



**Scoville Park Site Plan
Focus Group Meeting #1
Buildings, Grounds & Streets Focus Group
Oak Park Public Library, 834 Lake Street,
March 3, 2010, 9:15am**

Participants:

Ben Ahring, PDCC
Jamil Bou-Saab, Terra Engineering
Craig Failor, Village of Oak Park
Nancy Holmes, Memorial Trust Committee
Don McKay, Nagle Hartray Architects
Bill McKenna, Village of Oak Park
Cara Pavlicek, Village of Oak Park
KC Poulos, Village of Oak Park
Jim Semelka, Village of Oak Park
Henrietta Yardley, Oak Park Conservatory, PDOP
Christine Graves, Commissioner, PDOP
Mike Grandy, Supt. Of Buildings & Grounds, PDOP
Mark Jirik, Altamanu, Inc.
John Mac Manus, Altamanu, Inc.
Josephine Bellalta, Altamanu, Inc.

Introduction

Executive Director Gary Balling introduced the meeting noting that Scoville is the seventeenth park of eighteen in the park district's master planning process. Scoville and Lindberg parks are the final two master plans and will be completed within this year. \$725,000 has been slated for the first phase of construction which will begin in 2012. As part of the park planning process there will be five focus groups meetings today and one tomorrow primarily to aid Altamanu, the park planners, in understanding the complexities of Scoville Park and its context. The focus group meetings will be followed by community meetings that will also be held at the library. The first of these meetings will be held on Wednesday March 24th at 7pm. Altamanu Inc. was selected through an open and detailed public process. Gary encouraged the attendees to give freely of their ideas and opinions and then handed the presentation over to John Mac Manus of Altamanu.

John Mac Manus presented a brief PowerPoint presentation summarizing some of Scoville Park's current context; its role in the community in addition to its history and the current

relationship of the park's layout to the historic plan created by Jens Jensen, the noted landscape architect, in 1913.

General Comments

Scoville is heavily used with both local and regional use

Many different uses, kids gather to play Frisbee, to sled, there are many seasonal events

People love the meadow. It is nearly always in use.

The lower meadow is irrigated, before the irrigation there would be no grass by July

Started to limit the amount of special events in order to keep the lawn healthier

The comfort station is an heirloom, still remains in pretty fair shape

Play center was originally in the northeast corner but was moved away from Oak Park Ave. and its busy traffic to the northwest corner where it is now.

There is no new immediate development expected that would impact the park

There may be a future streetscape project on Oak Park Ave. south of Lake St. that would make it similar to the updated Marion St. This work would be south of the park. There is a potential of collaboration between Village and Park District for the rehabilitation of the plaza at Oak Park and Lake Street. No road work is anticipated soon.

Within the library design process we realized that Scoville has an intimacy due to its enclosed edges. The adjacent buildings create an edge in winter and the mature trees provide an edge the rest of the year. I have some concerns about when those mature trees die. We should look ahead now to replace the mature canopy.

The park accommodates both passive and active uses. The north end is active between the playground and the tennis courts and functions as a neighborhood area.

Pathways

Currently no sidewalk on the north side of the park, instead there is a trench or desire line created by people who wish to walk along the edge of the park.

The east sidewalk is canting towards the east at 3-4% slope and there are a couple of limestone slabs on the east edge of the park next to street parking. Would be difficult to regrade the area because of many mature trees with shallow roots.

There are current desire lines by the playground, through the meadow, and just east of the library front entrance aside the knee wall. Many of the pathways do not reflect how the park is used.

I'd hate to see another sidewalk on the north side of the park.

You could add a sidewalk on the north side of the park but it would cut into the green space.

There are also some mature trees along that edge that would either have to be removed or have the walk go around.

There's an existing desire line by the playground and a lot of erosion

We could get rid of the existing path and put in a new one to fit the desire line.

Don't we have to be careful of reading into the desire lines too much?

