



**Scoville Park  
Focus Group Meeting # 2  
Park Security Focus Group  
Oak Park Public Library, 834 Lake Street,  
March 3, 2010, 11:00am**

**Participants: Park Security**

John Williams, Oak Park Townships Youth Services  
Matt Ellmann, Superintendent of Recreation, PDOP  
Bart Patania, Oak Park Townships Youth Services  
Christine Graves, PDOP Board Member  
Ron Calloway, Safety Coordinator, PDOP  
Mike T. Grandy, Superintendent of Buildings & Grounds, PDOP  
Bill Hamilton, Asst. Supt. Of Revenue Facilities, PDOP  
Maggie Kelly, Park District Citizen Committee  
Sergeant Bill Rygh, Oak Park Police Department  
Teresa Powell, Village of Oak Park  
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 24<sup>th</sup> 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 overview on the history and current context of Scoville Park and followed with an examination of current day aerials and historic plans. John elaborated on some of the detail in the original 1913 Jensen plan. The park was planted very densely around the edges with plant massing providing color and interest and a feeling of enclosure within the park. Dense plantings in the interior of the park defined a hierarchy of spaces and controlled sight lines as well to give a varied experience for the park user. John asked the attendees to consider how Jensen's plan might be recreated or re-interpreted today. John opened the meeting up asking which areas of the park are currently of concern to the attendees.

### **General Comments**

The challenge is to balance uses, history, and practicality.

We need to keep a balance between shrubs, trees, and security

Illicit substances and items are sometimes hidden or stashed along the Lake St. edge of the park in the shrubs and plantings. Drug dealers will make an exchange elsewhere and tell the buyers which shrub to look under. Sometimes dealers will make similar exchanges instead hiding the drugs within the library.

Maybe better lighting could help these denser areas in addition to pruning up some of the branches.

We could move the placement of benches to more open and better lit areas.

The benches could also be moved into higher traffic areas.

The layout can help us a lot with security and the park can still be beautiful. I don't favor removing all the trees to deal with the homeless, the drug-dealers, people drinking, and the like. At Stevenson, with the basketball courts and skate park, we planted the trees along the edge of the park in diagonal lanes. It feels enclosed from the inside but offers sight lines into the park from the street.

I like the idea of planting trees in diagonals for more sight lines. I think if you augment that with more lighting it could make a difference.

We should incorporate benches with separators and arm rests so that people can't sleep on them.

Most of the problems in the park involve line of sight. I think if you opened up some of the viewing lanes into the park and bring in more traffic you could solve a lot of the current problems.

The drug dealers would hide the drugs in the library even if we completely cleared the area. Nothing is going to completely eliminate the problem.

Has there been any talk of using security cameras? They could record 24 hours a day over a week and then reset but someone could actually look through the tape if any event transpired. My chief would love that. If anyone sees a camera and they're doing something illegal they're going to move somewhere else.

We would not constantly monitor the cameras but if anything happened we would have a record.

Do the police ever drive into the park?

Yes, sometimes we'll use Segways or ATVs too. We can drive on the walks; we just roll over the curb if we have to.

Nobody uses the eastern middle half of the park.

I think there needs to be a balance between active and passive areas.

The tennis courts were supposed to double as ice skating rinks in the winter but there were a lot of problems with ice and skates cutting into the tennis surfacing which would get messed up.

Are there bike racks in the park?

Maybe not enough – I think they need to be in more visible places

We need to discourage bad activities at the main entries.

There were less crossover problems when the library faced Lake and Grove Ave. went through.

The problem of high school kids walking through the park and waiting for the bus is always going to exist.

Yes and they should be able to use the park.

We need to get rid of some of the undergrowth and make the park more transparent. If the park becomes more conducive to being observed, most of the park will be fine and security cameras can monitor the problem areas.

I don't think we need to make any radical changes.

