



**Scoville Park
Focus Group Meeting # 3
Avenue Business Association Focus Group
Oak Park Public Library, 834 Lake Street,
March 3, 2010, 1:00pm**

Participants:

Nick Gambino, Avenue Business Association, Cucina Paradiso
Andy Johnston, Wednesday Journal
Brandy Masoncup, Avenue Business Association, Geppeto's Toy Box
Eric Masoncup, Avenue Business Association, Geppeto's Toy Box
Mike Lennox, Morlen Realty, Scoville Square Building
Julia Nash, Avenue Business Association, Fly Bird
Christine Graves, Park District Commissioner
Maggie Kelly, Park District Citizen Committee
James Solnes, Park Investment, Scoville Square Association
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 explained some of the park's existing roles in the community and briefly explained the history of Jens Jensen and his plan for Scoville Park. Comparisons were made between existing

conditions and the historic Jens Jensen plan. Afterwards he opened up the discussion to general comments.

General Comments

What's the acreage of the park? (3.98 acres)

There's unusable space on the east half of the park in the middle.

Some people or couples will picnic there in the summer.

I always wondered why there isn't a water feature in this park.

With the polio scare most water elements were erased from the park system and liability is a big factor in design today.

People aren't as aware of the Oak Park history in this area as they should be.

Workers from Chicago used to come down Lake St. not knowing Oak Park. They used to say that when the bars stop and the steeples start then you know you're in Oak Park.

Has the park district come up with a defined purpose or vision for this space?

No, that will emerge from the community process.

Some of these spaces had a purpose and do not anymore. It may be hard to capture the Jensen spirit without dense plantings but we may be able to shape some of these spaces again.

There's a lack of public facilities. The bathrooms are limited.

There's a lot of youth culture in this park; hacky sack, ultimate Frisbee etc.

The park can get quite dark at night.

There was a big problem with that when they did Midnight Madness during March until it was slowly phased out.

Have you evaluated the current trees and plants?

We have a walkthrough of the park with a master arborist and the Greening Advisory Committee.

The park really is the village green.

More Activities

We see the park as a social destination. I'd like to see more activities available for people in the park. In winter, I'd like to see a full size ice rink (temporary).

I really want to make it as active as possible.

Can we move the slope back to create more room for a flat space at the bottom of the hill where we could put an ice skating rink? There's only one ice skating rink in Oak Park at Ridgeland. I think there's a great opportunity to put one here.

How about putting an ice rink on the tennis courts?

More outdoor ice skating would be charming. It would probably have to be at the bottom of the hill.

I see the hill as a theatre so putting the ice rink back by the tennis courts defeats the purpose.

No one would see it – it has to be visible.

I am a big fan of the ice rink concept. There are lots of ice rinks popping up all over backyards in Oak Park.

An ice rink would certainly help in January, February, and March when business is slower.

I don't like the slope of the park. It's hard to play football, softball, or baseball.

Is this a serious comment?

Could the ice skating rink go around the monument?

That might create a larger skateboarding problem.

I want all the activity to be by the business district. Families can come to the park and enjoy it and then walk down the street and grab dinner or go shopping.

We want this to be a park for community events.

I think this is the community park.

I'd like to see the park more engaging and more active.

I'd like to see more public artwork or sculpture. I really like the sculpture of Percy Julian.

Can you change the gradation of the hill (especially the east side)?

It would be tough. If you look the current grades and contours go all the way through.

I want to see the park become a more integral part of the business community.

There needs to be more signage illustrating what this park was and why it's important to the community.

What if the public garden (on the 1913 Jensen plan) was moved to the area in front of the library with spaces to read and maybe some moving water?

Festivals & Events

It's too difficult to close streets for festivals so the park is the best alternative option.

There also has to be less rigidity in what we can do in the park. Currently the Park District's set of rules really limits what we can do in the park.

I think it is also the Health Department.

We want to be able to have a summer fest in the park with food and beer in the park.

Scoville Park is a unique scenario – we should be able to use it.

We currently have two sidewalk sales; we would like the park to be another point of interest during those events.

I would love to see the park look more enchanted during Christmas. It would be wonderful to add more winter lighting.

There used to be lights up for Christmas but since the court decision they can no longer have colors.

The Christmas event is currently our biggest and it will continue to be so.

We want to have a summer fest.

Seasonal fests could all be promoted by the Avenue.

There could be a dancing under the stars event.

Could there be some type of sports tournament organized there?

We would like to work with the craft fairs and art festivals. It's a matter of coordination. It would be great to coordinate events like these far in advance with the park district.

