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Lower Landing Park: Design Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

June 15, 2017 / 5-7pm – Black Dog Café – back room

Attending; Tracy Sides, Tom Dimond, Jeremy Edwards (NPS), Toni Hudzina, Cynthia Whiteford (Lower Phalen Creek Project), Bill Mantis. Jeanne Hall (Capitol River Council),

- 5:00-5:10: Welcome and Introductions
- 5:10-5:20 Project Introduction and Design Process:
- a. **Project Goal: Develop a Renovation Plan for improvements to Lower Landing Park**
 - b. Role and Expectations of Design Advisory Committee reviewed and included;
 - i. Help to determine the community needs and desires for the site
 - ii. Review plan concepts and provide input on major design elements and themes.
 - iii. Bring suggestions from community, stakeholders, and respective organizations to the attention of the project team
 - iv. Help communicate project progress to community members
 - v. Provide guidance to City staff on final design recommendations for the project
 - vi. Ensure that the full range of issues are discussed during the design process
 - c. Meeting Goals Presented and discussed.
 - i. Introduce the project.
 - ii. Review survey results, analysis, and concept plans.
 - iii. Determine a desired organization of the site for moving forward
 - iv. Identify committee preferences for park development
 - d. Project Schedule
 - i. Overall project steps reviewed using gant chart showing;
 - ii. Future Advisory committee meetings
 - iii. Design Steps.
 - iv. Additional community engagement/open house to
- 5:20-6:00 Project Background **Slide** presentation used to summarize these topics.
- a. History of Park showing progression of the river valley land use leading up to today's conditions.
 - b. **Great River Passage.** Identified park as part of the river park system that would need a Master Plan to identify and coordinate park improvements, operations, access and continued service as a landing for barge operations and other



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possible landing needs. Reinforced the idea that the process under way was called for in GRP as well as the other planning processes.

- c. Recognition of existing Small Area Plan Recommendations. Common theme was improving access to and from Lowertown. (See [Lower Landing Park Renovation Summary of previous, existing planning efforts. Relevant recommendations.](#))

5:40-6:00

Site Analysis & Concept Planning presented and reviewed using slide presentation.

- a. Site Context; review of important changes to the Lowertown area since the park was first built.
- b. Natural and Environmental Resources; Review of the natural conditions of the park included; understanding its location in the river flood plain, requirement to maintain the two wetland areas, presence of the underground 'stream' enclosed in the storm sewer pipes and tunnels.
- c. Site Analysis
 - a. Park divided into three sections based on the surrounding context and feel of each. Analysis included in the slide presentation. Key points include;
 - i. West end/ Landing area; includes park entrance at Sibley, the Long riverside landing area, parking lot, concrete plaza space and the formal reintroduction of the separated bike and pedestrian trail all close to Lowertown and Warner Rd.
 - ii. Middle of the park includes; Area under Bridge opening out into the very large, expansive lawn/turf area. Few trees large enough to provide shade. Views of the river impacted by barges and shoreline vegetation. Homeless presence along shady tree line along the road. Overlook deck in poor condition and planting area overgrown. Port Authority sign placed poorly. Occasional bad odors from nearby sewer outfall. Picnic tables out 'in the middle of nowhere' seldom used.
 - iii. East End of park has a more natural feel. View is of the distinctive bluff, and the park itself is more vegetated. Pond area holding water and has more bird activity. Road Noise less but still present. Connectivity only via the Trail. No vehicular access.
 - d. Community Input; Review of comments and suggestion received at 'Pop up' meeting on May 6th at Wacouta Commons and Mears Park. (Please see [Lower Landing Park Renovation Pop-Up meeting Summary](#))

6:00-7:00 Planning Activities

- a. P.A.R.K. Analysis Exercise Participants were asked to share their views on;
 1. **P. What existing Park features should be preserved?**
 - a. Protect and preserve the park's natural resources, Wetlands, trees
 - b. Overlook
 - c. Trail
 - d. View of the river bluffs
 - e. Benches, tables – but better and better located and arranged.
 2. **A. Add. What things or activities would you suggest adding to the park**
 - a. 'Good size' dog park- would also increase eyes in the park and improve personal safety concerns
 - b. Parking bays along Warner Rd. – if not a road safety issue.
 - c. More Shade via Trees and/or shade structures.
 - d. Enhanced native planting
 - e. Fitness Trail

- f. Connections/access
 - g. History Trail
 - h. Active Recreation; Fitness Trail, Disc Golf, Scale appropriate Soccer Field, basketball, volleyball.
 - i. Bike Rodeo trail- with moguls scaled
 - j. Mist powered cooling Station
 - k. Nature Trail
 - l. Food Truck
 - m. Security Phone – like there is on the Minneapolis Greenway
 - n. Kite Festival
 - o. Fishing barge- or more accessible fishing location.
 - p. Water element such as Lower Phalen Creek stream or interpretation.
 - q. Loop trail/distance marker
3. **R. Remove or Revise. What does the park include that you feel should be removed or revised?**
- a. **Power Poles**
 - b. Overgrown vegetation areas. Along the river serpentine edge and along the steep slope toward Warner Rd.
 - c. Overlook deck boards in poor condition.
 - d. Remove picnic tables and relocate and replace.
4. **K. Keep in Mind. What is important to keep in mind while revising, renovating the park.**
- a. The Landing and its future as a port for **Vikings Cruises**
 - b. Barges and their impacts on river views, their seasonal and constantly changing presence.
- b. As a way to provide more focus and begin establishing design and implementation priorities, the committee was asked to collaborate in smaller groups (3 and 4) to discuss and agree on one improvement idea that might be the most important improvement.
- 1. Two groups both independently agreed that improving **Access to the park** would provide benefit the park above all else. Access was more broadly defined as;
 - a. Awareness of where the park is, how to get to it, knowing what is available there.
 - b. Entry into the park as a bicyclist or pedestrian from Lowertown or from the Sam Morgan Trail requires negotiating a traffic signal at Sibley St with 4+ lanes of roadway to enter the Landing area. There is no wayfinding signage to provide information just exactly when you have arrived at the park.
 - c. Vehicular access is limited to a single parking lot with a currently small capacity.
 - d. Access from the East Side via the proposed bridge connection will also improve bike and ped. Connectivity to the Bruce Vento Regional Trail.

6:15-6:45 Discussion

6:45-6:55 Next steps: Moving forward

Next Meeting will be July, 2016 (date to be determined)

<https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/parks-recreation/design-construction/current-projects/lower-landing-park-renovation>

for more information