I think the big things are improving lighting, opening up more view corridors, trimming the brush, and, if possible, adding security cameras. They would be a big deterrent to any illegal activity.

### **Southwest Corner of the Park**

In the southwest corner of the park, close to the library, people smoke, drink, sleep. They'll also sleep in the shrubs on the west-middle side of the park.

The benches in these areas present the homeless with places to stay

The big trouble area in this park is by the evergreens in front of the library entrance. It's very difficult to see into the space.

If the vegetation was trimmed up in the southwest corner so that the trees were still there but maybe up off the ground 3-5' we could see in there better.

This area is at the end of a loop too. It doesn't get a lot of traffic so it's even more secluded.

The layout of that corner presents an issue with the grades by the evergreens and the dense shrubs.

If we cleared some of the shrubs and the seat wall in order to open up the area could it be better?

Yes, that would be beneficial.

The library maintains up to the seat wall. The park district maintains from the wall outwards into the park.

### **Temporary Stage**

Sometimes people will perform illicit acts underneath the stage if the stage is up for too long.

In the past sometimes we've fenced off the stage which has been successful in keeping kids out.

We should continue to do so in the future.

If we design a permanent stage, which I would suggest, it could have a raised roof so that it was more see-through.

We could move the stage to the top of the hill.

That would be difficult having to look up.

Could we place a permanent stage in the problem corner (SW)?

Wouldn't the sound or decibel level be a problem for people across the street?

I still like the idea of keeping the stage in the middle. It would become uncomfortable to have to look cross-slope. People would have to be looking or lying sideways.

The stage has worked best in the middle.

The stage could incorporate a system like the basketball hoops with removable rims. The parts that would be more sensitive to damage could be removed when the stage isn't in use.

I'd hate to lose the trees behind the stage.

There is that one tree that leans into the sidewalk that could be removed. People bang their heads on it.

I think we need to keep the open space at the bottom of the hill. We could push the stage back.

If there's a roof on the stage people will climb it and if there's concrete kids are going to spray graffiti onto it.

## **Playground**

I'd like to see the playground updated.

The playground is isolated from the rest of the park. Some people may like it that way but others complain that it isn't closer to the stage when there are concerts and events.

Some people have kids of different ages and should have another option.

The Montessori school uses the meadow on a daily basis. They will bring in their own equipment.

The current playground is only for 2-5 year olds. It's mostly younger kids and parents or sitters.

The 2-5 year olds will always have a guardian nearby but the 5-12's parents may be farther away at times.

Maybe there isn't enough room to accommodate both the 2-5 and 5-12 age groups.

The playground could be expanded into the area west of the monument or down towards the library.

If you have 5-12 year old play equipment older teenagers will also start to use it or hang around on it.

Younger kids in the 2-5 age groups will also migrate to the 5-12 year old equipment because it's more challenging.

The closer the 2-5s are to the restrooms the happier everyone seems to be.

There's a lot of adult supervision by the playground and not by the problem areas.

I think the current playground has a good location – it is working.

Maybe we could update the restrooms in the building and add more?

Kids can hide drugs in there.

By expanding the playground into certain areas maybe we can attract more responsible types to those areas.

## **Potential of Recreating or Reinterpreting the Jensen Design**

I'd like to recreate some historical features in a different, safer way.

Why is the pond not practical today?

For several reasons. All of the parks used to have water features until the polio scare when everything was removed. There are also large issues of liability involved today. A kid can drown in a milk saucer. Large amounts of water also bring mosquitoes.

Maybe we could use a splash pad instead.

There's a lot of cost and maintenance involved. If you're using recycled water the system requires an expensive filtration system. If you're using non-recycled water then it's a lot of potable water.

In certain natural areas of the park maybe we could tie in a theme – something that identifies the park as a Jensen design

If we added more native shrubs along parts of Oak Park Ave. would it be a problem?

Anywhere the vegetation is thicker it will become a problem area.

I think the park needs to be enhanced with the Jensen identity.