



MEMO

November 7, 2010

To: Ford Site Open Space Work Group

From: Bruce Chamberlain, ASLA
Project Consultant

Re: Open space features, budgets and principles for the future Ford site.

On November 1 the Ford Site Open Space Work Group participated in a group exercise to identify priority open space features for a redeveloped Ford site. The group made feature selections from a wide array of scaled options with the objective of filling three boards that represented varying amounts of open space at the Ford site.

The three levels of open space used in the exercise were 10% of the site (roughly 15 acres), 25% of the site (39 acres), and 45% of the site (70 acres). The acreage calculations were based on a combined total of the bluff top parcel, river parcel and rail yards – all of which are anticipated to be part of the redevelopment package. The chosen land areas were used because they represent the range of open space exhibited through the five redevelopment scenarios selected by the community in the first phase of planning for the site. They were also used because they generally reflect differing City code thresholds (depending on the type and density of site development) and norms experienced in other similar redevelopments around the United States.

Open Space Feature Selection

The exercise was valuable not because it defines exactly what features should be at the site but because it characterizes the types of features that are valued by the community given varied land-area limitations. Because the Open Space Work Group is reflective of diverse neighborhood and community interests, it is felt that the results represent likely open space values held by the community. Following is an overview of the results.

10% of site area (15 acres): The group struggled with this level of open space because it was generally felt to be too small. The features chosen represent a theme common to all three open space levels – feature diversity. The selections include:

- Roughly 4 acres of neighborhood-based and neighborhood-scale recreation such as playground, picnic area, small skate park and small dog park.
- Roughly 9 acres of programmed community ball fields that were discussed as replacement for existing fields at the Ford site.
- Roughly 2 acres of passive open space with habitat value.

25% of site area (39 acres): With this level of open space, the group kept the land area of neighborhood-based features similar to the smaller site but significantly expanded both natural open space and community athletics. In this scenario the group added the component of a creek corridor as an expression of Hidden Creek that existed on the site before development. The selections include:

- Roughly 5 acres of neighborhood-based and neighborhood-scale recreation.
- Roughly 20 acres of programmable community fields including both ball fields and flexible fields that could accommodate sports like soccer and lacrosse.
- Roughly 13 acres of passive open space with habitat value including creek corridor.

45% of site area (70 acres): At this level of open space, the group selected more community park-scaled features, expanded athletic offerings and expanded natural areas. The group felt that this scale of open space would offer the opportunity for bigger/better dedicated recreational features such as dog park and community garden as well as allow for meaningful natural areas at both the interior of the site and along the Mississippi River bluff top. The selections include:

- Roughly 26 acres of diverse community recreation such as playground, picnicking, community gathering, tennis, ice-skating, open lawn, dog park and adventure play/skate park.
- Roughly 20 acres of programmable community fields including both ball fields and flexible fields that could accommodate sports like soccer and lacrosse.
- Roughly 24 acres of passive open space with habitat value including creek corridor.

Graphic representations of the features selected by the group are attached to this memo.

The group discussed numerous important considerations as they were working through the exercise. For instance, there was acknowledgement that future open space at the Ford site should support both site redevelopment plus recreation for the existing neighborhood. The group also discussed the importance of integrating open space with future development as opposed to locating it at an edge of the site or on the riverfront parcel. And, if there is an opportunity for higher ratios of open space at the site, the group expressed interest in broadening the habitat corridor at the edge of the bluff top.

There were several open space features that were specifically not selected by the group. A performance venue or amphitheater and major athletic complexes were felt to be too intensive, not in scale with the neighborhood and cause potential traffic congestion.

The group generally felt that development density and predominant land use of redevelopment should inform open space selections. Higher densities warrant a more diverse set of open space features. Predominantly industrial reuse would warrant more focus on athletics and natural open space while predominantly residential reuse would demand a wider range of features similar to those selected by the group in the exercise.

Budgeting

As a point of reference in the group exercise, capital and annual operating budgets were identified for each open space feature. At such a preliminary stage, there are numerous assumptions that must go into budgeting however they provide “order of magnitude” costs based on the construction and operational experiences in Saint Paul and other cities in the region. Some of the more significant budgeting assumptions include:

- Community athletic complexes would be lighted and use either engineered soil or artificial turf (significantly more expensive than native soils).
- Annual operating budgets include labor and equipment needs as well as escrow for long-term facility replacement.
- Above the stated facility budgets, an additional per-acre capital cost is needed to account for general park elements such as landscaping, signage, sidewalks, etc. - \$10,000/acre is used.
- A capital surcharge beyond the construction total is needed to account for design, engineering, construction administration and contingency – 30% is used.
- Any land acquisition costs are not factored.

