



CITY OF SAINT PAUL

Mayor Christopher B. Coleman

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Parque de Castillo : Community Advisory Committee #1 : Meeting Notes

September 23, 2015 5-7pm - Room 272# - Wellstone Center

Attendees (per sign in sheet):

Rick Hernandez, West Side Community Organization and West Side Boosters; Jesus Ramirez, Resident; Tou Yang, Dunnedin Terrace Representative; Sarah Foster; West side Transit Team; Gilbert de la O, Resident; Shad Lukas, Neighborhood House representative; Gail Merriam, Neda; Virginia Hernandez, Resident; Carol Neumann, Resident; Mark Thomas, Westside Clinic Representative; Lolo Castillo, Resident and Nicolas Castillo relative; Chacho Estrada

City staff: Will Xiong, Wellstone Center Recreation staff; Dave Danielson, Wellstone Center Recreation staff; Lucy Thompson, PED; Ellen Stewart, Parks and Recreation; Bianca Paz, Parks and Recreation; Anne Gardner, Parks and Recreation; Karin Misiewicz, Parks and Recreation;

1. Welcome and Introductions

- a. Anne Gardner, Project manager, started the meeting. Attendees went around the room to introduce themselves and who they are representing as a committee member (attendees listed above).
- b. Project Goal Stated: Create a concept plan for improvements to Parque de Castillo to improve the play area and create a vibrant public space.**
- c. Role and Expectations of Community Advisory Committee
 - i. Outlined in the power point presentation (<http://www.stpaul.gov/DocumentCenter/View/81056>)
 - ii. The key is that the committee members are the 'liaison' between the project process and the community.
- d. Meeting Goals:
 1. Introduce project and review survey results, analysis, and concept plans.
 2. Determine a desired organization of the site for moving forward
 3. Identify committee preferences for play area and other site features
- e. Meeting schedule & Tentative| Project Schedule
 - i. Anne will send out a poll to determine the next meeting date and time. Aiming for mid-November (11, 12, 18 or 19th)
 - ii. Suggestion received to move the meeting time to 6pm rather than 5pm
- f. Discussion Questions
 - i. Who are the project designers? City staff in Parks and Recreation makes up the design team (Anne Gardner, Ellen Stewart, and Bianca Paz). There may be additional consultants and artists brought in as project proceeds.
 - ii. Will the Park and the Field Construction happen simultaneously? They are two separate projects with different timing, funding sources, and schedules. The field will likely get built next summer (2016) but the park may be 2016 or 2017.



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2. Project Background

- a. Funding Source- CIB funding for \$650,000 for 2014/15 cycle to “replace the existing play area and add park improvements”. Funding will not allow everything: plaza, water feature, play area, paths, etc. so the committee will have to help prioritize the key improvements.
- b. Community engagement to date
 - i. Attended National Night out- Aug 6, 2015
 - ii. Visited neighboring businesses
 - iii. Mailed 750 postcards
 - iv. Managed an online survey
 - v. Assemble design advisory committee to represent community
- c. Survey Results
 - i. An online survey in English and Spanish was available from August 2015- Sept 2015 for community members. Links to the survey were distributed to the design advisory committee members, via Facebook, and at National Night out to pass out to representative organizations
 - ii. 73 people took the survey – preference was for combination of modern and traditional play equipment with synthetic resident surfacing (poured in place). 74% preferred a water feature to be added to the park space as well as more picnic space (68%)
 - iii. Some of the top themes that came from the survey include that might inspire the design include: music, culture, family, culture, history, and community
 - iv. Jesus Ramirez commented that 73 people is not a significant representation of the thousands of West side residents
- d. History of Park
 - i. Castillo Family member described how the park used to look. There was a curved bench for gathering. He mentioned that in the 60’s and 80’s there was discrimination against the Hispanic community and the park was a place where the Hispanic came together to chat. Park used to be called Chicano Park. It was an open (lot) space that the community used as a gathering place to meet with the neighbors.
 - ii. The original development of the park was a community effort
 - iii. A timeline of the park and neighborhood was presented to show significant events related to Parque de Castillo including the year in which it was named after Nicolas Castillo after his death in 1987.
- e. Discussion Questions
 - i. West Side Community Organization (WSCO) worked with children on a plan for the play area. Parks and Rec staff will follow up to find the plan as the city does not have a record of that process and may not have been included in that discussion
 - ii. Castillo monument- Committee members discussed that the park and monument has not appeared to be maintained. Vegetation is overgrown around the monument and hides people sleeping and hanging out. The group had a discussion around possibly moving the monument or rebuilding it. The Castillo family spoke of the significance of the monument to their family and towards the end of the meeting, Nicolas Castillo’s daughter spoke about being more comfortable with a new design proposal or relocating the monument (although the Castillo family expressed the desire to have it remain on the Chavez side of the street).

