



Scoville Park Community Meeting #4

Location: Oak Park Public Library – Veteran’s Room

Date: May 25, 2010

Time: 7pm

Minutes of Meeting

Mr. Gary Balling, Executive Director of the Park District, made the introductions to the meeting.

Gary Balling welcomed the attendees and introduced Park District Commissioners, members of the Citizen Committee and staff that were present. He provided a brief summary of the park planning process thus far and noted that Scoville Park is the seventeenth of eighteen parks to go through the process. Mr. Balling added that a great deal of information had been collected from the earlier focus groups, the three prior community meetings, and from subsequent questionnaire feedback. The hope of the fourth meeting was to reach a final plan that would be presented to the Committee of the Whole and Park Board for approval soon after in June. Mr. Balling thanked all of the attendees for participating in the public process and introduced the design team and handed the meeting over to John Mac Manus of Altamanu, Inc. Mr. Mac Manus presented a PowerPoint presentation and requested public comment and feedback along the way.

The PowerPoint presentation can be viewed on line at Website:

http://www.oakparkparks.com/NewsandInformation/FuturePlans/futureplans_scovillepark.htm

Summary of the Presentation

Mr. Mac Manus began with an overview of what would be covered in his presentation. He would provide a quick review of the public process so far, explain the emerging items of consensus, and finally review prior and new design schemes for the park asking for comment and input. Mr. Mac Manus reminded the audience that the purpose of these meetings was to reach an overall master plan, not to work out every detail of design.

The results of the first, second, and third questionnaires are posted online at:

http://www.oakparkparks.com/NewsandInformation/FuturePlans/futureplans_scovillepark.htm

Mr. Mac Manus first reviewed Jens Jensen’s (a historically renowned landscape architect) philosophy and 1913 plan for Scoville Park. Mr. Mac Manus discussed the challenge of designing the park within this historical framework but still designing for the requirements of modern-day urban society. He elaborated on the addition of the Peace Memorial, which has changed the character of the park and has



become the focal point of the park, and on the difficulty of reestablishing Jensen's planting character without creating public concern for security.

Mr. Mac Manus went over the items of emerging consensus. Some items include: recreating a path along the north edge of the park, adding a fence along Grove and widening the existing walk, expanding the meadow, adding a path along the southern edge of the meadow and incorporating a permanent stage and redesigning the entry at Oak Park & Lake.

North Edge of Park Along Ontario & Fence Along Grove

Mr. Mac Manus discussed the current issues at the park's northern edge along Ontario Ave. with a set of before and after illustrations. At Oak Park and Ontario the proposed perspective illustrated new bumpouts, colored crosswalks, a new entry on the corner, and a path along the south side of Ontario. The proposed design's purpose was to slow traffic and make the north side of the park more pedestrian friendly. An additional bumpout was proposed at the corner of Ontario and Grove to reduce crossing distance and increase safety for kids crossing. Mr. Mac Manus reviewed the existing desire lines along Grove Ave. and the proposed fence which would help protect the park and children around the tot lot. The stretch of sidewalk along Grove from the northwest corner to the existing entry into the park would be expanded from 7' to 12' in order to provide more space for pedestrians, bicyclists, and others away from the parked cars.

Public Comment

Just enforce it as a crosswalk. If the police ticket a few people for not stopping for pedestrians then more drivers will slow at that intersection.

I think the way you've shown it the radius would be much too tight to turn.

- Mr. Mac Manus responded that the perspective was a sketch not a dimensioned drawing and that the radius could be expanded to the correct geometry.

I'd rather see a bumpout at the other end of Ontario where the children cross.

If the northwest corner is going to be a main entry with bikes, strollers, etc. it needs to be bigger than a standard sidewalk.

These recommendations will be reviewed with the VOP Transportation Committee.

Southwestern Entry to Park and Library Plaza

Mr. Mac Manus described 'the hangout,' officially known as the outdoor reading room, and stated that security in the SW corner of the park had been raised as an issue in all previous meetings. Many residents showed support for its removal. Mr. Mac Manus described the proposed scheme for a new entry as more open and inviting. Moving on to the topic of the library plaza, Mr. Mac Manus showed the existing plaza's undulating edge and presented a scheme in which it was straightened giving it a more dignified feel. A curb with a low ornamental rail would protect groundcovers planted near the edge. The central portion of the park edge would remain as grass and trees with no low fence, so that tripping of park patrons during special events would not be a concern.



