



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
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Pedro Park 2018
Community Design Advisory Committee Meeting #2
Meeting Minutes*
May 24, 2018 6:30-8:00 pm
81 on E. 7th St Paul, MN 55101

*Meeting minutes are intended to capture overall participation and summarize comments from City Staff and Advisory Member participants.

Beth Bartz – Welcome introductions call meeting to start. Review role and expectations of the meeting, members of the committee will be focused to participants.

Beth - Members of the audience, thank you for being here to observe. Our conversation will be focused on committee participants but you are welcome to fill out a comment card or email [Andy Hestness](#) or [Ellen Stewart](#) with additional input. For this process, we are focusing on the design of the park, not focusing on the sale of the Public Safety Annex building. Andy is here from PED and your comments about the development site will go to a separate HRA process.

Main focuses for today: review what we learned from meeting 1, talk about the survey, and we'll go over the program elements. Then we will have an interactive portion design exercise, participants will have some fun designing Pedro park.

(Introduce Committee Members)

Sue Ohlrogge – Renodis,
Pat Wolf – Commercial Real Estate,
Kate Swenson – Rossmor Residential Association,
Doug Throckmorton – Central Presbyterian Church,
John Kavanaugh - MPR,
Bill Collins – Rossmor Business Association,
Bertin Dakouo – Donerly Inc,
Parker Evans – The Ackerberg Group,
Jeanne Hall – Capitol River Council,
Rod Halvorson – City Walk,
Robert M. – the Alano Society,
Jonathan Flory – The Pointe.

City Staff Introductions: Mary Norton, Landscape Architect; Ellen Stewart, Landscape Architect and Project Manager for Pedro Park; and, Alice Messer, Design and Construction Manager

Beth – As part of our overview of our last meeting, we had “the Parking Lot,” a list of items requiring further review before answering.

1. Volunteer group like Friends of Mears. Friends of Mears Park is a group of individuals who care for Mears Park including planting and maintaining perennial plantings each year. Some individuals have reached out together to organize planting of Urban flower

field for this summer. The plants are coming from the Parks Department and volunteers will plant this weekend.

2. Robert Street Reconstruction schedule and scope: Robert Street is a state highway and there is a project scheduled for 2022-2023 for a resurfacing. Likely will do ADA curb ramps and a refresh of infrastructure. There is information on MnDOT's website.
3. Alley Vacation? There are two things with that. The alley is used by Union Gospel for parking and access, and it is also used by other lands owners for access. All effected property owners would have to be involved in that conversation. The way that vacation works is that the alley, in this case, would be vacated and split between the land owners on either side of it. Therefore the northern half of the alley that is adjacent to Pedro Park would become park property. The other would go to the adjacent property owners.

Jeanne - My concern about the alley is that the Ackerberg group should in no way have the alley be used for them. They cannot design their building to access the building if that space is intended to be park. It is not their access, it belongs to the park. We need a clear provision that they cannot access the park.

Rod – That is my concern as well, as part of the planning process the comp plan identifies this as PedroPark. I think it is a fraud to continue this process and limit us to these boundaries to the northern edge of the park. I am going to resign from the park committee and therefore do not want you to use my name or City Walk listed anywhere as participating. I do not want my name or the City Walk to be used on this advisory committee here. Our board of directors made very clear that our position was not to include the Ackerberg group and that we were in support of the full block park. I think that's wrong and we need some signal to see vacating the alley as this is part of this.

(Alternate member Karl Karlson came to the table from City Walk)

Kate Swenson - The Rossmor Association has also asked me to remove my name as well.

Jeanne - I've been put in a tough spot, because I thought we would be looking at a larger park. I am a representative of the Capitol River Council and they have consistently and repeatedly voted for a park. I too will resign from this committee and ask that my name and CRC will not be on this council.

4. Comprehensive Plan Update

Lucy - We are in the process of updating the city-wide Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, which we are required to do every 10 years. The update addresses land use, transportation, housing, parks and open space, water resources, and heritage and cultural preservation for the city as a whole. The district, precinct and area plans are not being updated at this time; they will remain part of the Comprehensive Plan in their current form

Doug - Since it was my question last week, how does this fit into the vision of the city. It probably was not the right question to ask. With the long range plans, where does Pedro Park fit in and how is it described?

Lucy: The city-wide 2040 Comprehensive Plan does not show specific boundaries for Pedro Park, but it does show “planned park space” (via a tree icon) on the block. The draft plan recognizes the need to provide park space to meet the needs of a growing Saint Paul population and in areas that are underserved with parks. The original idea behind Pedro Park was to establish a “park at the heart” of the neighborhood, a core planning principle in downtown.

Doug: So any decisions we made as part of the comp plan are not applicable?

Lucy: This is a design process for the park itself. The idea of a “park at the heart” of this neighborhood has not changed, What is different, at least for the design process we’re undertaking right now, is the size of the park we’re designing.

Doug: One other thing I would say to that I’d like to say when I raised the question about what the City’s vision is the answer was that the City can’t do any long range planning because they don’t own the property. In this case, the City does own all the property.

Beth: I’m going to try and re-focus on this task and the Park land that is the focus. I don’t want you all to give up on the work you’ve been asked to do. It’s just this process and this group is focused on.

Doug: I really want to stay on this group so that I can be a part of getting a swing for kids in downtown. We’re planning a park, not THE park.

Survey Results:

Beth: I’m just going to move us along and talk about what we discussed last time. What kind of activity, look, and feel of the park. To quickly re-cap, greenery, safety, recreational and have some sort of entertainment. Activities in the evenings, that it be friendly to kids, have seating and obviously the alley vacation came up as a point of interest. We also put out a survey to the community to reach out.