Stage & South Access into the Park

The Park District has been erecting a 24' x 40' temporary stage for the past 30 years which is necessary to the seasonal events but can be invasive to the feel of the park

Would like to see the stage be more permanent, there are several different ways it could be changed

Maybe a permanent stage could be located at the southwest corner of the park, there would need to be a clear line of sight from the hill, I'm not sure if any existing foliage would get in the way.

It could be uncomfortable to sit on the slope and have to look sideways, that's why the stage is currently set at the bottom and (aligned to) the middle of the hill

I like the amphitheater or if it's a permanent stage it should be centered at either the top or bottom of the hill.

The stage could be on the north side of the hill.

That might be counter-intuitive; people would have to look up.

Smaller people might have trouble looking over larger people sitting in front of them.

How would you design the permanent stage?

It could be bermed up with a platform on top.

The south-central entrance into the park on Lake St. is the only spot I can have tree trimmers come in and it's also the only entry for the stage.

It is used for loading and unloading.

Maybe that entry becomes more formal. It could also still be a performance space.

Plaza at Oak Park Ave. & Lake

The plaza entry on the corner of Oak Park Ave and Lake St. is dated

From the 60s, the pavers are recycled street pavers which look pretty bad, in an effort to use less herbicide, weeds have to be pulled by hand from that area.

The design of the entry almost prevents it from being an entryway. You have the concrete from the 60s, those ugly newspaper boxes, and all of these obstacles that block the path into the park.

It's an important area as a bus stop. You see about 40-50 high school kids there after school. We used to have more problems in the area then but high school security helps out now.

I do like the change in materials – maybe we could use permeable pavers?

It may be 1-2 years before we start work on planning to do the streetscape on Oak Park Ave. It would be south of Lake St. and probably something similar to the Marion St. streetscape.

I'd want to use the same palette we used at Marion. Maybe not the bluestone because it's soft, expensive and needs to be heated but it could be something that looks similar.

The benches there are not wood. Before we had to keep replacing the wood slats because kids were carving into them or using markers and the wood just wasn't durable enough. All of the materials we use in this park have to be incredibly durable.

Do we want a more unified look? Toronto has a unified look between all of its bus stops, newspaper boxes, and such. (Street furniture)

Planting and Trees

A lot of plantings have changed over the years, planting used to be very dense until much of it was trimmed or taken out. Would like to avoid planting mulberries, wild honey locust, hawthorns with thorns. The park district began to take out shrubs like honey suckle in the 60s for safety reasons.

The current planters and boxes by the monument could be changed. The use of annuals is expensive and not sustainable. I would like something more meandering and with a mixed border. I'd rather introduce planters at the corners of the park.

We did something similar at the Le Moyne parkway. We took out the old railroad tie planters and replaced them with a longer, curvy bed.

There are 69 memorial trees scattered across the park. Most of them are mature. This is a very popular park for memorial trees. Some people are also happy to use existing trees as memorial trees.

Could there be an allee of trees along Lake St.?

We could maybe use tree pits or structural soils along the street. The trees seem to work better with irrigation like we used at Marion St.

We have irrigation in place in the meadow. The system is probably fifteen years old.

Library Entry Plaza

Carol Yetken designed the plaza in front with Jensen in mind but I don't think it drove her design. We wanted the library and plaza to improve the edge condition of the park. It was always our intention that the library would be a backdrop to the park.

The plaza functions with big events, it accommodates maintenance vehicles, utility vehicles, and caterers during large events

The plaza in front of the library was a good step forward and we can make the next step now. I'm okay with changing the space.

The park is not an entryway into the library, it is its own thing and I'd hate to lose that.

Should there be a separation between the park and that library? There's the knee-wall and shrubs behind it now.

The shrubs are minimal and people walk straight through them.

Those shrubs are not sacred to the library design.

We wanted a campus-like feeling while allowing the park to maintain its identity.

