

Meeting Notes

Iris Park Improvements

Design Advisory Committee Meeting #2

1/15/14

Design Advisory Committee Members Present: Benita Warns, Deb Veit, Jessie McClurg, Jim Johnson, Julie Niewald, Mark LaVenture, Rob Vanasek

City Staff Present: Brian Touretlotte, Karin Misiewicz, Dave Ronzani, Ellen Stewart

Others Present: Ruby Hunt, Mary Raid, Fred Emmings, Judy Emmings

1. Introductions. Many of the members attended the previous meeting. In addition to city staff, meeting attendees included neighborhood, business, and residents of Episcopal Homes and Cornelia house.
2. Ellen reviewed the purpose of the grant funding the project, goals of the project and overall vision developed from the previous community meeting.
3. Concept discussion: Ellen noted the easement for the sanitary sewer and water lines which limits the construction within the park. Each concept provides simple circulation and two gathering areas in the park. One in the northeast corner and the other near the pond.
 - a. Concept A:
 - i. Concept A provides a split plaza on the north end that provides two seating areas – one oriented to the street and the other oriented toward the park.
 - ii. Fountain and retaining walls provide a physical barrier and a sound barrier making the lower space more intimate
 - iii. Planters separate the plaza from the main sidewalk with a ramp in the middle for access from E. Lynnhurst
 - iv. The round pergola structure provides a demarcation of the park's presence. The structure's shape is unusual and could incorporate some whimsy related to either the previous presence of an amusement park or some other artful interpretation.
 - v. Access for those using wheelchairs and walkers from the upper level to the lower level will be the sidewalk along E. Lynnhurst.
 - vi. The upper and lower areas are connected by stairs as well toward the 5' arced walkway that leads to W. Lynnhurst.
 - vii. The lower plaza could accommodate game tables – it would be important to make some of them wheelchair accessible.
 - viii. Upper plaza area hosts more temporary seating including seat walls
 - ix. A second gathering area provides a slightly larger space than what currently exists at the north end of the pond. Another pergola structure there would accommodate more tables or benches or swings or a combination of furnishings.
 - x. Possibility of incorporating an Iris Park signs a plus.

- b. Concept B

- i. Concept B is designed around a circular lawn area.
- ii. An entry area to the park at the northeast corner steps down to the lawn and the circular walk that delineates the lawn.
- iii. A fountain at the corner flows down the steps into a runnel that leads south toward the existing pond.
- iv. “Family Friendly” aspect of the design is the water runnel, topography, and open space rather than having a designated play area in the park.
- v. Initially there were mixed reactions to the circular open area, though became more positive as the discussion progressed. Open space became a strength of the design.
- vi. Would it be possible to provide a park sign in this retaining wall like the one in Concept A?
- vii. Steps in middle creates a barrier
- viii. Include planters of a small garden area by the plaza
- ix. Drop-off at edge of plaza creates a barrier – bring grade of lawn up to edge of the plaza
- x. Talk about runnel dumping into the ground or terminating before the pond
- xi. Use runnel for storm water?
- xii. Maybe remove strip of concrete walk to minimize paths

c. General Comments applying to both concepts:

- i. Trees near the plaza just north of the pond can be limbed up or removed for visibility
- ii. Consider shifting the south pergola further west to leave more room for future development
- iii. Seating by pergola at by pond. How do we address the concern about the drunks by the park? Will consider the type of furnishings that will not encourage lying down or sleeping. Additionally, the increased traffic through the park from the LRT users will help to provide surveillance and decrease unwanted activities in the park.
- iv. Important to consider a NW-SW connection through the space to decrease cow paths. People use it a lot.
- v. Curb cuts – This is a public works issue, rather than a Parks issue. *Public Works is responsible for the ROW and as a rule, they do not incorporate mid-block crossings due to safety considerations. Questions regarding this matter should be directed to Monica Beeman, Traffic Engineer, in Public Works at Monica.beeman@ci.stpaul.mn.us or 651-266-6214.*
- vi. Potential of movable chairs by the water, swing chairs.
- vii. Building shade. How much and how will it affect the space? Fortunately the area to the south, where the most direct sunlight comes from, is clear of large structures. The new building will shade some of the park only in the morning hours.
- viii. Seat walls need skateboard deterrent
- ix. Corner is too public for the drunks. This is good. Will not congregate on seat walls
- x. Retail space at Episcopal will NOT be a coffee shop
- xi. Whimsy aspect – More of a memorable place. Sculpture or add color, metal details, etc. to pergola

- xii. Community garden opportunities. Raised gardens provide better opportunity for seniors, and those who are less mobile.
- xiii. Explore potential solutions to better accommodating mobility including eliminating steps.

d. OVERVIEW

- i. Most discussion about wall and separation issues
- ii. Maybe too much seating at the corner
- iii. Add benches around the edges of the circle
- iv. Some concern about keeping water runnel through the park and ensuring that there is a feature, even without water
- v. Like the planters – consider having raised beds for accessibility
- vi. Certain trees are considered sacred in the park like the apple tree on the south end. Show which trees are being considered for removal so the community can review that information.
- vii. Have the Ash trees been treated? *(From Forestry: Four ash trees along East Lynnhurst were treated in 2011. Two trees within the park have not been treated and will not likely be treated unless funding becomes available. If there is a possibility of potential construction damage, the recommendation is removal of the trees.)*
- viii. Explore other seating locations, planters, garden areas
- ix. Sidewalk poetry and other ways to incorporate public art should be explored. Mosaics would tie in with the station platform. Consider applying artful treatments to the seat walls.
- x. Most likes the circle in concept B
- xi. Most liked the runnel for B
- xii. Wood pergola in B. (what material will it be? Will wood hold up?)

4. Next Steps:

- a. City staff will move forward with merging preferred aspects of the two concepts for the next meeting.
- b. Additional information that should be included in the graphics for the next meeting would be:
 - i. Easement information so there is an understanding of the limits for construction
 - ii. Tree information – species of trees and the intent of protecting or removing
 - iii. Provide more detail on the design of the plaza area north of the pond
 - iv. Look at options for fountain and runnel to be incorporated or consider alternatives which provide focal points for the park that pull people into the park.
- c. Open House at Corneila House –Episcopal Homes Wednesday, January 29, 2014 5:30-7:30. Please invite your friends and neighbors to attend. There will be a short presentation by city staff and images of the proposed design for review and comment.