

Mills Park
Focus Group Meeting # 1
Building Grounds, Security and Safety, Staff
Meeting held at Pleasant Home at 9am
217 Home Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302

September 10, 2008

The following are the comments received from focus group participants.

History

There was a discussion about the history of the site

This property was originally purchased by John Farson, a wealthy broker in the 1800's.

A series of properties were accumulated in order to create the private estate.

\$30,000 was spent on one site.

In 1897 Architect George Maher was employed to build the house for John and Mamie Farson.

The house is currently on the National Historic Register.

After the construction of the house Farson continued to expand the site.

Following Farson's unexpected death in 1910, Herbert S. Mills bought the house and estate in 1911.

Mills and his wife died in 1929-30. Their children held onto the house during the depression.

In 1939 the family sold the house to the Village Board for \$212,000 with the arrangement that the property would be called Mills Park.

In the 1960's the outbuildings, stables, summer house and conservatory were demolished due to their poor condition and the lack of funds for their upkeep. The house was considered for demolition but saved.

The home's design positions it for show, orientating it at the termination of Pleasant Street.

The landscape was designed in the Italianate style, with terraces, steps, changes in level and broad lawns. The lines across the landscape are remnants of the straight lines which once defined terraces on the property.

The House has been open to the public since 1939. The foundation has been in operation since 1990. The Oak Park and River Forest Historical Society made the house its home in 1969. The house (design) is very well respected in the area, and in the architectural community around the world.

Many different interest groups sought to develop the outlying space around the house, but were never allowed to.

This is the only building of Maher's 300 which is open to the public. It is a very important site and park in the neighborhood and in Oak Park.

Historic Template

The historic landscape template is very important for the Pleasant Home Board Members. The long range plan would be to put everything back the way it was, but there is a strong understanding of the economic reality (lack of funds) and the modern uses of the park.

The original stables were 2 stories (Designed by Maher).

Farson owned 6 automobiles (first president of the American Automobile Association).

The top tower on the stables had a carillon which rang on the hour. Schools and people in the neighborhood adjusted their watches to that structure, prior to its burning in 1914.

When the original stables burned to the ground, Mills got Maher to rebuild them to the original specifications.

The Italianate style garden is historically significant and was mimicked in many north shore, Hyde Park, and Western Suburbs.

Areas of the park were at one time terraced, with sunken patios. The highest part of the site was near the house, and the lowest part was to the southern end.

The Fence/National Historic Register

The fence along Home and Pleasant is historic. The fence on Marion was added later.

The foundation cares mostly about the historic fence surrounding the house.

Some people have felt that the park feels like a private estate; perhaps if we remove the fence on the west end it would make the park feel more public.

If the fence was removed in portions, it would change the way this park functions hugely.

How important is it to keep the entire fence?

I would caution removing any part of the fence as it might jeopardize the grant application for preservation.

If we can leave the historic fence alone I think we're better off, unless we absolutely have to.

The Mills family erected the fence on the west area, it was not a George Maher design and it is not landmarked or historic.

A portion of this fence was relocated to Ridgeland when the Mills Tower was erected.

The park district has stored roughly 14/15 panels of the SW fence totaling roughly 130 linear feet.

Some of this fence in storage is in better shape than others. It is currently covered and resting on blocks.

What if you were to take that fence and sell it through Macy's or an auction and utilize it for resources for Park improvements both current and future?

The cost to restore the existing fence along Home Avenue will be very high.

You can find the foundations of all the buildings on site as they remain warm in the evening as the grass cools down.

The neighboring property owner (to the west) has expressed interest in improving the NW fence line with cooperation from the Park District. He's been quite active in restoration projects.

Paths/Desire Lines

Desire lines have been made through the grass across the park due to the location of the fence openings and the way people use the park.

The desire lines are really from the commuters, people walking to and back from the train. Also going to Lake Street, the stores and cinema.

I think we need to work with the multiple desire lines the best we can.

The feeling is that the desire lines might as well be incorporated into the design.

If we do not change the entryway locations, the desire lines will be here to stay.

You could use gardens to encourage foot traffic in a particular direction.

The number one need identified from the 2004 Park District attitude & interest survey was for walking paths, walking trails.

Pleasant Home Pavilion

The Pleasant Home Foundation currently rents the home for weddings and events.

This is a good source of revenue and a community service but it takes a toll on the house.

