

Meeting Notes

Project: Washington Park Diagonal

Meeting Date: Sept 20, 2011

Re: Public Meeting #3

Location: St. John's Church

Date Issued: Sept 26, 2011

Compiled By: Paul Thomas

Present:

See attached sign-in list for meeting attendees.

Denver Parks Staff- Nicole Stahly, Mark Tabor, Gordon Robertson, Jill Coffman

Stream Design (landscape architect/lead consultant) - Jess Clark, Paul Thomas

Urban Play Studio (play consulting) - Kerry White

Topics Discussed:

1. Nicole Stahly opened the meeting, gave an overview of the project progress to date, and identified the objectives of the meeting--to review the concept plan developed from the initial bubble diagrams.
2. Jesse Clark gave an overview of the feedback received from the public, DPR, and stakeholders, and described how the current concept plan was arrived at. The presentation included:
 - Recap of comments / feedback received at the last meeting;
 - A hybrid bubble diagram that illustrated the currently proposed spatial arrangement of uses/activity areas;
 - 3 Playground bubble diagrams showing the spatial concepts currently being considered by the design team;
3. There was a 15 minute break in the meeting to allow attendees to look at the concept plan and accompanying graphics shown on boards around the room. DPR and consultant team members were present at the boards to answer questions and take comments. The group meeting was reconvened and Jesse Clark presented the plan in more detail. General comments and questions were taken, and there was group discussion.

Concept Plan Comments from General Discussion:

- a. Concern for lack of additional parking given the attraction of the proposed improvements. Suggestion to leave the north playground area parking intact to provide more parking in the park.
- b. Participants in a recent activity in the Diagonal created traffic and parking congestion. Concern for oversight/enforcement.
- c. Suggestion for more drinking fountains;
- d. Questions on what "adventure play" is. Kerry White gave a brief description: Current popular play industry term for alternative, less traditional play elements that might include climbing walls, boulders, climbing nets, platform swings, crawl-through tunnels.
- e. Several people spoke in favor of reinstating the skateable area into the plan. Citing distance and safety issues to Ruby Hill Park, which is the closest skating facility. Suggestions that there needs to be an emphasis on recreation elements for kids from 7 to 12, who sometimes get bored with traditional playground events.

- f. Basketball courts were a major item of discussion
 - Some attendees want to keep basketball as-is in its current location instead of moving it to the north side of the tennis courts. Nicole Stahly stated that DPR is committed to improving the basketball facility in the park and bringing it up to the standards common in other regional parks--with a minimum of 2 high quality courts and adjacent seating in a location away from the ditch (where balls frequently end up.) Therefore the best place to do this in north of tennis. She also mentioned the design team's feeling that basketball courts were not the best use for the area south of the tennis courts, This area has great adjacency to the meadow area and the ditch, and views to Grasmere Lake and the gardens. Small picnic areas and improved/enlarged open meadow are considered more appropriate uses for this area in the design teams finding.
 - Some were concerned about appropriateness of basketball activity near playground, others wanted a good buffer between it and play areas. (During the meeting the proposed buffer zone was measured to be over 125'. The pedestrian portion of the Diagonal road also separates these uses.)
 - A suggestion was made for increased buffer between tennis and basketball
 - Some want to keep the basketball area in its current location south of the tennis courts.
- g. Need to keep in mind the history of the park and the importance of the park to the community and neighborhoods.
- h. There was a concern about picnickers building unsafe fires in and around the existing trees. Need for appropriately designed facilities to prevent fires, and enforcement.
- i. Accessible parking is well used by groups who meet for activities at the Diagonal area. Suggestion to maintain current number of HC parking spaces.
- j. Question about Phase 1 improvements: Nicole stated that the improvements would likely be made to the parking/road, and the picnic area.

4. Written comments received from feedback sheets. Numbers in parentheses () indicate number of similar comments received if more than one.