Day in Our Village is so nice.

Concessions may not be practical all the time but they could possibly be seasonal.

The problem now is that you can't have food, alcohol, food vendors in the park.

It becomes a health department issue.

Yes, but you can also provide restrooms and sanitation stations and the Park District doesn't allow it.

Peace Monument (WW1 Memorial)

I don't like the location of the memorial. It takes up too much real estate in the middle of the park.

Could the monument be moved to the northeast corner?

Realistically, I don't think it could happen.

They've already poured about 20' of concrete there.

I don't like that the area around the monument, it is squared off.

This (the monument) is the cataclysmic spot.

There could be a plaza dedicated to peace.

There could be a garden that wraps around the monument.

The monument is lit poorly. I think you could change that.

Could we add some crushed gravel paths by the monument?

Crushed gravel is really nice but there are a lot of maintenance issues.

Are there any other paving options?

We could use brick or permeable pavers.

What about Grasscrete?

It is difficult to walk on and would have to be irrigated in our climate. Concrete is the more typical and traditional choice.

Maybe we could use cobblestone with moss growing in between?

I think plowing is a current problem in our parks. Every winter they use a plow that's way too big rip out the grass or plantings on either side of the walks.

What about using porous concrete?

It looks kind of rough, almost like smashed popcorn. If kids fall on it you tear up the skin pretty bad.

A plaza piece by the monument could be a great focal point. It could become the center of activity. It would benefit everyone involved.

Everyone has to sit and eat on the grass now. The plaza could provide a meeting place for everyone to use.

Stage

It's the largest outdoor auditorium in Oak Park.

What about a more permanent stage in the southwest corner but there may be some difficulties to that. There are also some problems there with people drinking, smoking.

Yes, that corner is like the dead corner of the park. It's a separation from the library to the park. It would be nice if it was open.

If the stage was put there how would it prevent the homeless from continuing to occupy the area?

I think it would have to be visible and more open to the rest of the park and street.

I think the businesses really need to come up with a consensus on the stage.

The temporary stage kills the grass when it's out there too long.

I'd like to see it be more permanent but as flexible as possible.

Could something be done about the power source? The existing one is spotty at best.

People have to bring generators now.

Do you have any conceptual designs of the stage now?

No, not at this stage.

I would like the stage to be multi-use and then minimal when not in use.

Tennis Courts

Could we use the tennis courts or that space as an ice skating rink?

Those tennis courts are well used but there are also other parks in Oak Park with tennis courts.

The tennis courts used to be iced over for ice skating but they no longer do so because it damages the court surface.

The tennis courts take up a lot of space to dedicate only to tennis.

Wouldn't it be nice if that area became another meadow?

Could tennis be inventoried?

It already has been.

Could the tennis courts be more versatile?

What's the resistance to moving the tennis courts?

People want to be able to play tennis here. It's high density, centralized in the community and used heavily.

Plaza at Oak Park Ave. & Lake St.

The corner at Oak Park Ave. and Lake St. is very important.

That's the most important entrance into the park.

It's the only 'real' entry into the park.

In the 1960s they added that entry. It was not original to Jensen's plan. Originally there were plum trees at that corner. The paths have changed there as well.

The southeastern entrance is a focal point from almost every direction.

It is a very important space.

It should look better.

Paths & Circulation

The path leading from the southeast corner has moved forward into the central space.

I think it would be nicer if the path went all the way up to the monument.

There used to be more space before the paths moved.

There are several desire lines by the northwest corner and the southwest corner is almost blocked off by the pines.

I like the way the paths were laid out before. (in the Jensen plan)

Lake St. Edge of Park

The south edge of the park on Lake Street is completely blocked. There's no inviting area with the wall, shrubs, and trees there.

I like that wall because it hides the parked cars.

I think the bushes could be more interesting with more flowering varieties and more textures.

They look scrubby now.

The original horse and buggy (fountain) entrance is at the center of that wall. Maybe it could become a focal point.

There could be visitor's information there or a historical marker.

Playground

Maybe the playground could move or expand to the area west of the monument.

I'd like the playground to move further south. It could become a nice picnic or gardening area there instead and the playground would be closer to the possible plaza space.

Area East of the Monument

The slope on the east-middle side of the park makes it hard to make any sort of space out of it.

Maybe some Jensen plantings in that area would provide a hint of Jensen.

Could we terrace the sloped spaces on the east side of the park?

That would be difficult because of all of the existing trees and the premise of terracing is very anti the Jensen design.