



Taylor Park Site Master Plan

Taylor Park Community Meeting . April 7, 2008 . Andersen Center



Taylor Park Site Master Plan

Today's park conditions are predicated on the history of the park

a) Soils, Drainage, Flooding and Erosion

Taylor Park marks part of a glacial terminal moraine and the shoreline of ancient Lake Chicago where:

“a heterogeneous deposit of glacial “till” was apparently laid down by several successive ice sheets over Niagara Limestone.”

Survey of Oak Park 1937

FWPA Historical

This moraine continues through Scoville Park and on to the SW

Taylor Park Site Master Plan

The till is composed of a mix of boulders, clays and a rock flour that forms an impenetrable layer over a bed of limestone 200 feet thick

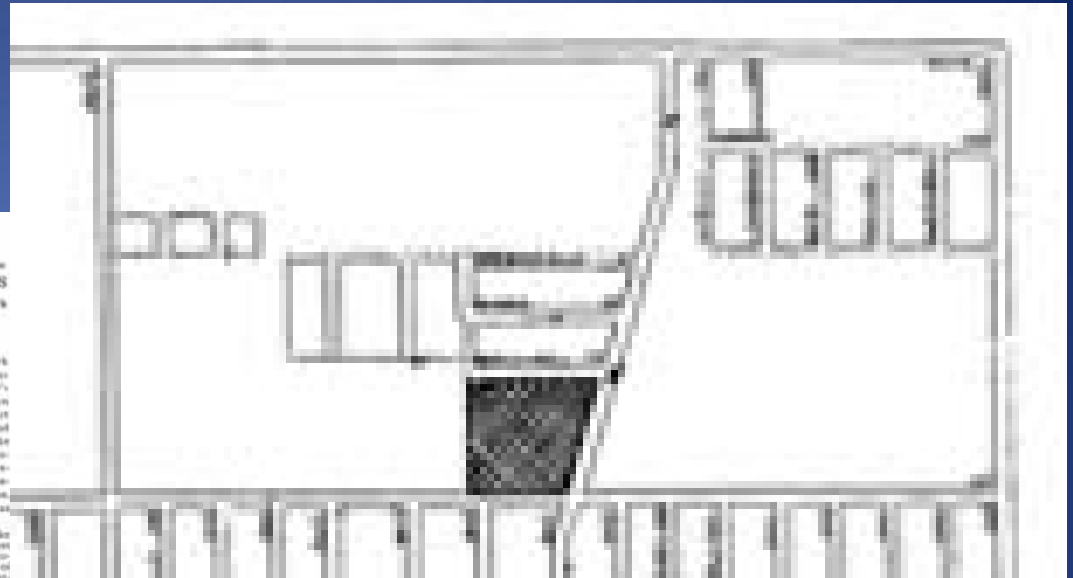
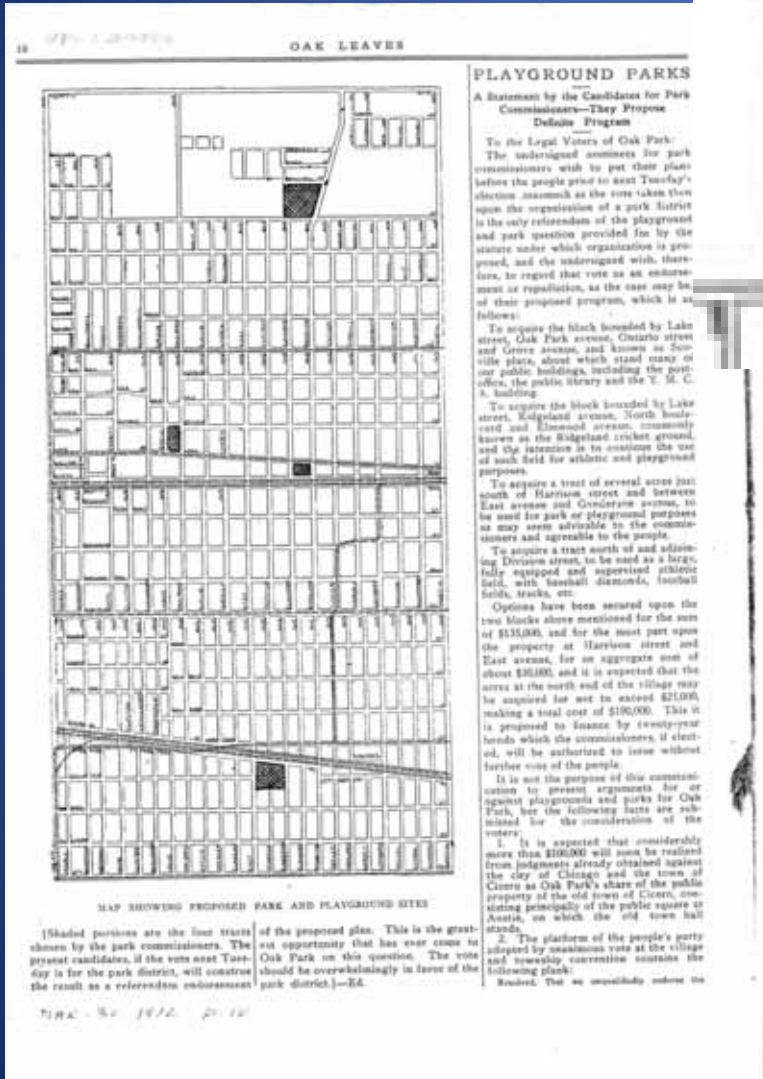
Ground water is trapped resulting in part of the standing water and flooding of sections of the park

