



## **Barrie Park Community Meeting #1**

Location: Barrie Park Center

Date: February 18, 2015

Time: 7pm

### Minutes of Meeting

Ms. Jan Arnold, Executive Director of the Park District, made the introductions to the meeting.

Jan Arnold welcomed the attendees and Park District Commissioners and staff that were present. She provided a brief summary of the park planning process thus far noting that Barrie Park is the last of nineteen parks to go through the process. There have been four focus group meetings held already where the design team received initial input on the current conditions of the park and neighborhood from Village and Park District staff local officials, and representatives of community recreation organizations. Ms. Arnold then confirmed the next community meeting for March 11<sup>th</sup> at which Altamanu, Inc. would provide concepts to discuss.

Community Meeting #1                      Wednesday, February 18, 2015

Community Meeting #2                      Wednesday, March 11, 2015

Community Meeting #3                      Wednesday April 22, 2015

A 4<sup>th</sup> meeting would be held if necessary.

There will be a questionnaire posted on the Park District website starting on February 19<sup>th</sup> and residents can also contact the Park District through telephone, emails, and mail.

Website: <http://www.pdop.org>

Contact: Diane Stanke Email: [Diane.Stanke@pdop.org](mailto:Diane.Stanke@pdop.org)

Ms. Arnold then introduced the design team and handed the meeting over to John Mac Manus of Altamanu, Inc. Mr. Mac Manus presented a PowerPoint presentation and then requested comments.



The PowerPoint presentation can be viewed on line at Website: <http://www.pdop.org>

### **Summary of the Presentation**

Though the purpose of the meeting was to collect public input it was also desirable to give the attendees something to react too; therefore while giving a presentation on the park Mr. Mac Manus also informed the attendees of suggestions made at the Focus Group meetings.

Mr. Mac Manus introduced some of the previous park projects Altamanu, Inc. has worked on or completed in Oak Park and noted that almost all of the design team is from Oak Park. Prior to the community meeting members of Altamanu, Inc. discussed Barrie Park with members of the Park District and evaluated the existing landscape. Altamanu, Inc. will take feedback collected from the first community meeting and in turn create concepts to present at the second community meeting.

Mr. Mac Manus provided an overview of the surrounding urban context and its relationship to the park. Barrie Park sits on the edge of the community bordering the Eisenhower Expressway and nearby Austin neighborhood. The park is also cut-off from the area North and West by a number of impediments including Lombard Street and the Expressway.

He then reviewed the following:

### Recent and Previous Work on Barrie Park

Access

Main Entries.

Safety Issues

Playgrounds

Sled Hill

Sports Fields

Reservoir

This concluded Mr. Mac Manus' presentation and so the meeting was opened to public comment.



Public Comment on Lombard traffic and safety:

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- In the original Park Plan, there was a plan to narrow Lombard, but idea was never completed
- You may need to talk to Fire Department regarding a speed table
- In the original Park Plan, there were attempts to make each intersection pedestrian friendly, however they didn't meet standards in other places of VOP so they were removed from the final design.
- My neighbors may not agree, however I support the closure to Lombard for all vehicular traffic, with the exception of emergency vehicles. On a typical weekend day when the park and sports fields are busy, children are constantly moving in and out of cars and chasing balls.
- One issue for this interesting idea is to restrict Lombard as a designated street just for drop-off and that will encourage people to utilize other streets for parking and access. You could design the street that is so pedestrian friendly that people will take priority over other means of transport. (Woonerf discussion - A **woonerf** is a living street implemented in the Netherlands. The word literally translates as "living yard".
- Techniques include shared space, traffic calming, and lowspeed limits. Under Article 44 of the Dutch traffic code, motorized traffic in a woonerf or "recreation area" is restricted to walking pace. Altamanu designed the first Woonerf to be constructed in the Midwest in Batavia Illinois.
- If this is an issue, make Lombard a one-way street in the southbound direction.
- One key issue with the park is drainage and water collection. After a rain storm or especially after a snow melt, water crosses sidewalks and may freeze before draining and becomes icy, so people will walk on Lombard or Garfield instead of the sidewalks. Drainage of water following rainfall or snow melt then add the occurrence of uneven plowing (difficult for the plows to follow the meandering path), the pathways are unpractical and very little ease of use. It is a similar situation regarding the sidewalk on North side as it receives little sunlight, so the ice build-up remains all season long and often people are found walking in the road. The park looks nice when sunny and nice out, but when it is cold the park doesn't function.
- This could also be applied to the sidewalk adjacent and North of the reservoir. If the trees are all Ash and are acceptable to be removed (due to Emerald Ash Borer), I suggest to rearrange the pathway so that the sidewalk is adjacent to the reservoir and the parkway is a divider between the sidewalk and the road. That way, the snowplows will not push snow onto the sidewalk and create another drainage barrier.

