Sunken Gardens Master Plan

Virtual Public Meeting 11/18/20. Questions and Answers

Can bike use in the park be improved? The Master Plan will provide recommendations for improved multi-use pathways (which includes bikes) through the park from adjacent designated on-street bikeways to improved pathways along the park perimeter that link major park entries. The Master Plan will also prioritize the implementation of pedestrian safety improvements at street crossings that provide direct access to the park in coordination with other City Agencies such as the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DOTI).

How can the park be made to feel safer? We’ve heard from park users about two main safety concerns: the southeastern portion of the park with more trees is shadier and visually enclosed, and the walk along Speer Boulevard that is too close to fast moving traffic. The Master Plan can prescribe measures to prune vegetation and add lighting to enhance visual access and security, and can also recommend greater separation and screening between the walk and Speer Boulevard.

Why does the tree canopy need to be renewed? Some trees planted in the park over 100 years ago are reaching the end of their lifespan or could succumb to disease or become hazardous. The Master Plan will recommend a selective and limited removal and replanting strategy to retain the character and diversity of the existing tree canopy amid new tree plantings.

How will historic resources be preserved? The existing historic features in the park will be preserved, maintained and restored as needed to preserve the park’s historic integrity as documented in the National Register of Historic Places. Any restoration or replacement of historic features would be done according to the US Department of the Interior’s treatment standards. Historic features include the stairs and foundation associated with the pavilion, the edge of the reflection pool, sets of stairs leading from the walk along Speer Boulevard to the open lawn, the swale in the southern part of the park, the maintenance shed and the sun shade located near the intersection of 8th and Speer Boulevard.

What can be done to improve park walkways? The Denver Parks and Recreation Department standard for paved walkways is a concrete surface. The plan will prescribe selective realignment of the park walks to make them smoother, more interconnected, with direct links between major park entries and amenities, and will specify replacement of asphalt with concrete walks.

What is the 5280 Trail? This is a proposed on-street walking and biking loop trail planned to pass through cultural and historic sites, parks and interesting neighborhoods encircling Downtown. The trail is planned to pass through Sunken Gardens from 9th Avenue on the west across Cherry Creek to Bannock Street on the east.

Will the introduction of a pollinator garden impact the ecosystem? Creating gardens that interact with wildlife is generally an enhancement to the ecosystem. This assumes that the selected plants are not noxious or invasive, and wildlife associated with the selected plants are not harmful or otherwise a danger to native species. The plan will include recommendations that all plantings and gardens be consistent with best management practices as prescribed by our in-house Natural Resources staff and local CSU Extension Service.
Can the park accommodate community events? Sunken Gardens is a 9-acre neighborhood scale park that currently has no dedicated parking or restrooms. This implies that the park is less suitable for large events while being more suitable for local family and smaller community gatherings. Utilizing Elati Street (i.e. for a potential farmers market) or “partner events” with the West Campus and other neighborhood organizations could be opportunities for events of an appropriate scale.

How can off leash dogs be managed? By park regulation, all dogs must be on a leash in the park. As more park users are bringing dogs to the park, the planning team will explore opportunities to incorporate a small, limited size off-leash enclosure in this small park amid other improvement priorities.

Can the park include a restroom? The park does not meet Denver Parks and Recreation Department guidelines for adding a restroom because of its smaller size and limited amenities that meet the established restroom use threshold. The team will continue to evaluate this guideline based on final improvement recommendations for the Master Plan.

How would future Park improvements be maintained? One benefit of park improvements/upgrades/replacements is that new improvements require less maintenance time than older – and more deficient - facilities. Improvements that reduce maintenance demands include walk replacements and irrigation system upgrades. The Denver Parks and Recreation Department has established system-wide maintenance standards that all parks are committed to achieving.