- Road, Turnaround & Parking
 - Don't use painted lines to delineate parking spaces--it would look too much like a parking lot--use surface materials and color instead.
 - Parking seems grossly inadequate for the increased use/events planned. If it means taking away from green space to accommodate realistic parking needs, it should be done.
 - Looks too much like a parking lot--should look more like an urban plaza. Should we add bicycle rental? Limit parking to 45-50 spaces max. Want to see bike racks as part of new roadway. Any environmental applications for parking lot runoff--bioswales, water quality basins?
 - Narrower roadway for peds--great idea.
 - Reduce parking rather than increasing.
 - Looks good--would prefer handicap parking only or metered parking to generate revenue.
 - Parking meters? Could incentivize parking at South H.S.--maybe only need to pay for meters on weekends. Consider 30 minute loading and unloading restriction. Consider signs that instruct people to park @ south H.S.
 - Narrow road is great--like turnaround. Add as many parking spaces as possible.
 - Looks good--like it (3).
- Bike and Ped. Circulation
 - Seems good, just don't make road so narrow that bike access /car co-existence becomes difficult.

- May need to adjust types and sizes of events so other users aren't displaced; also concerned about narrowness of road in parking areas. How about some speed bumps?
- Too many small walkways throughout--consolidate.
- Like highlighting and increasing # of crosswalks.
- Replace existing paths.
- Looks good--Like it. (5)
- Play Areas
 - Like the separation of the play areas from the road, while keeping them more central to the Diagonal.
 - Shade structures-yes!
 - Too many walkways.
 - Save money on shade shelters--most people bring their own.
 - Like picnic areas directly north of the lake--good winter sun.
 - Need activities that are appropriate for kids over 8--like rollerblading and skateboarding areas for beginners
 - No skate park please! (2)
 - Plant trees to the west of play to protect from sun/heat.
 - Looks good--Like it. (3)
- Picnic Area
 - Hope there are picnic tables for half dozen groups in this area
 - "OK."
 - Picnic tables unnecessary for shaded "intimate" areas and family--can use blanket--save \$\$.
 - Would recommend shifting the medium group picnic area to the farthest south area--put family picnic areas near the play areas--worry about big events spilling over and taking over the play area.
 - Would rather have the adventure play in the NW corner of the playground and shift the intermediate more to central location. Also please provide a good visual/sound buffer between playground & basketball. Shifting the restroom 'up' (to the north) would do this.
 - Keep number of picnic areas limited to existing number. Grills/fires are a problem now--have seen embers/coins on the grass and people grilling under trees with 3-4' high flames coming off their grills.--can we limit fires/grills to specific locations and enforce existing regulations?
 - Looks good--like it (4)
- Sports Courts
 - Keep basketball where it is. Consider reducing tennis to accommodate better basketball. Why do the basketball courts need to be regulation size?
 - Keep 3 tennis courts; in basketball areas leave room for informal spectators and people waiting to play next game.
 - Important that wind/visual screens be installed on tennis courts to buffer distractions from new basketball courts on north. (2) Also need more seating around both basketball and tennis.
 - OK.
 - Looks good-like it. (3)
- Other
 - Please plan for some real play equipment for toddlers in the north play area.
 - Would like skate area to be included in plans again. Like ideal of small skate-able elements north of the basketball courts. People would definitely use this. Skate elements could be artistic and enjoyable for non-skaters too.
 - Skateboard area would benefit all age ranges.

- Consider skate park or older kid area in wasted space between stadium @ South H.S. and Veterans Park.
- More drinking fountains needed. (2)
- Need continuous path from loop road to Diagonal south of tennis courts. (2)
- How will races be staged? Are there accommodations for race staging?
- Permitting of facilities should include a charge for either police or park ranger funding.
- Due to event use of the Diagonal nearly every weekend for much of the year, the play areas will be less accessible at those times--which is a bigger issue if this is the main play area for the park.
- Would like to see the meadow actually be a meadow-per Chicago's Lincoln Park, south of the zoo.
- Add animal-proof trash can lids to control litter.
- Signs on Diagonal direction bikers & rollerbladers, runner to park at South H.S.
- Still consider pedestrian traffic coming from Downing Street crossing Downing and the inner loop road.

Stream Design believes this report accurately reflects what transpired at the meeting. Please provide comment to the appropriate project manager if you have a different understanding of what occurred or would like to add specifics or additional information. Notification should be made within 5 working days of issuing this report, after which, it is assumed that all parties agree that this report is accurate.

CC: File