Park District of Oak Park
Field Park Public Meeting #1
Held at the Field Center
Division St. at Kenilworth Ave.
March 1, 2006
7 p.m.

A public meeting was held at the Filed Center.

1. Mr. Gary Balling, Executive Director of the Park District of Oak Park opened the meeting. He spoke about the overall planning process and gave background on the work to date. He introduced the members of Altamanu Inc. who were to facilitate the meeting, Park District Staff, members of the Park District Board and members of the Park District Citizens Committee who were in attendance
2. Mr. John Mac Manus of the Altamanu Inc. facilitated the meeting and Josephine Bellalta of Altamanu Inc. took notes and also took part in the meeting.
3. Mr. Mac Manus reviewed the information and opinions recorded at the recent Focus Group meetings. The attendees voiced their opinions on the information presented.
4. The following is a record of the comments made by the attendees:

   An attendee who had to leave the meeting early gave his opinion on the drawings
   - Build a new center as an addition to the school rather than restoring or building a new a new stand alone center.
   - Plant many trees as they add value

   After this attendee departed the meeting Mr. Mac Manus requested Mr. Michael Grandy of the Park District to give a synopsis of the history of the park and the on-going problems with drainage and erosion. Originally Woodbine divided the school and the park. When the road was removed the sub-strait for the road remained the impression of which can be seen on the aerial photos. This substrate prevents proper drainage. Mr. Grandy also spoke about the current condition of the center and the problems that PD staff have with the building. There was general discussion about the history of the building and the park.

   The meeting then reviewed and commented on the drawings produced at the Focus Group in detail.
   - Add a continuous trail/multi use path around the perimeter of the park.
   - Widen path and mark it with mile, 1/2 mile etc. markers.
   - The potential width of the path was discussed. Concern was later expressed that the path should not encourage people to drive on it through the park. However, it was noted that Officer Fox would like to be able to drive a police cruiser through the park at night for park security.
   - People do wheelies on the hard top at night now.

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- The center of the park is dark at night. Add lighting for safety.
- Moving diamonds into the corners of the park is ok.
- Replacing the parking in the north with a baseball field would be good.
- Parking could be moved south
- Moving diamonds away from each other will spread out intensive use and hopefully improve the condition of the soil
- It would be ok to do so if the playgrounds are safe
- Could we remove one diamond?
- No, some people want more diamonds. This is a major center for baseball.
- But most feel it would be better to just improve the two we have.
- Parents with young children cant share playground while school is in session and students use the playground

The meeting addressed a concept produced at focus group #3 which was attended by PTO and representatives of the school and school district. This concept moves the baseball fields to the extreme north and south in the center of the park and creates a large field. The parking is moved to the SE corner. The western side of the park is shown as park space with Field Center remaining.

- In this concept, there is more room for other activities and passive and picnic areas.
- There is more shade
- The concept works during weekdays but not on weekends when SW part of park is used for practices
- It could still be used for that
- Keep good sight lines between different playgrounds
- Area south of Center building used to be blacktop with curb and was flooded for play
- Would like to see some sort of splash pad/water play
- There was a discussion to whether the school would object to kids getting wet in the splash pool.
- Sanskrit 'ahimsa' means respect for all living things—keep this in mind. Shrubs were planted two years ago along the parking lot.
- We could move them easily
- Do we mind removing any trees?
- I am all for shade. I want trees to stay, but removing them would depend…..what we might gain?
- So you might take down trees if we manage to get something good into the park or improve it somehow.
- Need shade at playgrounds I don't care about baseball
- Although the park is used extensively, at times the park is completely empty
- It is used in waves
- Include things that draw people into the park besides active sports
- Creative play goes on at the mounded areas of the park. It is good to have creative play.
- Mound used for sledding, building snow forts and lots more.
- Mounded area is scary for perspective of some parents with small children
- Just limb up the trees
- I like the passive area where trees are at passive area for small children. It feels like a little bit of wilderness, but still consider security issues in new design

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Another scheme was examined; it showed ball fields in the extreme north and south of the park facing west from the school.