Public Comment

So you're going to remove the hangout just so the teenagers and users can hang out at the new plaza (Peace Plaza at the Memorial)?

- Mr. Mac Manus replied that there's been a great deal of consensus on this issue in the previous meetings. Part of the current problem is that these trouble areas, the hangout and library plaza, are on a local edge. There are apartments adjacent; it's also the entry to the library in addition to the entrance to the park. The plaza in the middle of the park around the monument would be away from residences, more regional than local, with more people circulating through the area. This area would also be relatively open and well lit with very clear sight lines.

How wide would those paths connecting from the library plaza to the park be?

- Mr. Mac Manus replied that they would probably be 8'-10'.

Could you reuse the existing materials around the library? The limestone is nice.

- Mr. Mac Manus replied that he thought that was a possibility.

I'm going to disagree with the new entry at the southwest corner. I want more mystery when I'm coming into a park. So, for that reason I dislike the open entrance.

However the majority in attendance approved of the new design.

Peace Memorial Plaza

The existing space around the monument, Mr. Mac Manus explained, provides no direct access to the monument. Desire lines that would otherwise exist from the Meadow are prevented by the wooden timbers planters and a change in grade. If a new plaza is designed appropriately, the paths could be incorporated into the space in order to increase green space, activate the plaza, and reestablish the more sinuous curves of Jensen's plan. Mr. Mac Manus reviewed the three most liked proposals from the previous meeting and presented an additional scheme. The scheme is based on Lloyd Wright's use of circles in his plans, in particular the Guggenheim Museum in NY. Mr. Mac Manus discussed some of its benefits and compromises but noted that it was still conceptual and needed further work. He then opened up all four schemes for discussion.

Public Comment

Were the pods in the fourth scheme for chess? It seems like if you remove the pods there'd be more room for the existing mature trees.

- Mr. Mac Manus explained that the pods could incorporate chess or simple seating and that the pods could be massaged or removed to avoid roots of major trees.

We need something to discourage skateboarding.

Would you use a different colored concrete or soft surface within the plaza?

- Mr. Mac Manus responded that Mike Grandy suggested the use of a soft surface material around the monument. Something like decomposed granite would prevent skateboarders from using it.

Would the pods affect the symmetry of the park?



It's a wider area from Oak Park Ave to the monument than from the Grove sidewalk to the monument.

The park is not symmetric.

Which space in your opinion works best?

- Mr. Mac Manus replied that it's a difficult question to answer and that he's really supposed to play the role of moderator.
- Mrs. Bellalta answered that after Mr. Mac Manus had finished the fourth concept it was the scheme that she thought worked best. The shape accommodates good circulation, it incorporates the better elements from both the circular and oval schemes, and it still allows for some formal beds in front of the monument.

I think someday this park is going to be an international center. The circle is a winner; it has universality with the wonderful synthesis of man and nature.

- Mr. Mac Manus noted that the circle in the fourth scheme is actually slightly stretched making a little bit of an oval. It had to stretch in order to meet the paths but also remain far enough from the mature elm to prevent any damage to it.

I think the monument presents the biggest design issue in the park. Did you look at an option with the memorial off center?

- Mr. Mac Manus replied that the team's design had started off on a much less formal aesthetic, paying more attention to the 1913 Jensen plan, but that over the course of the meetings there had been a shift. Public comment seemed to have driven the parts of the design to a more Victorian and east-coast park styled design.

I question the relationship between a formal plaza around the monument and the rest of the park. It's definitely the biggest design challenge.

I think the fourth scheme addresses some of that asymmetry.

You've also shown the canopy of the trees around the monument which is great because it illustrates some of that randomness of the park.

The monument imposes on the Jensen plan.

The circle is fine with me but I see traffic issues with the narrow walks and corridors. The plan funnels everyone through the plaza and the paths don't look wide enough where they meet the plaza.