Many years of this added wear and tear have made them look at other alternatives to providing that service while maintaining the home in a museum-like state.

The Foundation already erects tents in the grounds and has studied placing a permanent tent along the back 50' of the western side of the house.

The proposed tent would be cooled in summer and heated in winter.

Opinions in the room vary and comments range from "tacky" to general support and agreement.

The conservatory has the same situation. A lot of wear and tear is incurred on the site.

The tent would be unique to the site, perhaps having architectural elements to match the house but as yet the design is not defined.

In general the neighbors are supportive of the house being used and brought to life.

Due to the lack of endowment for the home, the financial difficulties are understood.

There will likely be a few people who dislike the idea.

Goal is to preserve the home in order to provide people with an opportunity to appreciate the historic architecture and furnishing/interiors.

Oak Park's Broadening Urban Density Demographic

New developments are popping up in the vicinity of Mills Park.

The demographic will likely be young couples and older couples; not really a lot of families with kids are likely in those areas.

The village is always looking at increasing density in the downtown area, so having a park nearby is a positive asset.

Many of these new developments won't have much open space.

If you subdivide Oak Park into various segments you'll find that in this area of the village, you have a recreational dead zone. You don't really have ball fields, tennis courts or playgrounds. These are things that have to be born in mind as you make these long-term decisions. You don't know what kind of people are going to be moving into these apartment complexes in the future, or what they will need.

When the density of the area changes, you will have young adults looking for a place to exercise, be outside, etc.

Historic Restoration

If you were to rebuild the stables, how would they be used?

They could be used as a gift shop, tour center, or a conference center. The difficulty is that it's disconnected to the house and therefore difficult to use in conjunction with the house.

How would people feel about restoring the tennis courts?

My understanding is that the Park District has more tennis courts than the parks need.

If we restored the sunken areas it would chop up the park quite a bit. There are lots of trees. By recreating the old template, all the spaces will become even smaller. The character will change.

There is a wish to restore the fountain.

The other question is do we consider recreating the terraced levels over time?

If we do decide to recreate these sunken areas, there will be ADA issues that will need to be addressed.

If stairs are recreated, ramps will be provided alongside them.

Park Access, Signage, Shuttle

The signage for the park is hidden.

To get here from the train you have to go through the underpass. People do not like going under the underpass.

It would be nice to tie this house into the Frank Lloyd Wright pathway utilizing the signage, and tie it into other tourist areas in Oak Park. Yes get more recognition of the house

I believe it would be useful to have signage to get you here, and to illustrate the rules of the park better.

If we can keep the shuttle, that can help a little to make the connections. (Stop is right out in front).

The Village is improving Marion and Oak Park Avenue underpasses as they are the primary walking routes. If they were more inviting, that would be desirable. Eventually the Village may get to the one on Home.

Would it be better to do a more obvious entrance along Marion Street?

If we were to create a secondary entrance on Home further to the south, we could look at the possibility of opening up the fence there.

Currently people squeeze through gaps in the fence to access the park at the NW.

It makes more sense to restore the east side of the historic template as it is more connected to the house. It would make it more intimate between the house and the fence. It would also emphasize the north entrance more.

Teens, Kids, Security, Safety

Lighting is very important to the park.

This park is unusual as it is completely enclosed by a fence and hidden by buildings.

What are the safety implications for restoring the sunken panels' within the park?

In terms of egress, if one got confused or if one missed a step, it could be a safety hazard in terms of falling.

Mills Tower is home to many elderly users of the park.

It's important to provide sufficient lighting and to make the areas very accessible for people who might have a problem negotiating steps.

Perhaps we could use heated sidewalks to keep the paths dry and clear of snow in the winter. Heated sidewalks are incredibly expensive.

Look into permeable pavers / stones, and permeable concrete.

What type of foliage growth/trees are envisioned, as they can either enhance security or hinder it?

If the gardens are more formal, there will be less of a chance for the landscaping to be overgrown, thus providing greater visibility within the park.

Historically the estate had very few shrub layers. The photos show mostly trees and flowers.

Pots and potted plants can provide relief without blocking views.

Kids and some homeless do hang out in the park. It was bad a few years ago but not as bad now.

Play Area

If we did have a play lot, could we make it a unique play lot in George Maher's style? Perhaps using play elements to tie the park into the house?

