not attended previous meetings for clarification on the issue and the overall discussion of the park design began

12. Mr. Mac Manus then facilitated the meeting using drawings and overlays to explore the issues. The following is a summary of the comments made at the meeting by the attendees grouped into categories:

Continuous path/multipurpose track around the periphery of the park

As in previous meetings, participants were in favor of a continuous path around the park except for Mary who believed that no one would use it along Harlem. Attendees who jog in the park stated that they would use it. . There was some discussion about the width of the path. Ms. Bellalta stated that a 6' wide path has become a standard in park design to allow two people to stroll side by side and to allow people to pass each other. A resident stated the path in Euclid Square was narrower than 6'. It was decided to agree on the need for the path and to discuss widths and materials later.

Dog Park

Mr. Mac Manus stated that at previous meetings there was a majority in favor of a dog park in Maple Park. But that there had been objections by residents that live on Maple. However, the Park District had received some emails from residents along Maple expressing their support for a dog park. There was general discussion on Dog Parks with some residents stating their objections to any dog park in the park and others expressing their support. A resident brought up the Dog Park in Forest Park and said that there had been incidents there and stated that the police were called. Mr. Mac Manus stated that if there is to be a dog park



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at Maple, the Forest Park dog park is an example of how not to run a dog park. Representatives of Friends of Oak Park Dogs stated that residents should look at the dog park in Ridgeland Common for an example of how a dog park should be run and that there had been no incidents there.

Dogs are able to use the softball field on Saturday and Sunday mornings to run off leash but there is no suggestion for doing something similar at Maple. All of Maple would need to be enclosed for such a scenario/use. Any area devoted to dogs must be completely fenced in and must also comply with Cook County.

Mr. Mac Manus stated that he had received an email from a resident suggesting that the Dog Park be placed at North West corner of the park. Altamanu drew up this suggestion just before the meeting and therefore did not have an exact square footage of the suggested Dog Park area.

Mr. Mac Manus presented three potential sites for a Dog Park:

- Center
- North
- South

Each of these sites were discussed in detail but the consensus of the meeting was that if a Dog Park was to be installed in Maple Park it should be at the North end of the park, close to Harlem and the concrete plant.

There was discussion about the time the dog park would open. It was agreed that residents could see how it operated and then, if necessary, they could negotiate the operating hours of the dog park. Mr. Mac Manus stated that the first official dog park in Oakland, California had Bark Free hours because of similar circumstances.

Play lot

Most participants were in favor of leaving the play lot in its present location, but it should be well lit for safety and the trees and shrubs trimmed up for better visibility.

Several participants would like the opening in the fence to Harlem that is near the play lot moved further north away from the present location that is in a direct line from the play lot to Harlem. A resident also requested a water feature or drinking fountain for the kids.



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The existing play lot is not ADA compliant and will have to be changed/redesigned to allow access for those with disabilities. Also play equipment safety zones between pieces of equipment has increased in the last few years and therefore the same pieces would require a much larger area. The existing play lot is approx. 9 years old and will have to be replaced soon. When this occurs, a new location should be considered.

There was consensus that some pieces of play equipment should be placed amongst the trees between the ball diamonds.

Tennis courts

Various schemes for the tennis courts were examined including reducing the size to allow for a path along Maple, removing one tennis court to give more open space and access through the park but all those remaining at the meeting were in favor of moving the tennis courts to the south end of the park. Mr. Mac Manus stated that a family had been in attendance at the meeting who lived at the southern end of the park and that they had been against such a move and one attendee stated that she was representing a friend who was on vacation and was against “touching the tennis courts”. However, she was in favor of moving the courts. The moving of the tennis courts would open up the center of the park and provide a new green space and a continuous chain of meadows the length of the park.

The moving of the tennis courts would require transplanting some smaller trees and the removal of some trees. Mr. Mac Manus showed a drawing of two tennis courts at the south end but positioned to avoid the largest of the trees. Ms. Bellalta stated the sizes and species of the trees that might be affected, 3 pines with two in decline and 7 other trees between 4” – 8” caliper which could be relocated on site. The largest of the trees, a 2 stem Mulberry, would not be affected and could be saved even though Mulberry is not considered a significant species. Some of the pines have been affected by borers and viruses and that some of the crabapples were coming to the end of their cycle. Mr. Grandy of the Park District has been planting new crab apples in this area and they could be moved easily. An attendee stated that the majority of the trees that might be affected were not of high quality. Ms. Bellalta stated that many more trees would be planted to replace whatever trees were taken out.

At the request of a resident Mr. Balling committed to not moving the existing tennis courts until the new ones are constructed.

Fence along Harlem

There was consensus again as at previous meetings in favor of an ornamental fence along Harlem.



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Mr. Balling summed up, thanked the attendees for coming and participating and reminded all to please attend a fourth Community Meeting scheduled for Monday, September 10th at 7:30 p.m. at Carroll Center, 1125 S. Kenilworth at which time a Master Plan for the park, based on comments made by the public and at the focus group meetings, would be presented.

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