When the park is used while the soil is sodden the turf is damaged and erosion begins.

Drainage and erosion are major problems in the park



The Ridgeland Alignment

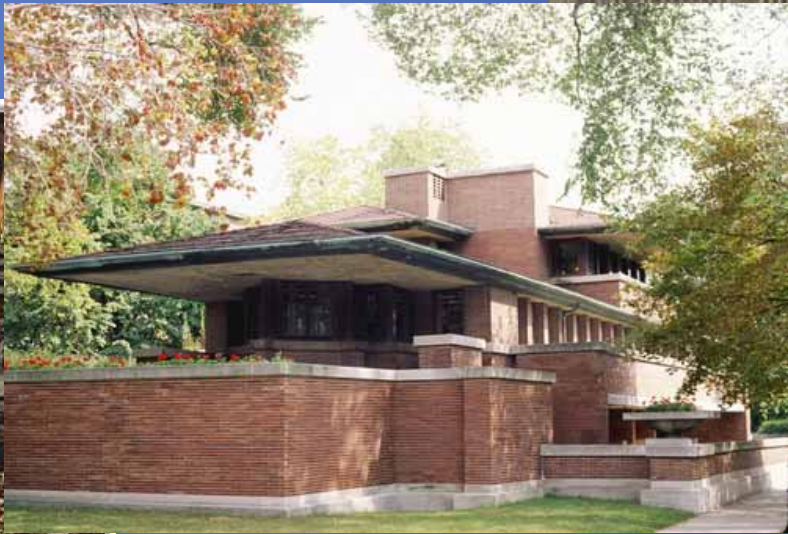
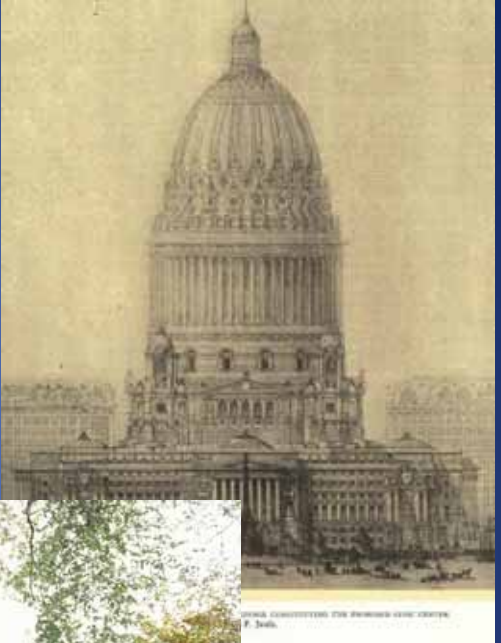


Oak Leaves March 30, 1912
Map shows Ridgeland at a diagonal
Are the remains of the road still there? Do they account for some of the flooding?



Historic Taylor Park

In 1913, while the detailed design work for Grant Park, in the neo-classical style was in progress and Burnham was designing neo-classical buildings in Chicago, in Oak Park Frank Lloyd Wright was developing the Prairie Style of architecture and the Village retained Jens Jensen, “the renowned landscape artist” to design a series of parks “in his natural style”.