Often grandchildren visit the residents at Mills Tower. I am sure they would like one.
The existing concrete curb area near the Mills Tower is the remnant of an old play area.
Those concrete remains may be removed.
Now may be the time to consider adding a play lot.
The closest children's play area is the Randolph tot lot.
The incorporation of a child's play area would have to take into account the free play portion

Passive Park/Trees

This is a great park where you can remove yourself from sounds, traffic and people passing by.
Many of the users play Frisbee; on the weekends there are families picnicking.
Please avoid putting in too many memorial plaques.
The park has many existing Memorial Trees; please notify us if any are relocated.
Everyone is very concerned that the trees are kept.
Would adding formalized gardens change the nature of the park away from being passive?
There is a sign that says no ball playing in this park. And everyone obeys signs!!!!
I wouldn't be very quick to change it at all.
I'd be inclined to keep it as it is like a British park in a way.
This park is one of the great neighborhood parks which are truly passive. Others are filled with sporting events. I think we should try to preserve that the best we can.
The park is an important piece of the neighborhood and community.
Walking is fairly passive, that would probably be embraced by the public.
With the young adults, there could be some use for leagues or activities on a small scale.
Possibly volleyball, softball, on a recreational basis. Perhaps tennis courts can be restored here.
One of the things we need to think about is that uses are changing, roving bands of volleyball players move from park to park. They do not have a specific area to use and unfortunately they can cause a lot of erosion. There is not a real need for youth sports leagues here.
There is a lack of green space south of the El tracks (in the vicinity of the park). The majority of the green space is across Harlem and North of the El.
I like the idea of formalizing the north part and keeping the southern part more free formed as it is now. We need something like this where people can be free to lie out in the grass.

Flower Bed Restoration

If you put in formal flower beds, please install irrigation systems. It will save money for water and labor. Underground irrigation would help tremendously.
Restoring these (historic) flower beds would take an enormous amount of maintenance.

Given the park district's limited resources who would maintain the gardens if the flower beds were restored.

Perhaps beds of annuals could be planted in the spring and maintained throughout the summer, even dedicating one person to take care of a particular garden.

If you are talking about dedicating a single employee from the Park District to spend all their time here, that's unlikely.

Master Gardens are an arm of the University of Illinois. They do educational programming and teach people how gardens work.

You can get Master Gardener Team leaders to organize maintenance

If we restored the Italianate Garden you could also offer tours.

Think about sustainability issues, collecting rain water, using grey water for the plants, utilizing the topography etc.

All are absolutely open to a contemporary interpretation of the original design.

Look at natives in a broad sense such as perennials rather than annuals.

Rather than restoring it exactly as it was, look at it as a more contemporary version. More plants are available now than were back then.

Gardens are very popular for wedding sites.

The gardens at Lindberg Park are too large and the prairie plants have become invasive and have crowded each other out. There is not enough staff to maintain them. Originally that was supposed to be done by volunteers.

We need to look at sustainability as a major issue, as labor is expensive. Irrigation will allow plants to establish themselves, but once the spreading of invasive plants begins it is hard to stop.

Maintenance is critical.

The environmental committee is trying to create a stewardship program for the parks; they could help with upkeep at the park i.e. weeding and planting. It seems this would be an ideal site for the program, as it would be easily tied into finding volunteers from the area and those interested in history.

The restoration of the formal gardens could occur in the vicinity closest to the home, the south end of the park would be left for passive recreation.

Seating

I'd like to see a fountain and benches in the park.

Mills Tower

During the week, the park is used by residents of the Mills Tower which is a low income senior housing complex.

They use the park to walk their dogs, and gather outside the tower.

A few of the seniors volunteer at the house from time to time and the foundation has a good relationship with them.

Perhaps the volunteer opportunities would be better for taking care of plants.

There could be opportunities for horticulture therapy, trying in new planting beds with the seniors in the community. (Please note that at a later meeting the residents of Mills Tower liked the idea of more planting but did not favor being volunteers)

Potential for raised beds near the senior center.

The Greening Task Force has been looking at stewardship models. There could be a tie in at Mills Park.

Drainage

There doesn't seem to be any major drainage issues on the site.

The driveway area by the house may have standing water at times.

The Park District has dealt with sink holes and as the freeze thaw cycle occurs there is some settling.

