



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
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November 19, 2014

Rice Park Revitalization Design Advisory Committee (11/19/2014)

Meeting Location: Landmark Plaza, Saint Paul, MN
6:00 – 7:30pm

Attendees:

Design Advisory Committee: Colleen Fitzpatrick (SPGC), Dave Haley (Parks Commission), Andrea McKennan (Central Library), Ruth Huss (Resident- Landmark Towers), David Lilly (Ordway), Nancy Huart (Travelers), Greg Fouks (JJ Hill Library), Amy Mino (Landmark Center)

Other: Jeff Bartlett (Lighting Designer), Anne Gardner (Staff- Saint Paul Parks), Karin Misiewicz (Staff- Saint Paul Parks), Tim Griffin (Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation/Capitol River Council Representative), Amy Spong (HPC)

Meeting #1 Goal:

- ***Introduce the Rice Park Revitalization Project. Identify and understand the issues to resolve in the final concept plan.***

- 1) Introductions - Anne Gardner welcomed the group and introduced the project. Individuals introduced themselves and who they represented.
- 2) Project Overview- Anne Gardner gave an overview and goals of the project.
 - Project Goal- This project will develop a concept plan for the phased improvements to Rice Park to revitalize this significant public space in Saint Paul located on the block bounded by Washington Street, 5th Street, 4th Street, and Market Street.
 - Meeting Goal- Introduce the Rice Park Revitalization Project. Identify and understand the issues to resolve in the final concept plan.
- 3) Design Advisory Committee and Design Process-
 - a. Anne Gardner discussed the guidelines for the design advisory committee process including the role, charge, and guidelines for the design advisory committee.
- 4) Project Background/Schedule/Funding-
 - a. Background: The park is in need of updates and improvements beyond the reach of annual maintenance. The Saint Paul Garden club raised funds to address the need for improvements at Rice Park. The funds were given to the city to use for



the design process to develop a concept plan through a community design process. This design process will identify any major elements needed to revitalize Rice Park. From this plan, the city will develop a budget and a projected timeline for construction. We intend to use this process to identify changes and updates that can be made in the park, though we are not intending to ‘start from scratch’ with the park.

- b. The Design Advisory committee will have the next meeting January 21. The goal is to have a final meeting in early March and then a public open house in late March.
- c. There is no funding for implementation of the concept plan at this time. Funding for implementation will be requested via Capital Improvement Budget request process (starting in January 2015)

5) History

a. Timeline:

- i. Rice park was dedicated as a ‘public square’ in 1849. For many years, it was simply a green space that was mown occasionally, used for laundry and grazing. In 1867 a parks committee was formed. By 1872, trees, a fountain, defined pathways, and a bandshell were added. By 1883 Four feet of soil had been added to the park.
- ii. 1898 marks the year the park underwent a complete remodel in anticipation of the completion of the Federal court building (Landmark Center).
- iii. 1917 the Saint Paul Public Library was constructed- the park maintained views to the major buildings north and south of the park with open vistas and pathways.
- iv. 1925 the pathways adjusted to form an x relationship
- v. 1930-1960- Decline of park due to movement to suburban areas and
- vi. 1965- Women’s Institute raised funds to renovate Rice Park- HGA was hired to complete the project. New fountain added “The Source” to represent the combine the historical past with the contemporary spirit. The fountain was below grade- concentric circles stepped down- creating a place for seating and gathering.
- vii. 2000- Renovation of the park and the fountain occurred. Grade was raised due to ADA requirements which is how it remains today
- viii. 2010- Garden club raises funds to renovates the south end garden
- ix. 2014- Gardens updated with plantings of Yews, Hosta, and Tina Crabapples

b. Historical Designation:

- i. Rice Park and the surrounding neighborhood are eligible to be a historic district. Application is ready to be submitted.
- ii. Park planning should consider the historical significance so as not to impact eligibility.
- iii. The general park layout (diagonal paths to a central gathering space and generally open green space) relate to the historic design of the park. Materials can recall the historic past (eg hexagonal tile in pathways)

6) Survey Results Summary (Anne Gardner)

- a. Results show the favorite aspects of Rice Park include: the character of the park, the surrounding buildings, & the fountain
 - i. Comments indicate that the park is highly valued as a beautiful, greenspace in the heart of the city. It is a favorite urban ‘getaway’ space that offers “nature” in an urban setting. The surrounding historic buildings give a unique and desired enclosed quality to the space. Winter lights in

the park are also highly valued and create an iconic experience in Saint Paul.

- b. The top five items to change include:
 - 1. Garden Plantings
 - 2. Lighting
 - 3. Lawn Area
 - 4. Pathway Paving
 - 5. Trees
- c. The top three items in need of physical improvement include:
 - 1. New seating
 - 2. Flower and shrub plantings
 - 3. Lawn
- d. The priority for character improvements include:
 - More historic
 - Accommodate small groups
 - Views into and out of the park
 - Improved circulation
- e. Results indicate adding gardens, more seating and food truck space are preferred. Comments indicate lighting is also highly preferred
- f. Comments indicate that the top issues to address include the homeless population in the park. Safety, Lighting, Circulation design, and changes to current seating are also significant issues.