April 2, 1912 Permanent Park District established - A tax levy in 1913 provided funds
1914 District purchased the 12.9 acres of farmland for \$24,416 to create North Park

- There have been changes to the park but it is still regarded by many as the most intact of his designs in Oak Park.
- “This seems to be the most intact design. Many of the original trees remain, in addition to the shelter, tennis courts, ball field, sheltered picnic or “rest area” to the north and the general layout of the park.”

Julie Samuels, December 2001

- A focus on good design and preserving Jens Jensen designs is essential to the quality of life in Oak Park

The Park District's Infrastructure Committee in 2001

Taylor Park and Jens Jensen

Jensen was ahead of his times – he was an environmentalist, a landscape preservationist and a superb and original designer.

Jensen was designing a park in the imitation of nature, to provide us with the experience of being in the Illinois countryside. Not a landscape of Europe but one that was native to this specific place.

‘You are lulled into thinking that Jensen has simply preserved an existing natural tableau – until you realize that he has painstakingly planned it to appear so.’

Cathy Jean Maloney

Jensen’s treatment of edges - the zone where forest meets field – was distinctive, with grasses and prairie flowers giving way to sumac and dogwood, and then hawthorns, crabs and plums.



Hazel Buck Ewing Gardens

Some Characteristics of Jensen's Design

He sought to recreate the spirit of the prairie and provide a sense of mystery and intrigue

Natural, romantic and practical as he uses native plants that thrive here

A sweeping lawn gently curving around wooded "peninsulas" with hawthorns at key points

Large open meadows or broad vistas alternated with enclosed woodlands or dense shrub masses

Open "meadows" or "prairies" were represented by rough-mowed grass with short wildflowers

The edges were planted with masses of prairie flowers and sometimes native grasses followed by shrubs and small trees of varying heights and then taller trees of the forest or savanna woodland

The horizontal ground plain was frequently reinforced by planting trees or shrubs such as the hawthorn

Partial Plant Palette

Oaks and Elms, Hawthorns, crabapples, groupings of native plum

The horizontal ground plain was frequently reinforced by planting trees or shrubs such as the hawthorn (*Crataegus crus-galli* or *C. mollis*), crabapple (*Malus ioensis* or *M. coronaria*), or pagoda dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*) for their horizontal branching with prairie rose, sumac, honeysuckle, chokecherry,

Lillies, iris, monarda, monkshood, hepatica, sedum, shasta daisy, columbine, veronica, cowslip, coreopsis, trillium, viola, campanula

Overlay of Original Jensen Plan Outline on today's Park



Note that park designed in expectation of Ridgeland on a Diagonal

Taylor Park Today



Jensen Plan for Taylor Park



The historic plan appears to have less width because the Ridgeland alignment on a diagonal reduces the size of the park on the east

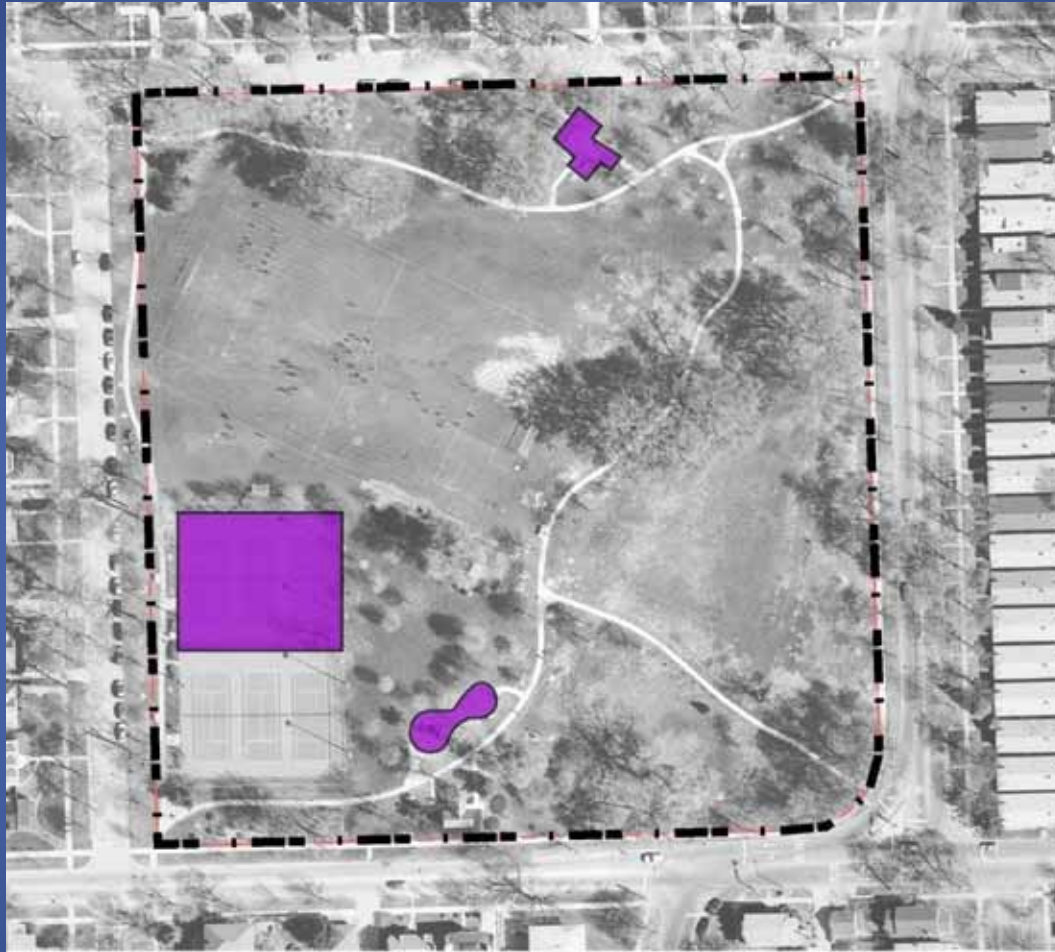
Historic Plan overlaid on Aerial Photo of Today's Park