Karl Karlson: How was the survey conducted? People in my community do not have access to it is not statistically valid.

Beth: It is a sampling, reflecting results at a point in time. It’s a chance for feedback and not meant to be statistically accurate. (Discuss Survey results on slides). Other feedback, what would be the most important piece to see in the park? In this case the “1” is the priority – most important would be open lawn and trees/shrubs. We had many other responses that could be things to do in the park. The least important would be a dog park area, possibly 20% downtown dog-owners might coincide.

Reasons for visiting the park: Other than event or performance, items were relatively passive, but again it’s an informal survey and gives an indication of community feedback. If you had to describe your downtown park what would they be – some of the priority words, Shade, flowers, seating. We did receive a number of responses relative to the PSA issue and those have been relayed to PED.

Beth: Any other feedback from representation?

Jonathan: We had someone email me about his biggest concern which was that he definitely did not want to have benches because of the homeless population. I realize there may be other ways to design around this with moveable chairs. Absolutely no basketball, if we do put trees in he wanted something that were pines.

John: Most feedback from MPR look at it as a place to relax and eat. If there is a dog area, they would like to have it sectioned off away from where they eat.

Doug: One thing on the homeless part, I live by Kellogg Square. Homelessness is another issue that needs to be addressed, we have to deal with that and would hate for that to skew the design.

Sue: A St. Paul Mural, reference all things St. Paul, traveling artists and sculpture garden to rival Minneapolis.

Beth: Great, thank you. (Transition to Ellen Stewart Project Manager and a quick time check to get through the slides.)

Park Design Tools and considerations

Ellen: Johnathan was asking how do I design a park? I'm hoping to give you a few tools as we go through this exercise. Some key things to think about making it social, active, accessible, and comfortable. How are people getting in and through a park, the more people there are and able to get to the park the more vibrant it will be. Comfortable, we want it to be flexible to adapt to uses. Looking at these elements, we want to think about seating or walls to separate areas. Organized play areas we could also look at more sculptural play areas, just having it set up so that it can accommodate multiple activities.

Dog Areas, some people would like it to be off-leash with a fence while others would have a very deliberate use for dogs without ruining the grass. Plaza/streetscapes, hardscapes that pull people through or help move people and also be set up for seating or events. Open Space could accommodate many passive or active reaction activities. Features, identify ways to have it continue to be vibrant, more centralized, or water features which are a great way to interject play into a space. Plant materials, trees can be in paving or open space to share uses.

Precedents: We went into depth a little more for Spring Street Park. Multiple uses here in a comparable space, adjacent residential and retail uses. Rockville, space is closer to the size of Pedro Park –rock outcroppings serve as play elements, park includes shade structures, open space. Tilikum Place in Seattle, the fountain is the main organizing feature in the park. Planting areas are all containers. Detroit Martius Park. They have a beach, all moveable furniture, central fountain area. All of these open spaces in fairly urban areas with commercial areas. Chestnut Plaza, the final example - perennials here, much more industrial palate but has public art as well.

Karl: Can I make a point that there are no people in your photos?

Ellen: That's true. (Transition to the Pedro Park Location Map.) We have a member of our staff who loves taking pictures of places and I guarantee the park does have visitors, but these pictures don't show that.

Jonathan: Just wanted to bring up that City Walk residents access the park from the Southwest corner.

Ellen: Yes, we remember that, thank you. It is unlikely that we would put a main entrance here because it would facilitate crossing private property to get to the park.

Pat Wolf: What is the grade change across the site?

Ellen: It's about 12'

Bill: Does this mean you would have to fill the park?

Ellen: Yes, we would have to accommodate this with adjusting grades across the site or a giant wall on the southern edge of the site. Here are some diagrams that we worked on based on the feedback we heard. These are diagrams and potential designs to keep in mind.

Doug: Where would my swing go?

Beth: Yes, let's please keep in mind that these are concept diagrams, they several approached to a design. Let's hold questions until Ellen goes through these and then we'll let you run free and work on some ideas as a group.

Ellen: (Walks through diagrams, A B and C) We're not going to design in a vacuum we want to take into consideration the many factors adjacent to this site. We also do not want to preclude the possibility of expanding to the south so are keeping that in mind.

Beth: Okay let's break up, there are two tables with plans and markers. Please pick a table and work with the designers to facilitate your own bubble diagrams of the park.

(Break out into teams, facilitated concept diagram exercises)

Design Exercise:

GROUP 1 – Bill - Identified a place with making a park that has flexible space, something to accommodate many needs in a small area. Priority was on a green space, shade and flexibility of uses.

GROUP 2: Jonathan – Lots of ideas, but focusing on flexibility and multi-use. Way to invite you in or terraced area. Open lawn, tables and chairs.

Bill: I still don't think we have consensus on what this place is – what is the park and what are the priorities?

Robert: a lot of people walk dogs and break it down for people who are just cutting through.

Karl: It's a very small park, it will be used for small things. I'm against a dog park, kids can play on grass. Whatever you end up with, because I'm not sure I'll be here next time. My suggestion on that map would be some permanent tables and chairs along the wall and a trash can next to that.

Pat: One of the thought we had would be to have tables and chairs along the streetscape so that would be a well-defined edge and could be lit.

John: Did the other group discuss the grades?

Bill: Yes, we thought you had to raise the grade to be accessible.

Ellen: Yes, we would need to work with the grades to make sure the park is accessible, there are creative ways to do that and we will be working through that.

Beth: Thank everyone for coming and participating in the process. We'll be back next time with some more ideas to discuss on the park design. Thank you and please drive safely home.