How big are those paths? How often would the paths be used for festivals?

- Mrs. Bellalta replied that all of the paths will be increased from 5' to 6' for accessibility and that some could be enlarged depending on the level of traffic.
- Mr. Mac Manus responded that the park is only used for festivals twice a year. A lot of people said that we should not design the park for maximum use events. It is a public park.

In terms of sight lines and passive users of the park, have you considered bench placement?

- Mr. Mac Manus replied that benches would be situated to look onto the meadow and that curved benches could be used around the monument and at the entries.

Mike Grandy noted that the first scheme reduces the pavement behind the monument that he regards as a dead space. He said that putting more hardscape back there doesn't make sense.



Getting rid of desire lines is great but he wasn't sure which of the schemes accomplishes that best. Mr. Grandy disliked the third scheme because of the additional offset paths.

Is there a way to bring more active use to the space behind the monument?

- Mr. Mac Manus commented that Mr. Grandy could be correct; it could be difficult to activate that space.

Where would the Julian bust go?

- Mr. Mac Manus replied that there was a decision to set up a subcommittee that would handle all issues related to memorials and educational signage in order to avoid too much discussion on these topics during the public meetings. "We need to create a framework first and then overlay the memorial layer."

In your experience, could people's behavior readjust to a new form?

- Mr. Mac Manus responded by noting that typically this doesn't have a radical effect on people under 21.

This scheme is not a council ring. The place to put a council ring is in the northeast corner. You could have a real council ring that way.

- Mr. Mac Manus replied that someone at a previous meeting strongly disliked the idea of putting any seating in that corner because it is a local edge with apartments across the street.

I like the fourth scheme and I like the back space because I can see the Julian bust moving there with the possibility to add more busts there. I'm not sure how close you're getting to the tennis courts though.

Lighting can have a strong effect on behavior. Is lighting a big budget item?

- Mr. Mac Manus answered that lighting is another layer to the project. The monument restorer, Mr. Dajnowski, would love to have the monument properly lit and the design team would love to see "up" lighting in the surrounding trees.

I think the fourth scheme is marvelous. I don't like the apron on the north side but otherwise it's great.

- Mr. Mac Manus asked if anyone wanted to speak for any of the other schemes. He also reiterated that the schemes were still conceptual and had details that would be figured out later in the process.

Where would seating be around the monument?

- Mr. Mac Manus replied that curved benches could sit at the edges of each plaza and, in the case of the fourth scheme, around the pods off the main plaza.
- Mr. Mac Manus asked if there was anyone that strongly disagreed with scheme four. The audience made no comment.

I'd prefer to see less concrete and sidewalk overall.

What's happening west of the monument?

- Mr. Mac Manus replied that the design recommended was for a space with stones and boulders engraved with information on historic figures that lived and worked in Oak Park. Children could be encouraged to search for the stones and to make rubbings of



the engravings as a record of their trip to Scoville Park and Oak Park. Mr. Mac Manus noted that the history and sculpture subcommittee will help work on this.

Tennis Courts

The meeting moved forward onto the topic of the tennis courts. Mr. Mac Manus explained some of the discussion from previous meetings. The nearest courts in proximity are at the high school, which are not owned by the Park District and unlit. The closest Park District courts are at Taylor Park and at Longfellow Center, each approximately a mile away. The Scoville courts are centralized within the community, lit, and well used during the playing months but some residents feel they have too much of an impact on the park. There have been recommendations to remove either the western most or eastern most court in order to either expand the tot lot or enlarge and activate the northeastern corner. Mr. Mac Manus presented three schemes. The first scheme keeps all three tennis courts, adds a small northern entry on Ontario, and upgrades the tot lot within a more limited footprint (due to the tennis courts and existing tree roots). The second scheme removes the western most court, leaving two, allowing for an expanded tot lot, roll hills, and entry off of Ontario. The third scheme removes a court and relocates the other two to leave slightly more room on both the west and east sides of the park. The tot lot then can be slightly expanded while also having a larger space in the northeast corner of the park. If all three courts are shifted east, as someone had suggested in the previous meeting, they start to move too close to the roots of some mature trees. Because the existing courts are not spaced correctly by today's standards, in each of the scenarios the courts' footprint would have to increase slightly in order to compensate for room between the courts.