Mills Park
Focus Group Meeting # 2
Mills Tower Residence
Meeting held at Mills Tower at 11am
1025 Pleasant Place
Oak Park, IL 60302

September 10, 2008

The following are the comments from the focus group participants.

Passive Park/Trees

It is a beautiful park.

We use the park for reading and sitting.

Should the park be used for some form of active recreation? Would you be willing to share this part of the park?

Do we have a choice to share? I mean its park district.

What about a little volleyball area?

Not underneath my window.

Putting the Volleyball courts up north wouldn't bother us. (Maybe Misty May and those girls would come play.) Pathways for jogging and walking would be nice.

But keep it mostly green

The park is a very unusual shape and is broken up in zones. Would you have any problem if there was a playground over in your zone?

No, a playground doesn't bother you at 1 or 2 in the morning.

It's a nice sound children playing, we have no problem with kids being over there.

Do your families come visit you with kids? Some nod.

My grandchildren came from Minnesota; they can't believe that what we have is a park because there is no playground. They want me to run with them!

It would be nice to have a children's play area with seating.

A kid's playground would be nice for when my family visits.

Dogs in the Park

The park is being used for dogs.

When the dogs get in the park, the dogs chase the squirrels and then the people. I love dogs but I think people should keep them on leash.

Many dog walkers use the park for exercising their 3+ dogs.

People let their dogs use our parking lot as a bathroom. They go through our parking lot on their way to the park.

Do you have to keep that gate open? Sounds like you should close your gate.
Enforce dog rules, have police check on people sleeping and drinking around the park and benches.

The Fence/National Historic Register

How would you feel if a portion of the fence along Marion Street was removed?
It might open up the area to the street. Would it make that much difference to you?
No, it isn't a big deal. But if you do a kid park there, it might be good to get rid of the fence.
How would you feel about an opening on the East side of the park with a path running over to Mills Tower?
That would be good. It would make it easier for people who live down at that part of the street to get over here.
It also might be easier for residents of Mills Tower to leave the park and walk down into town.
If there was an additional opening in the fence, it would be helpful to residents who have trouble negotiating the steps (by Pleasant Home) safely.

Paths/Desire Lines

Would you like to see a full path the whole way around the park?
Some say yes for walking, some say no they would like to see it stay as green as possible.
If there was a walking path, it wouldn't take away too much from the green, would it?
We would like to see completion of the walk all the way to Home Avenue. We stumble on the path.
Put wood chips under benches, and on paths
Limbed up the trees
Some residents currently go NE and negotiate the steps to leave the park.
The residents in wheelchairs don't go to the north part of the park due to steps.
The limbs of the trees on the short diagonal are low and hit your face as you walk on the path; they need to be limbed up.
Does anyone have suggestions as to where you might want to see other entry ways to the park?
No, we are fine, we have plenty.
What about an entry on the east and a path to Mills Tower?
Oh yes that would be nice

Pleasant Home

Clean outside of building around base. Paint the back of the building, windows etc.
Enhance the landscape to the south of the building, the grass is very worn.
More flowers on the south side, it's a good place for photographs and events.
Please keep more barrels around for trash.

Historic Template

Does the historic template matter to you, or do you want to see it just green?
The fountain would be nice, but otherwise just green.
I would like to see a water fountain.
Make it a small fountain, it wouldn't take away too much of the green.
Would the fountain being placed in the original spot (on the east side)? It would be a nice destination.
Put benches around the fountain; that would be so nice and peaceful.

Teens/ Security/Safety

We see homeless people drinking and teenagers smoking pot after dark.
Why are there no police around after dark?
Yes there are.
We need to get the beat officer around more in the park after dark.
I am on the second floor and I witness a lot of what these people do, I get a little high off of second hand smoke every night.
Does it make you frightened?
No it makes me concerned that they don't have any other area to congregate. I am thinking they removed the bench on Pleasant because the people in the apartment area complained, so they said put it over to the seniors.
The places with more activity tend to have more eyes on everything and are likely to be safer.

Flower Bed Restoration

My favorite things are the benches and the trees.
I would like to see flowers (many people agree).
Would anyone be willing to volunteer to maintain the flower beds?
The answer is no. We've done that already
Would you guys be interested in having raised planting beds (enabling gardens)?
Enabling Gardens would allow people of different ages and abilities to garden at any time of their lives. We would provide people with special raised beds that would provide easier

access. People can sit and reach in, and the plants used in them could be used indoor in the winter and have special sensory features. Plants could be dried and used in crafts etc and planned for the next area. A lot of people would maintain part of the garden all year long. Sometimes we'd have some vegetables.