Public Comment on the Barrie Center and Tot-Lot:

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- The two rooms are small and hard to use. There is no family bathroom and it is inconvenient that the bathrooms are located in only one room.
- The tot-lot does not feel protected. I like the idea of moving the tot-lot to the top of the reservoir.
- I don't like the idea of moving the tot-lot away from its current location. I like walking past and seeing the kids. I like seeing kids as part of the neighborhood, when you see kids playing in the tot-lot it expresses that they are part of the community.
- Moving the tot-lot to the top of the reservoir would make the reservoir more part of the community, I hardly go up there now.
- I like that there is only one main point of entry, parents can control access. The area could use more trees along edges.
- I like location and proximity to the CTA station. I have a ritual with my children of waiting for my spouse at the end of the day and when she exits the train station we are at the tot-lot playing. It is a great end of the day and beginning of the evening for us.
- When I walk past the play area, I think the tot-lot and the children playing in it sends strong community message that 'this area is safe, here are our children'. It is a great community message that the location transmits.

#### Public Comment on the Reservoir:

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- I think the Peter Pan mural (on the pump building wall) idea is great. There were murals here once, now they are gone.
- Above the mural, there is a potential opportunity for a green roof.
- Another green solution for the pump building is catching grey water and/or solar panels.
- Look at other green approaches to this (pump) building and entire facility.
- There is a definite need to find more shade.
- I'd like to speak for the voices that are not in the room: basketball is very popular and in addition to that activity, every day I see someone using a skateboard in the front of the Barrie Center. Even though these voices are not in the room to give an opinion, but perhaps we should consider how to best enhance these opportunities. If you provide an area dedicated to skateboarding, the users will not use other areas that are not meant for skateboards.
- I would support skateparks in a capacity that is appropriate... Yes.
- Our son has always skated, now he is very engaged in his own community. You see skateboarding more and more and not always as a problem, I see it even more often as transportation.
- I like the idea to include skateboarding as an option; I think basketball is also very important and not very present on the South side. Whatever we decide we should consider that, if necessary, the Village will need the ability to access the reservoir.



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Whatever we put in, the Village may need to remove in order to access (example: this could impact permanent solutions such as concrete skate ramps)

- I'd like to see batting cages here on the reservoir rather than take green space in the park. I recognize it is not ideal to make kids cross traffic, but better to have it here on the concrete surface.
- I suggest you rent turf squares for people to hit golf balls. Some adults may be interested in doing this before heading out to the golf course, so it could be a way to activate the area in the morning.
- Try to find multiple uses for the reservoir.
- I thought the suggestion for an airnassium was interesting. We don't have something similar to that, a place where people can all use for various purposes. A place where people can gather, a place for events, a place that can be rented and everyone can enjoy the space!
- I'd be curious how high the roof needs to be to contain the ceiling heights required for basketball. In that case we are impacting views and trees due to the roof size and it would concern me.
- If the scale was an issue we could look at the sizing by first addressing the views from the residents on Harvey. The West area of the airnassium/reservoir could have space for uses that didn't require such extreme heights, then the roof line could rise moving east away from Harvey and the residents view toward this structure.
- When I said something earlier about the inclusion of skateboarders: We can look at spaces that are multipurpose- if skateboarders become a problem, then we can relocate their equipment. This is an evolution of pop-up opportunities.
- It is interesting when someone says the phrase 'dead space'. I remember one area in Broadview - people will use a small underutilized space to plant small gardens, little 4x6' vegetable gardens. If people can make something out of what some may consider as 'dead space', people in Oak Park can find a use for the reservoir.
- Community gardens on the reservoir as a suggestion – gardens with raised beds. There is lots of light perfect for vegetable gardens.

#### Public Comment on the Sports Fields:

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- Regarding placement of batting cages adjacent to the baseball field – the best part of batting cages at Ridgeland is that a coach can work with a group kids during game or practice. He has the ability to take them aside and still have them engaged in an activity during a game when they may otherwise lose attention. This placement adjacent to the ball field is very useful. My opinion is that if cages by located near the baseball field, then they are not intrusive to other available activities or residents. However, any new resource added is a bonus.