7) Analysis

- a. Rice park is the second largest park in downtown St Paul. It received an APA award as one of the top 10 great public spaces in 2011 and hosts many annual events that draw thousands to the space.
 - i. The park is utilized throughout the year in every season.
- b. Site Analysis boards reviewed. Points include:
 - 1. 5th Street
 - a. Significantly higher traffic volume on 5th street
 - b. Fast moving traffic- can traffic calming approach be considered to slow cars down at the intersection of Washington Street and 5th
 - c. Bus stop contributes noise, traffic, and blocks views. Can it be moved?
 - 2. Entry space at corners
 - a. Create more welcoming or inviting approach into the park
 - 3. Central paved space
 - a. Open and predominantly out of shade
 - b. Central paved space needs activation during non-event days
 - 4. Activate edges
 - a. Seating, gardens, elements to draw people into the space along Market Street
 - 5. Pedestrian Flow
 - a. Desire paths show traffic moves north south and perpendicular to the diagonal path
 - b. Consider flow from entrances of surrounding buildings to central space of park
 - c. Additional pathways may be needed- peds walk from the Saint Paul Grill to Ordway.

- d. Deter mid-block crossing due to safety
 - e. The Ordway will attract more visitors due to expansion.
6. Sun/Shade Conditions
- a. Extreme sun/shade conditions throughout the park- central paved area has very little to no shade. Pathways are densely shaded
 - b. Dense shade conflicts with lawn growth
 - c. Can trees be selectively removed to provide filtered light conditions
 - d. Can shade or trees be introduced in the central gathering space without compromising events space?
7. Trees/Garden
- a. Desire paths show traffic moves north south and perpendicular to the diagonal path
 - b. Lindens bordered paths in structured, linear way. All other trees appear to be planted in a random configuration
 - c. Fruiting ginkgo trees are problematic due to smelly fruit
 - d. Electrical outlets on trees are not always functional
 - e. Garden beds recently updated with yews, hosta and 10 Tina Crabapple in beds surrounding the large circle- donation by the Saint Paul Garden Club
 - f. Saint Paul Garden club maintains the small garden along 4th street. This garden is trampled and replaced each year after large events.
8. Sculpture inventory
- a. Many plaques on site. Can they be consolidated?
 - b. Also, newspaper bins on exterior/perimeter of site could be more coordinated
 - c. Peanuts sculpture? Can we address them- possible removal?
- 8) Discussion of desired changes/issues to address – Round the table comments
- a. Create a more welcoming park so young families will use park.
 - b. Add areas for conversation
 - c. Can we consider snowmelt in the park?
 - d. Maintain this as a positive process regarding homeless population. Utilize city programs. Draw people into the park to stifle the negative activities and perception
 - e. Add lighting
 - f. Traffic calming along 5th street
 - g. Small tweaks to the park – it works well for the most part now!
 - h. Look into the Dorothy Day improvements (Hope Rising, Artist/Architect)
 - i. Enhance the four corners
 - j. Consider Landmark Plaza- how it is functioning and used. Can the River theme flow from Landmark Plaza into Rice Park
 - k. Preservation thrust in selection of materials, consider historical past in the planning and design
 - l. Historic process- Article to follow on planning and design of historic spaces
 - m. Activate the space using furniture
 - n. Consider change to bus stop- can it be moved?
 - o. Interest in learning more about the history of the space and the process to modify with historic consideration
 - p. Activate edges. The sides appear to be ‘dead end’ considering entrances of the

main buildings are in the center of the block

- q. Add lighting that is animated
 - r. Add lighting to the fountain so that it offers interest in the off season/winter
 - s. Activate the space in a modern way
 - t. Is perimeter fencing an option? Or on the sidewalk to prevent mid-block crossing
 - u. Lawn and turf improvements- irrigation and reduce shading to help lawn growth
 - v. Infrastructure need for new irrigation and new electrical to support events
 - w. Funding- what are the options for implementation: CIB? Legacy?
- 9) Feedback: Questions asked of the Design Advisory committee:
- a. The survey indicates that the following are the top five items to improve: lighting, lawn area, gardens/planting, paving materials, and trees. Do you agree? YES or NO Please suggest any other changes or additional items.
 - i. 8 papers turned in. All circled yes.
 - b. The survey indicates that the top issues to address are Homeless population, safety, lighting, circulation design, and changes to current seating. Do you agree? YES or NO Please suggest any other changes or additional items.
 - i. 8 papers turned in. 7 circled yes. 1 did not answer.
- 10) Action Items :
- a. Next meeting: January 21
 - b. Send out:
 - i. William Whyte Video (Anne Gardner)
 - ii. Historical context Article (Amy Spong for Anne to distribute)
 - iii. Precedents projects (will send in later December)
 - iv. Update on December progress (Anne send to Colleen)
 - v. Funding (Anne to look into funding options)
 - vi. Public works questions: traffic calming, sidewalk replacement, bus stop (Anne to meet internally and invite to next meeting)
 - vii. Homeless Issues (Dave Haley to send Anne contact information for various positive city programs underway)
 - viii. Sculpture/plaques- (Anne will look into resolution on sculpture and plaques)

Notes by: Anne Gardner – 11/24/2014