It would probably be something that you would maintain and enjoy but the public could enjoy. Any thoughts, does that sound intriguing?

One person thinks it sounds interesting, but the overall consensus is that they are retired and don't want to do that kind of stuff anymore.

We like the idea of the flowers but we don't want to maintain them.

Seating

The seating is very dull and it is quite wet by the benches.

It is the low point of the park and floods.

Why did they remove the benches on the Marion side and the Pleasant side of the park?

Currently, people up to no good congregate on the remaining benches in front of the senior center.

Why did they remove the other benches?

Would you want to see a terrace or a patio out front of the building? There is grumbling about the homeless people taking it over. It would have to be a fenced off area

They don't actually want a terraced patio because it wouldn't be secured for the Mills Tower Residents only.

Drainage

Do you get flooding? Yes near the benches.

Mills Park Site Plan
Focus Group Meeting # 3 Notes
Mills Park - Area Business Community
Meeting held at Pleasant Home at 1pm
217 Home Avenue
September 10, 2008

The Fence/National Historic Register

The restoration plan for the fence is for the portion of the fence that is on the National Historic Register which is the fence along Pleasant Street and Home Avenue.

The fence on the NW border of the park is chain link.

Replace the chain link fence along the NW border of the park with something aesthetically pleasing, and at a reasonable cost.

Who owns the current chain link fence?

The portion of the fence along the southwest corner of the park, which was removed, and is in storage, should be reused if possible.

The park district currently has possession of that piece of the fence.

This fence wouldn't have to be as tall as the existing fence; the current chain link fence is not consistent with the rest of the park fencing height.

The length of fence to be replaced would roughly be 350'. This would be a nice amenity for the residents of the apartment building. The owner is willing to contribute to part of the cost. The purpose would be to maintain consistency with the rest of the property.

There is a suggestion to remove part of the fence along the SW corner of the park, opening the park more onto Marion St.

This may bring more people into the park, and create a self policing effect for the less safe areas.

It is better to keep the fence and the contained feeling for the park. It is more private and safer.

That decision will be part of the public process.

Are there any places where you would see having more entrances?

I feel the fence provides a very classic/ traditional look and feel.

I would like to provide my residents with private access to the park, perhaps through a keyed entry in the proposed new fence. The only catch is people wouldn't be able to get in the park without that key.

It's a question worth asking, if you pay for part of the fence would you be able to provide a gate for your tenants to have keyed access.

The fence is a safety net to keep the kids there, I would definitely keep it.

Pleasant Home Pavilion

How you would feel about the temporary structure?

Does that mean you would no longer have party events inside the house itself?

Yes we envision we would use the house to pass through. Guests would be welcome to tour within the house but events should be moved out of the house.

The wear and tear is showing on the furniture from it being constantly moved for events.

My main concern about the tent is the location. Have you put any thought into locating it on the south side of the house? We notice the noise when there are events to the west side of the house. Sound seems to carry into the park and outlying areas when things occur in that area, more so than to the south.

There is also a visual concern from tenants that move into the buildings. A lot of time the prime apartments face the park, people pay for that view of the house with the back lighting of the house.

Hopefully the views of the house might be taken into consideration.

Has there been consideration taken to placing the tent to the south side?

No it doesn't work logistically or aesthetically.

Historic Template

Grant funding will be used to repair the house

Our hope is that the historic nature of the site is reviewed, respected and in some cases brought back.

Park Access

I like the fact that the park is enclosed with designated entrances.

Security

In Oak Park we have the PADS program which operates from October to May. I'd love to see some of our extensive taxes to extend the PADS program through the whole year. Then you alleviate the homeless problem in many of the Oak Park parks.

It's a horrible thing to design a park so homeless people won't stay.

It's terrible that the PADS program kicks people out in May.

Homeless people don't seem to be as active during the day as they likely haven't had much to drink yet.

We fought for years to get the bench behind the apartment building removed. Just recently they have taken it out and things are much better.

We have had more problems with local gangs' activity, openly doing drugs, being loud and obnoxious, throwing bottles, and on occasion threatening tenants.

