



Baker Park: Site conceptual development meeting notes

The following is a summary of interpretation of items discussed and action items. If there are any corrections or additions to the summary, please inform Project Manager, Alice Messer at Alice.Messer@ci.stpaul.mn.us to issue updated notes

December 4, 2024

Baker Park Field and Site Improvements - Community Meeting #

Meeting Date: December 4, 2024

Meeting Time: 6:30-8:00pm

Location: El Rio Vista Recreation Center

Attendees:

St Paul Parks and Recreation Staff: Nikodemous Hadera, Alice Messer, Ellen Stewart

Community Members: Arnulfo Flores, Heather Friedli – Ratzlaff, Loudi Rivamonte, Nan Karka, Bob Craft

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

1) Introductions, Meeting Purpose & Goal

- a) Presentation of the current design proposal for the field improvements at Baker Park. Community questions and discussion. Overview of agenda.
- b) Goal for project to improve field space and park to support activities, improve shade canopy, create entrance, improve circulation. Scope is for multi-use synthetic turf field, stormwater management, tree plantings, restroom, drinking fountain.



2) Presentation

- a) Recap from Land Use Circle meeting at WSCO: Presentation of analysis and concepts. Feedback included no need for parking lot, keep sledding hill, explore fencing where it is needed, concerns about artificial turf fields and request for add info, drinking fountain(s) needed. High quality facilities for community access.
- b) Description of considerations when making decisions about changes and improvements including regulation and policy, system and neighborhood needs, funding requirements, budget source and amount, context of the site, programming, maintainability and sustainability of amenities over time, and uses and community input.
- c) Description of the engagement to date
- d) Survey summarization people took survey largely within ½ mile of the site. enjoy the access to the site, use of site aside from using the field includes using the sledding hill in winter and
- e) Needs identified include access to the site, shade, bathroom.
- f) Updated Concept – includes maintenance lot,
 - i) Patio space, shade structures complement the existing character of WPA building. Addition of picnic tables and metal trash
 - ii) Winter recreation important – reconsider position of basketball court. Pull trees back out of sledding zone. Goals would be moveable, so they are not in the way of sledding hill.
 - iii) Trees – areas where there are opportunities for additional trees. There will be a need for supplemental shade, and it may be in the form of shade structures and overstory trees. Powerlines will prevent the planting of overstory trees under powerlines. There will be smaller trees in those locations.
 - iv) Proposed restroom with drinking fountain. Restroom would have storage. Have it at about 24' x 24' with good access for maintenance.
- g) Summary of feedback received since last meeting including maintenance of natural fields, warranty for artificial turf, materials, lighting, and outreach to Cherokee Elementary
 - i) Type of Infill is unknown at this point. No additives to turf fields by owner or the vendors. No cleaning required. Data sheet for Material Safety Data Sheet. Artificial turf field would



- not need to be fenced completely. Just for ball control. Openings without gates. Pulled some of the fencing back in concepts to allow for sledding
- ii) 2025 Amara's law will regulate use of and installation of products with PFAFs. Artificial turf fields are regulated by that. We will need the suppliers catch up to this law. Vendors will need to prove to the state that their products are within regulations. MPCA happy to be a resource. Send questions to Alice and she can get the information to that contact. They do not have published information on artificial turf. They referenced a study out of California. No approved vendor list.
 - iii) Lighting. Won't be on continuously. Will work on placement.
 - iv) Talked to Cherokee Heights Elementary Principal Hass and they use the site every day for recess. She did not have initial concerns.
 - v) Profile for the base would improve drainage – described Sylvan – getting Geotech testing and information currently to determine what the profile will be.
- h) Turf pros and cons
- i) Looks great when maintained but requires ongoing maintenance and more staff time and the city does not have the resources to maintain the turf.
 - ii) Carbon trapping and natural material
 - iii) Less expensive to install and repair.
 - iv) Cooler surface temp
 - v) Field restrictions
 - vi) Uneven surface results in injuries
 - vii) Fencing recommended to control use.
- i) Artificial Turf Pros and Cons
- i) Less maintenance and fewer resources required over time including less water than natural field.
 - ii) Considered higher quality for athletes compared to natural field



- iii) More playable – able to quickly recover from weather events and keep people playing more frequently.
- iv) Multiple sports accommodated
- v) Does not have the wear and tear of compaction and divots of natural field and can be used after rainfall
- vi) Higher cost
- vii) Public concern of health risks
- viii) Understaffed sites make programming more difficult
- ix) Higher surface temp and does not sequester carbon