- What about this configuration?
- Issues with facing western sun.
- Moving the parking to Division at SE corner was discussed. Will it create traffic issues?
- Could have only right in right out.
- Village officials liked it as it keeps traffic on Division and not in the neighborhood.
- The school does not like the open space south of the school as visibility is low and last year there was an incident.
- They would like to see the playgrounds combined and moved west of the school.
- Can we make the hill bigger in the NE?
- Maybe as long as we can see
- Yes to path all around the park
- Field Center Building:
    - Important to have shelter in this location, at this park
    - There aren't any other sheltered locations in general vicinity to take small kids to
    - Rest rooms important
    - Uses include peewee sports, daycare, summer programs, voting, classes, rentals, etc.
    - Keep building for senior activities and build a new one attached to the school
    - Not likely we will get two centers. It would be too expensive.
    - Don't want tax dollars spent on a new building
    - It is not efficient to have more that one center due to costs, staffing etc.
    - This building is considered by some to be historically significant as it was designed by Van Bergen
    - Architectural historian in audience stated that it was compromised beyond any historic significance
    - It could still be restored
    - Yes but how much do you want to spend on this building?
    - Expand existing Center building
    - Would rather keep the Center
    - I would prefer a new center
    - Maybe cycles of activities will return (used to ping pong, four square, etc in past) and this building would be fine
    - Alley is crazy and dangerous. Parents drop off and pick up students and leave kids into day care. That would not happen if the center was moved
    - It is the narrowest alley in town
    - Move center towards Berkshire perhaps?
    - We could design a building that would pay tribute to the existing design and its architectural/cultural history
    - Who makes the final decision?
    - Gary Balling of the Park District described the new Historic Stewardship Committee and how it will operate.
    - If we build a new center it should be south at Division at SE corner
    - That way traffic would be kept out of the neighborhood.
    - But the school gym is in the North and they should be beside each together.

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- NW corner of site good location for Center building and then it would be immediately adjacent to play areas (play areas and Center building adjacencies are the most important factor though)
- Put second level on lobby/gym area of school
- Mann school not ADA compliant to second floor-upper addition would have to resolve that issue
- A new center connected to and shared by the school would be easier to run and costs could be shared
- By combining the school and center we could have many different uses, classes, excursive, aerobics, yoga
- There used to be yoga here and it was fine
- What about seniors, there should be classes in this building for them
- Center is in a good position, it is centrally located
- But if you were starting over would you place it here?
- No way, it is too far away from the roads
- Place Center building at SW corner
- Why?
- Closer to Division and traffic
- I like in the NW
- Why?
- It is close to the proposed playgrounds
- That could happen where ever the center was

There was discussion about how the school is used and whether there is a cafeteria or gym at the south end of the school. Other issues were then discussed.

- Perhaps use multi-age playgrounds to incorporate seniors and all age groups (European models?)
- Add a water feature with multi uses
- Put the water feature into the children's garden area
- Emphasize pedestrian entrances and have clear views
- Install year round water (drinking) fountains for joggers
- Include picnic tables
- Picnic tables are not liked by everyone. They become hangouts
- Include benches
- The existing trail/path needs to stay, but move path to give space to other possible uses
- Take out concrete pad south of Center building
- South field would be more usable if we move path to the east between the existing trees and take out existing light pole
- Close alley to public use and keep for adjacent resident only just like at Lindberg
- It is upsetting to take the trees down

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An attendee asked what did we all agree on?

- Most unobjectionable scheme is the concept from “meeting #1”
- It expands the green space, that is good
- It spreads out the uses
- We could take out some trees but have to plant lots of new ones.
- Some trees could be moved
- A path 7’ wide would be too wide (would encourage vehicular use)
- Soccer has not been talked about—a mid size soccer field would be nice.
- What about 4 softball diamonds at Field and 4 hardball diamonds at Lindberg?
- That would become too stark and would be a mono use
- The school will object to a children’s water feature—show on a concept anyway.
- Don’t want taxes raised any more due to a new Center building
- But we should show it on one concept

Mr. Mac Manus said that Altamanu Inc. would have at least three concept plans for discussion at the next public meeting.

Mr. Balling thanked the attendees and encouraged them to return for the next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 5 at 7pm at Field Center.

END OF MEETING NOTES

Notes recored by
Josephine Bellalta, RLA, ASLA, President of Altamanu Inc.

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