Removing the bench has really taken care of this problem. It has changed so much. I have seen local gangs stash drugs in the trees in the park. It is perhaps a social issue that the village of Oak Park is facing. Would you want to see the park locked at night? I actually see people walking their dogs here at night and I think that makes it a safer place. Our tenants ask if it's safe to walk here at night. I like to see people walking their dog in the park at 3 am. I think that if you lock up the park, you are going to discourage local residents from using the park for proper activities. You will still get the gangs climbing over the fence, and then you will have them locked in. The community will probably start to feel that they are being locked out of the park. I'd prefer to not see it locked up. I find it interesting that the benches along Home have much fewer problems than the other ones within the park. What if the park had a lock and residents of the neighborhood had a key? You can't do this with a public park. People are looking for a social space. The problem is that the people who appreciate the benches during the day time won't be using them at night, which is when the gangs come and use them.

Play Areas

There is concern regarding noise from a playground if it were put in the park. The problem with ball playing in the park is that some of the teenagers throw a baseball very hard and it can go through a window. Mills Park was always called the quiet park and we were very reluctant to use it when we had little kids. A tot lot would be nice for the YMCA preschool camp/ preschool program. With a children's play area, there is always concern over older children coming to use those structures. Adding a play area may take away from the quiet nature of the park. Currently the park offers free play for kids. They typically come and run around as there isn't anything else they can do. We utilize the park for the same reason with the YMCA as there is nowhere else to take them. If you put the tot lot there, other people in the neighborhood would use it and it would no longer be a quiet park. Seems you just want the park for yourselves and your tenants. The play area wouldn't be exclusive to anybody.

The play area may attract gangs to it at night as it would provide an area for them to congregate.

There is always room for collaboration with programs as far as events. We are always looking for more space etc.

Do you have any specific requests or something you would like to see in the park for YMCA in general. There is nothing specific, just having it available to its members.

Passive Park

In general I don't want to see the feeling of the park change from being peaceful to be more athletic.

I like the traditional classic neighborhood feeling, it makes it more of a community place. Mills Park has a lot of character and charm.

I would add tall trees.

If you are going to make improvements I would keep it very close to the original character.

I like the idea of adding a water element.

I don't think you want to increase activity in the park; you want to keep it peaceful.

Could you have BBQ pits there where people could cook out/grill out?

The smoke from BBQs goes right into the apartment building windows and is annoying.

Seating

Could there be single seats instead of benches?

This may prevent 20 plus gang members from congregating together. It may change the level of psychology.

There could be individual chairs that people put away at night.

I like the idea of single seats.

There are not many problems around the east side benches. There is more foot traffic in that direction, so people don't seem to linger or gather in large groups.

I would like to see seating around the fountain if it was restored.

Mills Tower

The Y does programming with Mills Tower, including trick or treating and caroling.

Mills Park

Focus Group Meeting # 4

Representatives of the Pleasant Home Foundation

Meeting held at the Pleasant Home Foundation at 7pm

217 Home Avenue

Oak Park, IL 60302

September 10, 2008

The following are the comments received from the focus group participants.

Passive Park, Activities and /Trees

Keep the park passive

This is a museum as well as a park

Once you open the door to active recreation then you are there.

What about a children's play area?

Could be a play area which is architecturally-themed and therefore has a visual link to the house.

What about a "natural" free play area?

Could be done but there is a liability issue for park districts as they have to use non-standard equipment and therefore there is increased cost and the District has to take liability.

It should be located in the SW of park

Historic Landscape Template

Having the historic house on its original site is a huge plus and very unusual.

Restoring part of the site and having some sort of garden would be a great attraction and could become a destination

Maintenance will be an issue

The plan showing the pathway system is not totally accurate but it is close.

The path system was for an estate. This is now a park and we need to treat the site differently.

It would be wonderful to restore all of the buildings and grounds but it is unlikely that we will have the funds but whatever is done should not preclude the rebuilding of the stables etc.

We could restore or reinterpret the walkways, terraces and the fountain on the Home Ave. side.

They should be ADA and be appropriate for today.

Use permeable pavers or similar.

Bring back some historic element but make it win win for everyone, something everyone will want

Keep important part close to the house so we have a primary historic zone.

Best idea is to recreate the fountain and create an opening/entry on the east.