3) Questions and discussion

- i) Use of tennis courts? Combine with basketball? - Hoping to get full court basketball somewhere but it may need to be relocated from the current half court location due to extents of sledding. Tennis courts are well used through the warm months. Warranted to have both basketball and tennis courts in this park.
- ii) Is there a way to use hay bales or landform to help to provide some limits for sledding? We can investigate into it.
- iii) Was play area excavated from the hillside? It is “pretty raw” from Page Street. Was it flattened but no care taken to grade? Likely manipulated and we can look back.
- iv) Shade needed. Are you talking about stadium style seating? If you are thinking about the spectators, why wouldn’t you move them to the west side of the field? We are talking about spectator seating and there are options for putting cover over seating. Looking for options. The reason to keep the seating on the east side is due to the orientation of the baseball field. It is also influenced by the topography.
- v) Are you planning on picnic tables near the restroom? Yes. We are showing a gathering spot there and also a great spot for gathering at a plaza by the annex building.
- vi) Will permanent restroom structure building opened and closed by city on daily basis? Or will it be closed with porta-potties like Cherokee Park? There are porta-potties across the city right now, we are working with Operations to look at options for automatic locking. If they



can be automated it would be the way to go. The restrooms would only be open during park hours. There are new options for restrooms now and we would be able to take advantage of updated technology.

- vii) Boosters' perspective on artificial turf was strong, but the surrounding community was not in the same position. How can you assure us that the turf is safe when self-regulation of industries is not satisfactory? Third party independent testing will be required and that applies from cradle to grave - from making product through disposal.
- viii) Implore you as a 7th generation Dakota descendant to consider the responsibility that you have to the people. Rushing forward with artificial turf is highly irresponsible. Also speaking, as an artist and person who is spiritually sensitive. When you are playing on a grass field, there is a sensory physical experience that is spiritual.
- ix) Earth is a living thing that needs to breathe. This is a terrible idea.
- x) Inequities about who gets fields. It is a great thing to have investment here.
- xi) Where are turf fields being built, and in what communities? Something to look at.
- xii) PFAS one thing. Plastic another issue but focus on PFAS since there is a law coming forward.
- xiii) Disposal of the artificial turf – every 8 years – is a strike against turf.
- xiv) Has anyone provided cost benefit analysis? Is it really a savings over time? Currently the recommendation is based on use and programming. Not on budget.
- xv) Is the main issue playing more games? Is there data about rainouts over the last 5 years? It is also about the condition of the field being consistent over time.
- xvi) Clearly the field does not drain properly, it needs to be torn up no matter what the field is.
- xvii) I understand that games need to be called and rescheduled, but it is Minnesota.
- xviii) Advocating for young folks and investments – Glad there is an infrastructure project for Common Cent on the West Side. 923 young folks in the Booster program and a need to offer as much programming as possible. I understand the conversation on environment. I know that the Parks Department takes the environment seriously. There are other strategies that Parks implements and many of us strive to do to minimize carbon footprint. Not doing this field creates an inequity for our young folks. This is an investment in our youth. I invite you to come and visit and experience the Booster program.



- xix) Is the problem just the drainage? No. The issue is beyond drainage. It is about the playability of the field. The wear and tear, the ability of the City to maintain a playable natural turf field. There are issues of shifting and divots creating unsafe playing conditions.
- xx) So many schools are using this site because of this demand for space.
- xxi) I am hearing that we want to continue abusing the land So we want to create an artificial technical based. How can you say this is a good idea?
- xxii) It is a philosophical choice then if it is not a budgetary choice. So much is lost to convenience.
- xxiii) Issue is not resolved or decided upon. There is not agreement or consensus based on neighbors or meetings. Likely divided in half here on how people feel. Moving forward with your designs it needs to be clear that there are two different options. And it needs to be clear who makes the final decision. Budget is the hard thing. Decision making is the most important.
- xxiv) SPPR response: the recommendation is not based on budget, however there are realities when it comes to budget too so that is ultimately a consideration. The director and ultimately the mayor makes the final decision. We are learning about Amara's Law now and we are not going to purchase anything right now.
- xxv) SPPR: There is often funding to build new things, but not to maintain. Hardest part of our job is knowing that we can do things that then we cannot maintain. It is a disservice to the community members to put money into something that we cannot be maintained. If you have a proposal on how to help resolve the maintenance budget, I am sure that the council member would be happy to hear it.
- xxvi) I though you would be bringing back a proposal that is NOT artificial turf. How can we support you if we don't want an artificial field and you are not proposing a turf field? SPPR: It would be helpful to have some comments about the layout and concept play that we are showing. Are there things that are missing with the other amenities? There is not ability to vote on the field.
- xxvii) What we need is a well-funded maintenance staff
- xxviii) Folks that program serves are those that generally do not have the same advantages or privileges. Often people with power and privilege become squeaky wheels and those voices



carry. There were probably a lot of other families and people who probably wanted to be here and could not be.

xxix) Additional public comment submitted and read at meeting is attached to these meeting notes.

4) Next steps

- a) Send any questions you have, and we will respond as quickly as possible.
- b) Parks staff will go back to the Director and talk to him about the conversation tonight.