



Randolph Tot Lot Site Master Plan

Focus Group Meeting # 2 Senior Citizen Group

Meeting held: Oak Park Arms
408 S. Oak Park Ave.
Oak Park, IL 60302

Date of Meeting: July 29, 2009, 11am

Attendees:

Josephine Bellalta, Altamanu
Mark Jirik, Altamanu
Larry Bloon, Oak Park Arms Resident
Paul Madarus, Oak Park Arms Resident
Marline Solbery, Oak Park Arms Resident
Catherine Kowalski, Oak Park Arms Resident
Laura Morris, Oak Park Arms Resident
Desi Vasquez, Oak Park Arms Senior Coordinator

Introduction & Overview

Diane Stanke opened the meeting at 11 AM thanking everyone for coming and giving a brief history of the Park District of Oak Park's master plan development process. She noted the considerable amount of park planning and renovating taken place in the last 4 years and introduced the Randolph Tot Lot.

Josephine Bellalta began by presenting the close vicinity of the Oak Park Arms to the Randolph Tot Lot and also the farther Lake St. and Mills Park. She also relayed the existing conditions at the Randolph Tot Lot noting:

- a sand area
- 3 benches
- a picnic table
- a couple of older pieces of equipment
- a drinking fountain
- and a spattering of trees



Josephine then explained that the Park District recently acquired the adjacent lot on the corner of Oak Park Ave. and Randolph St. from the Village of Oak Park. The site is bordered to the south by an apartment and currently consists of:

- turf
- some hedges
- four light poles
- and a couple of sidewalks going to the apartment

Josephine further explained the circumstances of the new site and the issues of connecting it to the Randolph Tot Lot. The recently acquired lot has to have passive programming, meaning that there can be no baseball, basketball, etc. and that the playground cannot be extended across the alley. Passive programming includes activities like chess or checkers, vegetable gardening, or areas where people can sit and socialize.

The main issue that follows the project is the alley running between the existing Randolph Tot Lot and the newly acquired piece of land. The alley is a physical disconnect between the two areas and could be unsafe for children playing around the tot lot. We would hope to join both lots together and vacate the alley in-between in order to create one linear park but that may not be an available option. If the alley was to be closed it would create difficulties for dump trucks and would necessitate traffic coming in and out of the alley from Washington Blvd.

Josephine then opened up the discussion asking for any appropriate suggestions, ideas, or thoughts regarding the Randolph Tot Lot and newly acquired additional lot.

I like the idea of chess and seating but it should be quiet – there shouldn't be any running, screaming kids.

Gardening would be okay but I think it would be easy for me.

Raised gardening beds would be easier and seating could also be provided so that you could garden and sit simultaneously.

The garden on the roof (of the Oak Park Arms) is still being used for gardening. I think something like chess would be better suited for the park area. There could be an area for picnics that is multifunctional with flower beds around it.

Playground Area

We need to update the existing playground because many of the pieces are dated. Are there any active desires you would like to see addressed here? Maybe something like bocce ball? We put in a bocce ball court at Field Park.

Maybe horseshoes.

I like the idea of horseshoes.



A lot of these games are already in the building (Oak Park Arms) and so I'm sure as to how many seniors would go outside to play them. Most would probably enjoy an area to picnic and play chess and socialize. But if you created a site with picnic tables it could become a dangerous place at night.

Maybe golf – we used to have it here inside the building.

When we were young we used to play games like jacks and marbles. We would play on the trampoline and jump rope – those are becoming popular again.

Maybe we could incorporate games like jacks and marbles into the playground.

Safety

Would the park be fenced off?

Parts of it probably will be. There are a lot nearby residences and it is pretty well lit. The park also closes at 10 PM. We will probably fence at least part of it so kids don't run out into the street.

Do they lock the parks at close?

The park district will not lock the parks but Randolph will be lit with lots of neighbors nearby. There have been no big problems up to date and we will be meeting with a beat officer at a later time.

Who will watch the children?

The parents will be watching their children playing and will be at the park the whole time their children are there.

Water Feature

How would everyone feel about a water feature? Something like a fountain that could create a little noise to drown out the noise of the nearby traffic.

I love the idea.

I like the idea of a water fountain.

Will there be a drinking fountain?

Yes, there is one there now and it will be replaced.

Site History

We've heard that the park used to be on a train or trolley line.

You should check the historical society.

If it was part of railroad at one time what then?

It would mean that there might be construction issues underground but it could also serve as a theme for the space. That was suggested this morning in the earlier focus group. An intergenerational theme was also suggested.



Those sound like good ideas. There is a converted train station building nearby and the Arms used to be a hotel. There are also underground tunnels – maybe the tunnels connected to the train station. It would be a good idea to check the historical society.

I will try to look for where the green line came to ground level. Maybe it split off there and came to Randolph. I think the green line was elevated by Harlem in the 1960s.

The Process

When will this park come up?

There will be a set of public meetings; the first is on August 5th. I would love for you to come.

When will work start?

Next year after a consensus is made following the public process. There will be a completed master plan that will be phased.

The group adjourned at 12:05.