We should recreate the sense of grade change by the fountain but make it ADA

Fountain

Some maintenance and liability

Has greater appeal to more people, it would be a great attraction and a feature in the Village

The Fence/National Historic Register

The fence along Pleasant and Home is the original fence and is part of the National Historic Designation. The fence along Marion is historic but part of the Mills addition to the property and not part of the designation. A discussion was held on the importance of the fence and its effect both good and potentially bad on the park. The fence controls access and creates desire lines from entry to entry and limits use.

Should we open up the park and make an opening in the fence?

Opening the fence up would increase the likelihood of unsuitable behavior at night.

This is a park not a private estate and it should be more open.

Additional entries into the park would increase pedestrian traffic which can only be good for the Foundation - creating more exposure.

Additional entryways would be more welcoming to residents

What if we broke through the fence at the SE corner?

Maybe we could get an easement from the neighbors instead.

This site belongs to everyone, opening the fence would make the space better

May create a better use of the site

Changing the fence could affect grant applications.

The changes could be sympathetic to the historic nature of the site. It is a park not a private estate and most would recognize that some changes are necessary.

It could be done properly and could be approved.

We could meet ADA issues more easily.

Marion side of park needs attention

Open it up, cut shrubs down near circular path

Parking

Residents complain about parking but it is an urban area

Provide parking for staff, those who are physically challenged, the elderly etc.

Could be to the NW of the building on the gravel area. No trees would be affected

Parking on site in the park could be difficult

I have never had to walk more than a block to find parking

Parking is an issue, certainly needs to be made appropriate for the staff.

Maintenance

Maintenance and snow removal are concerns throughout the parks

It is not necessarily the Park District's job to plough all the paths. It is a huge maintenance burden

Yes but they do not even bother to get ploughs that fit the paths, they damage the park

They have been maintaining the park in a certain way for years and do not want to change.

Spending money to create features is great but we need to maintain these features

A maintenance plan needs to be designed for all the parks and a special one for the historic parks

The PDCC needs new recycle system

A new plan is now in place that could change the system

We need new, nicer looking trash cans

I hate those trash cans.

Site Furniture, Lighting

Lighting will be difficult to introduce into park, we need more but carefully done

Lighting needs to be appropriate for the site, not the corten 70's standards. They are unsuitable

There needs to be a design vocabulary for all park furniture, lighting, benches, bike racks and especially trash cans. This is an historic site

I hate the blue barrels

They used them in the past so they could be seen but they are not necessary now

We need bike racks, they chain them to the fence

What about benches?

Use individual chairs,

Rental?

No, just like at Bryant Park where they are free and chained up at night

Planting

We have discouraged planting in the park until we had a master plan. We did not want to have trees just plopped down.

We do need planting but the parks are becoming overgrown with trees. We really do not need this memorial tree program anymore.

The Park District encourages donations for memorial benches etc. as well

What happens if a memorial tree dies?

It is replaced, that means some of the trees that are less than perfectly placed are here to stay?

Not necessarily. We need a definite plan.

Potential Temporary Structure/Pavilion

We need a way of raising more funds and reducing wear and tear on the house

It is a museum and we would like to have it that way

We have to erect and take down these temporary tents when we have events. It is time consuming and costly.

We have thought about a semi-permanent tent-like structure to the rear of the building

The term tent is unfortunate as it raises an image that some people at the earlier meetings today thought tacky and that is not what we want at all. It should be architecturally designed.

Well it is more than that; it would be attractive, tied into the design of the house. We should be careful not to convey the wrong perception

It is really an "auxiliary event space".

It should not impact the trees.

It could be landscaped and made to integrate more into the park.

Some neighbors do complain about noise but it is usually the same ones, most people do not mind.

Some want any structure to go on the south side of the house

It doesn't work there and it is unfortunately out of the question.

Teens/ Security/Safety

We have had a few problems with graffiti. But really only once in ten years

Sometimes people drink etc. on the front porch or on the steps.

The police come if they are called.

My husband often goes out and talks to them and they move out into the park.

Often it is just kids.

The PADS program is not open all year and these people have nowhere to go.

Benches were removed and that changed things

It is perhaps a social issue that the village of Oak Park is facing.

I find it interesting that the benches along Home have much fewer problems than the other ones within the park. It is the lighting and closeness to the street.

Still they have some of the same issues too.