Potential Original Plantings



3 Tennis Courts and Play Ground added, the north edge of the park was treated as an edge between woods and meadow with a clearing without formal pad and benches



The Park District list of the facilities at Taylor Park in 1938 - 6 tennis courts, 1 football field, 1 baseball diamond, 4 softball diamonds, a cricket field, picnic grounds with a fire place, a band stand, general flower displays and a comfort station

Overlay of Tree Canopy from original Plan over an aerial of today's park

•Though some of the original trees remain, many have been added and the sequencing of spaces, vistas and spatial relationships have been changed



C. The sloped edge of the park was planted with shrubs and trees today it is primarily open and used as the sled hill

D. Area added to the park

E. Trees planted in open space, views across park reduced

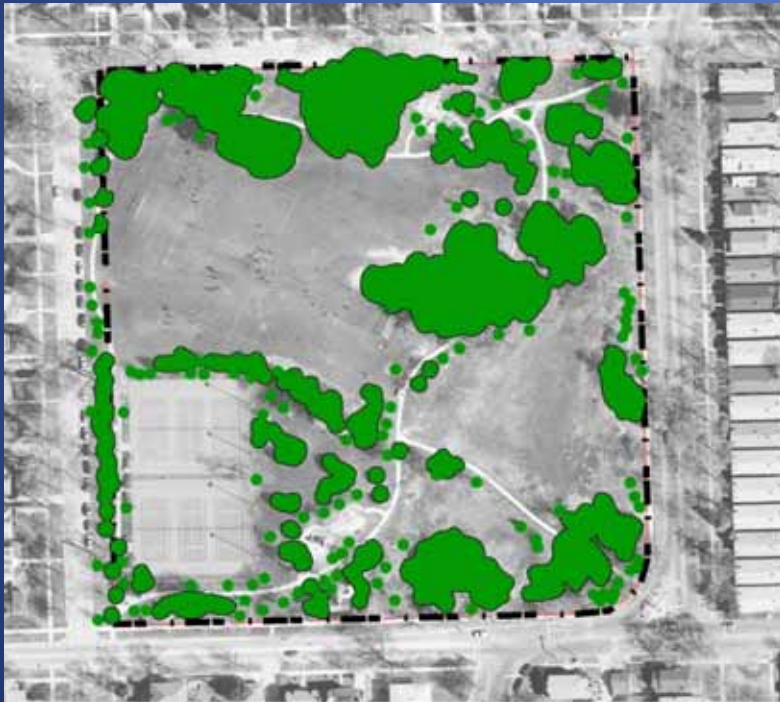
F. Tennis Courts Added

A. The arrival space or clearing to the NE has been planted.

B. The northern edge and funnel-like entrance to the picnic/rest area has been planted

Comparison of Tree Locations

Taylor Park Today with existing trees highlighted in green



Tree locations from Jensen Plan overlaid on an aerial photo of today's park



Taken from aerial photo approx. locations only