- iii. Suggestion for adding in 'natural vegetation' or a thicket of native plants to encourage wildlife movement. Parks and Recreation responded that safety and sightlines will need to be considered

3. Site Analysis & Concept Planning

- a. Site Analysis & Neighborhood Context: Key points of the site analysis:
 - i. Establish a presence on Cesar Chavez side that offers sightlines into the park, but enough of a buffer to make it feel comfortable;
 - ii. Create strong visual connection to Gilbert de la O field and Rec Center;
 - iii. Widen sidewalks and enhance pathways through the park that are intentional connectors
 - iv. Flatten the lawn space to create more useable open areas
 - v. Reduce the strong presence of visible utilities (power pole & light fixtures)
 - vi. Trim plantings around the sculpture and/or move memorial
 - vii. Create a vibrant, active play area for children
 - viii. Create an open plaza space for community events
 - ix. Other comments and questions:
 - 1. What are the known hydrology and soil conditions of the site? Parks and rec has not completed soil borings at this point. That will occur once the design is further along if needed
 - 2. Traffic on Clinton Street: It is not safe currently to have a mid-block crossing. Kids go from the fields to the park. Gates are being used during big games.
 - 3. People get off the bus on Cesar Chavez Street and walk through the park to get to the fields and rec center
 - 4. Parking lot next to the clinic has unsafe circulation pattern. It is heavily used and can be problematic during peak times of use. Suggestion to add one way traffic to enter from Cesar Chavez and exit onto State street
- b. Concept images: Play Equipment options and Water features to show the difference between a fountain, a pool, and a splashpad were shown to discuss the preferred options
 - i. Discussion, Comments, Suggestions:
 - 1. Gail suggested adding work out circuits and an area for yoga. This idea was supported by the rest of the attendees.
 - 2. Lighting- The lighting is not yet detailed in the plan but will be included for safety and ambience
 - 3. A native vegetation pathway for birds and wild life can be added in to the park along with an educational component to the park. Create a partnership with environmental high schools.
 - 4. A splash pad would be a great addition to the park and it would be very important for the community. It would provide an interactive play element for parents and children; the committee was very excited about adding a splash pad even if it is small (example at Conway splash pad was shown
 - 5. Add a bike rack within the park so that people do not park in the bushes
 - ii. Concept plans had been previous developed in 2007 with a group of neighborhood organizations and city staff. Three concept plans were developed but all three included a convertible street for community gatherings/events. The concept plans were shown and discussed the various pros and cons of the three: Art Park, Neighborhood Park, and

Traditional Plaza. Simplified diagrams were shown to represent the 'spatial organization of the three schemes'. The group discussed the preferred option for the location of the play area, the size of the plaza, and the type of water feature.

1. Preference was to locate the play area on the Clinton Ave Side of the park
2. Organic pathways were preferred
3. 'Community kiosk' could be added to include information about community assets and history of the place with links to a walking tour
4. Exercise area or circuit- could be a collaborative effort with the Health Center
5. An entrance or gateway could be added in with the name of the park. It could be a 'welcoming' area for the community and speak to the community history of immigration of the West side
6. Relate to the townhomes- does it make sense to have a connection through the existing fence?

4. Design Preference Activity

- a. A board was available to see what aspect of the three concept plans people preferred. Attendees preferred the size of the plaza from Concept A, style of water feature in Concept B, Location of play area in Concept C
- b. A questionnaire was sent out asking: What would you like to see at Parque de Castillo to enhance the space?

▪ **Please rank in order: (1= most preferred – 2= least preferred)**

12 out of 13 prefer: Smaller Play Area and Smaller Plaza with water feature

- c. Other comments from questionnaire:
 - i. Bike racks would help many people feel safe getting to and being at Parque de Castillo (maybe near Chavez street)
 - ii. 4 comments: Add a Splashpad
 - iii. 2 comments: Native planting thicket a good idea for birds to inhabit and for education opportunities, along parking lot and Castillo fence
 - iv. Exercise stations
 - v. 2 comments: Educational kiosk. 10x10' at north corner
 - vi. Develop active programming with La Clinica, Wellstone, and Riverview School
 - vii. Cultural aspect through educational piece (utilizing Humboldt HS students)
 - viii. Intentional agricultural design using elementary or junior/senior high students from Humboldt & Environmental school on Plato to support birds and butterflies
 - ix. Eliminate existing memorial. Do an RFP for new sustainable design: Portal to the park
 - x. Include half a basketball court
 - xi. Have a gateway arch saying welcome in a variety of languages of the Westside on the side near Cesar Chavez
 - xii. Elevate road on Clinton to force people to slow down around the park area
 - xiii. Cultural Education
 - xiv. Veteran Area

5. Next steps: Moving forward

- a. All meeting presentation material, minutes, and notes will be available on the project website (www.stpaul.gov/parquecastillo)

This document shall serve as the official record of the community meeting and information shared. If there are additions or modifications that are required, please contact Anne Gardner via email anne.gardner@ci.stapul.mn.us by Monday, October 5.

Notes by Anne Gardner and Bianca Paz- 9/29/15