In concept, the plaza was part of the backdrop to the park, it was also important that the library entry was off of Lake St.

The plaza hasn't been attractive (to users) because it's too enclosed and hard to see out of it.

How does the Park District feel about water features?

Why did the library put up the no trespassing and no loitering sign?

It's a means to tell people who are not library or park patrons or parked in the garage that they cannot stay there.

There's nowhere to hang out now and eat outside anymore. The Buzz used to put tables outside and we'd meet friends there for breakfast. The tables were eventually taken over by the homeless and then they were removed.

The tables were put out by Buzz but they could not oversee the tables from inside and it became a problem.

The plaza has introduced another hard edge to the park. If there needs to be more hard space it could be added on there to avoid losing green space elsewhere in the park.

Southwest Corner of Park adjacent to the Library Plaza including the outdoor "Reading Room"

If we change the area the homeless will simply move to another area within the park

You can't see into the area.

Frisbee players run over the area and the flower bed there

What if this entry (east of the plaza and on Lake St.) was gone? Who uses it?

I used it this morning but only for the first time because I wanted to walk through the park.

When I walked in that way I realized the park and the library were not very well connected.

Change that landscape in the corner then, but it would be difficult with the existing mature trees and grades. We also needed the plaza to function for vehicles; police, caterers, utility vans. The

wall works as a natural seating area but behind that there's a ton of cigarette butts, beer bottles, wine bottles, and garbage.

The path that sweeps towards Lake St. east of the plaza is lost space. It could be an interactive fountain or some other feature that better connects the plaza to the park. Water could create another gateway but I'm against a pond which could attract geese.

How does the Park District feel about water features?

We took out the ponds in the parks after the Polio outbreak and there is a problem of liability. As in a child can drown in a few inches of water?

It's generally an issue of maintenance and cost but it's ok to think about at this stage.

The more responsible people you bring into the park and into these trouble areas then the less problems you end up with.

Historic Jensen Plan

The plan was examined in detail and discussed.

The Jensen plan has a variety of spaces with a distinct hierarchy. I dislike the current location of the monument because it divides the path in two. It has a front and a back with the back facing the north side of the park.

The paths have been changed to accommodate the monument.

They were straightened.

The dense planting were probably very colorful

But they would stop people seeing into the park

The Peace Memorial (WW1 monument)

Since we can't move the monument could we redesign the space around it? With the path too far south of it and the current planters there is no real space around the monument.

Play Center (Tot Lot)

I think the tot lot could be moved closer to the library.

Maybe it is enlarged so it is also further south of the comfort station.

I'd want to keep the playground by the comfort station and (close to) restrooms.

The playground is one of our older ones. It has a sand base versus mulch or rubber surfacing. It was probably put in 1985 or 1986.

I'm not sure if I'm totally in favor of moving the play lot.

Maybe a fountain or water feature goes into the area by the southwest corner of tennis and playground and northwest of the monument – currently that space doesn't get a lot of use.

The path by the playground is not working.

There are heavy erosion lines.

Tennis Courts

The tennis courts create a barrier on the north half of the site.

Those are heavily used courts and there's outcry every time we take away a court.

We may have to accept that the tennis courts are staying.

The path in the northeast corner is working because of the grades and shrubs there. The path by the playground isn't working.

The courts get a lot of use. I understand that they create a wall but the courts are a given. We've already eliminated 5 courts in Oak Park and it's a growing sport.

Parking & Streets

There is not enough parking in the area considering the high density but the answer is not cutting into the park. The park sees multiple users and it becomes difficult especially when it becomes a more regional park during events and festivals.

Could the street on the north side become more pedestrian friendly? Is there a possibility of this becoming a more shared space? Perhaps it could be repaved in brick to make it more of a space?

It would be difficult to share this space with pedestrians because of the angle of the parking, unless you get rid of the current parking. If you get rid of the current parking, it would probably result in an outcry.