Based on the feature selections made by the group, the following open space budgets are identified:

10% of site area (15 acres):

- Capital budget total: roughly **\$2.7 million or \$180,000/acre**
 - Breakdown:
 - Features: \$1.9 million
 - General park elements: \$150,000
 - Surcharge: \$615,000
- Annual operating budget: roughly **\$160,000 or \$11,000/acre**

25% of site area (39 acres):

- Capital budget total: roughly **\$6.3 million or \$160,000/acre**
 - Breakdown:
 - Features: \$4.4 million
 - General park elements: \$390,000
 - Surcharge: \$1,440,000
- Annual operating budget: roughly **\$300,000 or \$8,000/acre**

45% of site area (70 acres):

- Capital budget total: roughly **\$8.5 million or \$120,000/acre**
 - Breakdown:
 - Features: \$5.8 million
 - General park elements: \$700,000
 - Surcharge: \$2 million
- Annual operating budget: roughly **\$500,000 or \$7,000/acre**

Guiding Principles

A number of core guiding principles for future open space at the Ford site have emerged through the planning process. The guiding principles establish a basis for open space guidelines but as

importantly, they provide a framework for future community evaluation and policy directives for the site. Draft guiding principles include:

- More open space is preferred to less.
- A majority of new open space should be integral to the Ford site as opposed to peripheral.
- If higher levels of open space at the site can be attained, a broader natural habitat corridor at the edge of the bluff top should be created.
- Existing league-play ball fields on the Ford site should be replaced along with future redevelopment.
- Open space features should have layered functions (example: athletic fields should infiltrate or reuse stormwater).
- Open space feature selections should respond to land use type and densities at the Ford site.
- Open space at the Ford site should accommodate both new development and the surrounding neighborhood.
- Others?

Questions

Below are several questions for Work Group members to ponder in preparation for the next meeting on November 15.

1. Does this memo accurately reflect group selections and discussion?
2. With some time to reflect on the last meeting, are there any different choices you would make?
3. Are there other key points that should be reflected in the guiding principles?

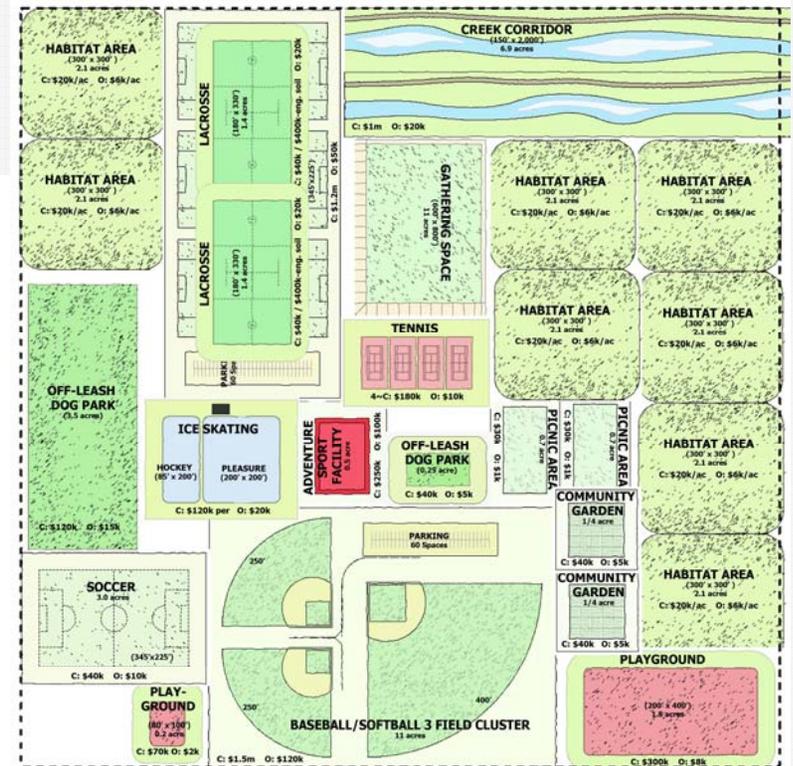
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Preferred Open Space Features

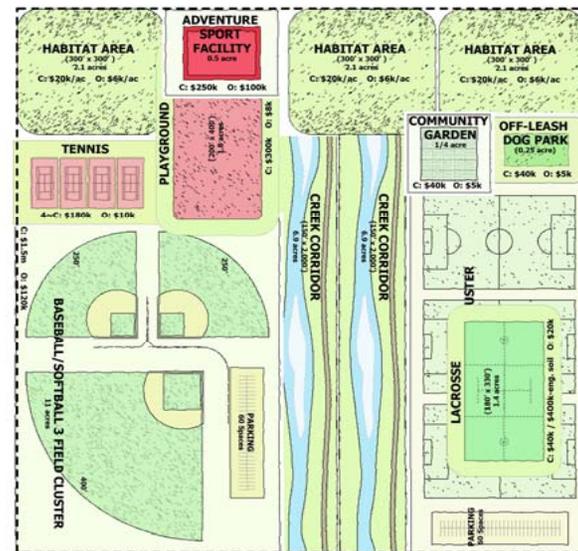
These composites depict the features selected from a broad menu of open space elements in a group exercise conducted by the Ford Site Open Space Work Group on November 1, 2010.

The group chose favored facilities to fill boards representing 10%, 25%, and 45% of the land area of the full site.

45% of Ford site (70 acres)



25% of Ford site (39 acres)



10% of Ford site (15 acres)