Public Comment

When the vote came up last meeting over whether or not to remove a court it was based on the supposition that we needed more space for the tot lot. I don't think we need to choose between a new tot lot and the removal of one court. All three courts were busy tonight, as they will be for the rest of summer, and I don't see the value of removing one.

If we moved all three courts 10' east there could be enough room for the play area and to retain all 3 courts.

I didn't think the option with the expanded meadow was favored.(NE corner)

There is room for the playground to expand to the south in the scheme with three courts.

In comparing schemes one and two, I prefer scheme two (western court removed, leaving two courts with space to expand the tot lot). There's an entry for tennis players and for parents with children going to the playground. All 3 courts are well used but the tot lot is also filled all of the time. Most tennis players can drive or bike to other locations but fathers and mothers with strollers don't have that luxury.

I think the expanded tot lot is lovely but I don't understand why we should have to lose a court.

I like the expanded tot lot. The high school tennis courts are only two blocks away.

I can share the concern with the northeast corner because it's a bit of a jungle. If kids want to roll down a hill they can do that on the hill. I think we have to do something with the space in the northeast corner.



Adding the midblock bumpout/drop-off on Ontario for the entry there makes for a potential crossing that is ultimately dangerous. It's a one way street but it's busy with traffic.

- Mrs. Bellalta replied that she had spoken with the Village and Jim Budrick who had given a preliminary okay since it was a one way street and the parallel parking falls within the Park District's property.

There should be a gate on northwest side of the courts for tennis players.

Who are you really dropping off there? You're not dropping off kids of the 2-5 age and tennis players are mainly adults. I don't think you need the drop-off.

- Mr. Mac Manus commented that it looked as though the drop-off wasn't necessary.

In terms of demographics there are more tennis players. The park is surrounded by apartment buildings, it's less of a family neighborhood. If you remove a court, it will never be rebuilt.

If you remove or relocate the three smaller trees west of the tot lot there could be more to expand.

- Mrs. Bellalta responded that it had been considered but that shade was also desired.

I wanted to touch on the demographic issue. This park is the community center so the entire demographic of Oak Park should be considered, not just the opinion of those within a couple of blocks.

Many grandparents around the park will have children visiting them and use the tot lot.

Tot lots are local theoretically.

Yes, but this is downtown too. Many parents with kids will come shopping and then go to the playground and park afterwards.

The courts at Scoville are lit. The courts at the high school are not.

Is there another option to light or add other Park District courts in Oak Park?

- Mr. Balling replied that he would be reluctant to make a promise like that because he could not guarantee what might result from other master planning processes. Mr. Balling also noted that Oak Park has many lit tennis courts compared to other communities.

But is it enough? If we could we'd make the tot lot huge but we don't have the space. These courts are used all of the time during players' hours.

Mr. Balling commented that he looked at the new entry from Ontario as an important tradeoff and stated that the entry provides an entry to a more open park for tennis players and tot-lot goers.

There is always an interaction between tennis and the tot lot. Many parents will come to the tot lot with their children and play tennis and many children will often sit by the fence and watch the tennis players.

Is the tot lot the same size? How many pieces would we be losing if it was the same size?

- Mrs. Bellalta replied that given the same size (three tennis courts) the tot lot could fit a similar sized play set as currently on site, a small set of swings, and possibly one or two small free-standing pieces. It would be a tight fit because current playground regulations have larger fall zones and play equipment has to be spaced farther apart.
- Mr. Mac Manus asked the audience to take a vote on whether or not to remove a court. 9 voted in favor of retaining all three courts and 5 voted in favor of the removal of one court. Mr. Mac Manus stated that the tennis courts were not a consensus item.



I know we don't talk about funding but does leaving or removing the tennis court make any difference?

- Mr. Mac Manus replied, not at this stage in the design.

Plaza at Oak Park Ave. & Lake St.