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- Drainage is a huge issue, an overall issue. That is why people are drawn to artificial turf as an option.
- Regarding drainage – is there a lot of clay because that is what they put in? Explanation from PDOP: ‘The field was excavated to 20’ below grade and replaced with clay via 1’ lifts and then compressed to 99% compaction. What is existing now is a very compact block of clay under a 12” layer of soil’
- I think natural grass works here at Barrie, but I’d like to see a 3<sup>rd</sup> synthetic field. My concern is if you put in an artificial turf field, you may need to fence it off from dog owners. You will be unable to stake tents and you can’t have events that include food. I think from a community standpoint these are items that the community values for Barrie Fest and to celebrate the return to school.
- Maybe we can dig deep and cut into the clay and replace with soil at a greater depth. Then we would lessen the drainage issues.
- If you went with the previously discussed woonerf concept, you would then have a place for the community to gather and then an artificial turf for the ongoing sports activities.
- We would like to see an additional artificial turf field. Ridgeland Commons is unbelievable how often it is used, same as at Irving. It alleviates the use at other fields so PDOP can maintain them all better. Youth and adult activity is getting bigger each year, not decreasing and we are limited in space so there is a real need to extend the use of the existing fields.
- From co-mingling on same field, it allows us sports organizations (soccer and baseball) to work together. We all work together to share the fields.
- If sports fields are to remain and used at same intensity then there is no way to maintain turf on a level of necessary safety. If this is true then there is no other solution for this site than artificial turf. Currently, there are adjacent parkways that are now weed beds due to salt and other maintenance interference. You have to consider, is this site appropriate for a bluegrass lawn if you cannot maintain it. I don’t think so, maybe a mixed balance of artificial turf and no-mow grasses in certain areas.
- I’m impressed about the quality of life we have to be able to walk about the park. Artificial turf is not a top priority at this point in my young child’s activities; however I like how this park serves different communities.
- During sports events, people who come here don’t show respect for the neighborhood
- If this is something to be used by the neighborhood and also used by other groups such as soccer/baseball and then there is also an economic component too. Is there a revenue issue vs. community issue? Direct payment vs. indirect payment? People will need to decide which park will we have – if everyone is happy then no one is happy.



- PDOP responds to the economics of sport payments: PDOP receives \$5 per enrolled child and in return allows 3 hours of field time per child to be used in team practices and matches.

Public Comment on Park Use and Passive Activities:

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- You missed key element of people who use park – it is not just AYSO, not just baseball, but also people who use the park as passive space. We want gardens and sitting areas. I typically walk around with my dog a lot and I always look for a place to sit and it is not always inviting.
- In the past, I often took my family to Euclid or Rehm rather than Barrie Park because of shade, and there is still no relief from the sun (at Barrie).
- I came to share the same opinion: this park is just a big rectangle, it is not interesting. Is it possible to redesign the plantings and pathways to somehow protect the public from the noise and pollution from the highway? Perhaps you could put a pathway across the middle of the field.
- This is an interesting suggestion, to have a path cut through the center. This current park layout looks like a sports program designed the park. Will the sports dominated uses prevail over the casual use of the people who use the park daily and have different needs?
- If you want a new garden, they could be engaging gardens. I get a feeling we are leaning towards plastic grass here ... if we can spend that kind of money towards sports, we can spend that kind of money on gardens and maintenance. I hope we consider the needs of aging population and restoration.
- I love how people walk around the park, but sometimes dog clean-up is a problem. For some of us, this is a constant clean-up problem. It may not be adults in the community, but sometimes teenager dog-walkers may be the issue. Enforcement is one solution, bag dispensers as another option. Audience response : 'that's where enforcement and design inter-mix'
- There are many pop-up activities at this park: one example of this type of use is a sports group that meets regularly at 6-8 am to exercise; this group is another type of visitor that is present and keeps an eye on the park. The message is that this group feels safe using the park and eyes on the park helps to keep the park safe. Adaptability and providing opportunities for these pop-up activities is great and I would like to see more.
- Has there been any study done on green space per capita?
- PDOP response: NRPA standard: 10 acres of park space per 1,000 residents  
Oak Park with 82.29 acres of park space has about 1.6 acres per 1,000 residents and if totally underserved.



- It seems as though there is limited green space on the South side and I would hate to see it turn into a plastic field. Response from audience member: That is not the case. Some of the parks on the north side might be big but there are large areas with no parks or have small parks such as Anderson. There is a large gap north of Lake Street once you go north of Austin Gardens.
- Most of the parks in the PDOP system are on the South side of the district. Compared to the lack of fields in North VOP, we are better off on the south side. It is not too bad down here.
- Are there axioms in design that MUST stay the same? Out of the box thinking can be a futility if there are set requirements such as baseball, soccer or the sled hill ... if not, take it all off the table and make it say a tall grass prairie with a small playground. What are the parameters we are working with?
- There is no such thing as a local park in VOP. We are talking about 53k people and how they will share the space. Chances are if we propose to plant this park as prairie, there will only be a small percentage of people interested.
- I think when you have regional destinations like the sled hill or one of the few full-size soccer fields, there is a responsibility to retain. If we were to announce 'this community has decided to remove the sled hill' you will get a strong reaction throughout the entire Village. Many people across the Village uses the facilities here and if you take them away, then PDOP will have to answer.

#### Public Comment on the Hill:

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- I really like the idea of running up the hill. Sometimes I see people running up the stairs, and I know they wish they had the chance to run down the hill; perhaps it would be useful to use the naturalized space and expand the width of the hill.
- Could there be a 2<sup>nd</sup> staircase on the opposite side? Maybe, then offer a different tread sizing for varying difficulties.
- Question: What do people think about synthetic materials for the sled hill? Response: it doesn't seem proven. It seems expensive. (The design team will look into artificial nylon slopes)
- The hill was fenced-off when a girl broke her arm and her mother complained.
- PDOP explanation of the hill fence: 'The hill is closed off during the summer months because people work out and follow same path in their workouts. Soil compaction becomes an issue as these paths are run on time after time. You cannot grow grass on compacted soil.
- And the eroded path becomes a channel for water runoff and erosion increases.





- Question: Do people like the idea of a secondary small hill for smaller kids? Response: Yes.

#### Public Comment on the Playground:

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- One friend mentioned that she saw a girl get hit by car because she just ran into the street. If there was a fence or improvement to sightlines, there would be less of a safety concern.
- Question: Do people like mulch or rubber surface? Response: I like mulch, it isn't as hot as rubber surface, and you can walk barefoot on it and is a natural material. Rubber gets very hot.
- Playground needs to be redesigned.
- Like the discovery area at Mills.
- How about a different type of playground. Think of "pop up" opportunists.

#### Public Comment on the Park's General Aesthetic

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- This current park was constructed just seven years ago. The designers had good intentions, but it is just seven years later and we are revisiting. I would offer that one main reason is that PDOP is having a difficult time keeping up with general maintenance. In that case, they need to guarantee whatever we come up with will be maintained properly.
- We are just beginning to get our trees back. It has been so sunny (no shade due to small young trees) for so long, the new trees are just starting to give shade.
- Concrete is the theme of the park, the art murals were very nice addition and give relief.
- Art mosaics added would be helpful, another suggestion is sculpture, etc.
- As an architecture theme – I get a sense that the theme of this park is concrete and the sled hill emulates it as well. Other places have used friendlier materials and the sled hill wall could've been sandstone, or brick to match center or a green wall. Any change in the façade material could have a great impact.
- One thing I'd correct is drainage on walkways. Look at Lombard and then look at safety of the street. Safety in the park is imperative.

#### Public Comment on the Eisenhower Expansion:

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- Regarding, Do you have any idea how the I-290 reconstruction will impact this neighborhood?
- When the bridge is replaced, will that create new opportunities? Can we then push for more pedestrian friendly environments with the opportunity of a new wider bridge?



- If they replace the retaining wall by the railroad tracks, there could be construction right up to the park, plus equipment staging for this 3-5 year project.
- If they move ramps to a right-hand exit, they may need to replace and elevate the Lombard bridge height. We will have a major issue then. Response: Please make your concerns known; Village trustees will be glad to hear from you.
- In regards to the Eisenhower project timing, what will we do at this intersection if they rip it out in 5 years for the I-290 project? It doesn't make sense to address one thing to have it replaced soon after. Response: We always thought that improvements to Barrie Park will be constructed in Phases, so we should consider what may be impacted the least during an adjacent I-290 expansion project.
- This is a good argument – we could show IDOT that we have invested in the community to keep their massive changes and equipment staging away.
- Perhaps we could allow their presence for the duration of their project and then use IDOT restoration funds to improve the Park to our proposed design.
- Do you trust IDOT to restore the park?

At 8:45 PM Mr. Mac Manus took the final comments and thanked the attendees and encouraged them to attend the next meeting on March 11th.

Ms. Arnold encouraged the attendees to tell other residents and to please come back themselves to the next meeting. Diane Stanke then invited the attendees to complete the online survey and the meeting formally ended.

End of Minutes