Mr. Mac Manus shifted the topic of discussion to the plaza at Oak Park Ave. and Lake St. Residents had asked that it become more welcoming and inviting and less cluttered. However, there have been many requests as to what should remain and be added to the plaza. Some items include; keeping the fountain in its existing location, keeping all of the trees, providing sight lines to the monument, lots of seating, a bus shelter of some type, bike racks, directional and educational signage, a message board or kiosk, and a flower display. A question remains as to whether or not the bus shelter, directional signage, and message board are really issues for the Park District. Mr. Mac Manus presented two main options (one presented previously, one new) for the redesigned plaza, each with or without the fountain remaining, in perspective and plan view. The first option, arcs into the park with an oval planter in the center. The second option, the new scheme, is more curvilinear and with slightly more space. Mr. Mac Manus also presented some diagrams illustrating where a shelter might fit outside the plaza and showed some bus shelter options but noted that the issue did not fall under the Park District's purview.

Public Comment

I like the first scheme.

The first scheme draws you into the park. You see where you're going.

I like the second scheme with the fountain remaining where it is today.

If you build the case that this was not the historic location of the fountain, I think it can be moved.(back to Lake Street location)

- Mr. Mac Manus noted that the Village will also be adding street trees in grates onto Lake St.

In the first scheme I prefer the fountain raised up but I like the first scheme better than the second.

- Mr. Balling stated that the Park District would need to coordinate with the newspapers on any new newspaper boxes.

There was no consensus on the design.

Trees

Mr. Mac Manus presented exhibits showing the trees which would need to be removed, relocated, and root pruned. There are six trees in the southwest corner of the park that have to be removed due to the new entry. There is a spruce, already leaning and not in the best shape, just northeast of the monument that would have to be removed for the peace plaza. And there is a pear just northeast of the existing tot lot that would need to be removed in order to expand the tot lot footprint. A plum tree at the NE of the tennis courts has died this year and will be removed.

Public Comment

Three of the six trees in the southwest corner and the spruce are all memorial trees.



- Mr. Mac Manus replied that the team takes the memorial trees very seriously and works with Nancy Holmes of the Park District Citizen Committee who is in charge of the memorial tree program. Often memorials can be reassigned to other trees or new trees can be planted.

Where is the important oak on the plan?

- Mr. Mac Manus showed the oak, which may be a pre-settlement tree, in the plan and said that the team would be very careful not get too close to it in addition to the 62" elm west of the monument.

The catalpa looks like it is dying and should be replaced.

- Mr. Mac Manus said that the team's arborist will have a look but thought the catalpa could be saved.

Mrs. Bellalta noted that the trees marked with orange are all smaller trees that can be relocated.

Thinking of the elm, would it help if the plaza adjacent to it was a permeable surface?

- Mrs. Bellalta responded noting that permeable systems, whether pavers or a crushed stone, still have significant profiles which can be deep. Permeability isn't so much the issue in that case. One solution is to use a geo-synthetic grid with a membrane on top that is laid on top of the existing soil surface, and raises the grade so that the tree's roots are left with minimum impact.

How many trees do we currently have in the park?

- Mr. Mac Manus replied that he did not have the number on hand but Altamanu will provide the total.

Root pruning is not such a big deal if handled correctly.

There are also anti-desiccants which can be applied to trees in order to stop trauma.

In the sketches you showed the trees next to the library and at the new entry as large with high canopies. Won't they be much smaller going in?

- Mr. Mac Manus replied that in other projects a tight budget requires the use of very small trees. The hope is that larger trees could be transplanted in this instance. It would be nice to plant 6-12" caliper trees there for an instant solution.

I think moving trees that big is questionable.

- Mr. Mac Manus responded that it's important to note that these trees would be grown to be transplanted from a nursery.

What did the arborist say about the mulberry at Oak Park and Lake? You're highlighting a weed tree that is lopsided.

- Mr. Mac Manus replied that it provides an anchor for that corner. When it does go another tree could go there instead.

Mr. Balling closed the meeting as the time neared 9PM and thanked the design team and all of the attendees for participating. The next step in the process is a presentation of the proposed plan and consensus items to the Park Board Committee of the Whole on June 3rd. Mr. Balling said that work may continue into July before we get complete consensus. The PowerPoint presentation will be available online and Diane Stanke will send a notice when the final concept is put online.