

Linwood Workshops held at Household of Faith Deliverance Church 3.29.08 and 4.05.08

What is a Design Workshop?

We use the term workshop (often called “charrette” among design professionals) to describe a collaborative design effort involving the project team and key stakeholders in generating preliminary designs that express a collective vision of the neighborhood. While a workshop is both participatory and creative, it is also structured to produce a real product – a workable and sustainable design with a wide consensus.

On two consecutive Saturdays, the Design Team facilitated multiple small-group sessions to talk about the “program” for the park. Program refers to what could be in the park, what types of activities, and where activities or design elements will be located. Through various design exercises, such as sketching, visioning, moving program pieces and talking about their ideas, workshop participants provided input on their vision for the park.

The goal for these workshops were not to produce a single design for the park, but rather to stimulate discussion, visualize ideas and foster a communal planning process.

More than 30 adults and 19 children were involved in these community workshops.

Workshop Notes – Yellow Group

Current Use

- Parking lot is presently used as a park by kids and adults, during the workweek and on weekends.
- There is lots of ad hoc recreation, from tots to teens, such as “street games,” learning to ride a tricycle or bike, roller skating, Frisbee throwing and even learning to drive a car

Roundtable Discussion 1: What is the One Thing you Want in the Park?

- Reflective place – a place to collect your thoughts
- Ample seating area
- Paris concept park – a la Rittenhouse
- Calm and natural
- Tight bike path
- Sustainable, low-maintenance place
- Butterflies
- Safe place for ‘street’ games for older kids

Roundtable Discussion 2: What makes this Space an Unsuccessful Park?

[Assumption: the parking lot functions de facto as a park]

- Too much asphalt
- No place to sit
- Not enough shade

- No nice views
- No habitat
- Hedge at sidewalk/lot edge presents too strong a buffer
- No entrance at intersection
- Traffic speed very high through intersection – **strong need expressed for traffic calming**

Roundtable Discussion 3: What We Don't Want in the Park

[there was not consensus among group on the dogs or the water issue]

- Fences
- Water
- Community garden
- Dogs
- Compost pile
- Swings or traditional play equipment

Stormwater Management

- Storm water: Treat like a meadow not a parking lot
- Group was in agreement that a design should capture as much runoff as possible and integrate that with a water feature in the park – more interested in a “naturalistic” interpretation of that idea
- Rain Gardens appealed to all in the group

Planting & Habitat

- Desire for large, flat lawn to play games, picnic
- Naturalistic planting
- Strong desire for creating habitat for birds, butterflies/insects, foxes
- Shade in seating areas
- Some disagreement in group about amount of tree cover desired in park

Circulation, Gateways & Landforms

- Circulation diagonal across site is desirable
- Path could have seat wall along entire length
- Entrances/gateways desirable at intersection/corner and at far corners – park needs thresholds
- Group liked idea of creating a landform for a buffer along back two sides of park, and for play space

Covered Structure

- Many liked idea of a “gazebo” at front corner of park
- Others liked idea of a shade structure further back into the park
- Social and musical events desired in this structure

Types of Spaces

- Need both active play space and a quieter space – active space out front at corner, and quieter space towards back near neighbors
- Interest in a relatively simple plan, with lots of seating and shade from canopy trees

Other Comments

- Solar lighting desired but minimal night lighting generally

- Water could be great but very high maintenance
- Some really liked idea of a stream or naturalistic water feature
- Others could not envision it as useful more than 3 months out of the year
- Uncertain about a service building and where it would go without detracting from park or using valuable space

Workshop Notes - Green Group

Parking in the Park

- Group wanted to explore the possibility of a parking area for a few cars in park as drop off for families with small children-determined space required not worth the convenience
- Discussed the idea of a drop off along the street

Linwood and Athens Ave Intersection

- Concern with speed in which cars travel Linwood and Athens Avenue led to the suggestion of eliminating the traffic light and replacing it with 4 way stop signs so everyone must stop at the intersection.

Circulation

- We assumed the existing circulation across the site
- The main entrance should be at the corner and enlarged for a waiting area
- Wanted to emphasize the entrance at the corner in some way
- The group felt the entrance along Athens that was across from the Church could be eliminated
- A secondary path that circled the site for tricycles and walking needed
- The secondary path would walk through the plantings as opposed to next to the plantings

Amphitheatre

- Amphitheatre either grass or paved with a covered plaza was designed as central gathering space
- Liked the idea of different types of events in the park

Edges

- Desired a buffer along the neighbors properties
- Group wants low planting area along the street edge of the park for separation from the street and safety for children

Landform

- Elevation change seen as desirable buffer solution for neighbors bordering the park
- It would also incorporate an amphitheatre
- The landform would hide a utility area
- The landform would be under 6' high

Seating

- A variety of seating-benches with backs, seat walls, steps-seen as desirable
- Incorporate the seating in different types of outdoor 'rooms'-quiet, shady, active etc.

Water

- Highly desirable
- See it as more naturalistic
- Liked the idea of a stream winding around the central path that cuts across the site
- Emphasize the 'stream' with a bridge that takes you from the entrance to a plaza area in front of the amphitheatre
- Stream would be solar powered
- Rain gardens with storm run-off in low points on the site for educational and ecological value

Climbing Elements

- Group felt it necessary to have creative play and climbing elements for children
- Wanted a tree house that connected from tree to tree
- Giant sundial and climbing art were discussed

Lighting

- Solar powered lighting seen as the only viable way to light the park

Dogs

- The group was against allowing dogs in the park on or off a leash

Workshop Notes – Orange Group

Traffic calming

- Highly desired. Intersection and traffic, particularly on Linwood, is of concern.
- Curb extensions (shorter distance to cross) and tree-lined streets (more defined edge, 'buffer' from traffic) could assist w/ traffic calming and making pedestrians safer.

Kids

- Need paved area/paths to ride bikes safely, loop best, would use sidewalk (as part of loop) if there was a buffer to traffic (tree planting strip)
- Unstructured play space seemed most popular, water and climbable art are desired
- Having a play area near the busy corner was not seen as a good idea

Types of spaces

- Separation of meditative/quiet from active/kid-friendly
- Multifunctional with event space—performances, celebrations, market

Trees

- The existing trees are hugely important- Trees are desired for shade. Everyone noted how hot the parking lot is in the summer.
- The group was very interested in moving the curb out into the streets on both sides and having a tree planting strip between the sidewalk and the street.
- Use of a diverse woody planting buffer between the houses and the park was seen as an opportunity to create a garden and habitat.
- We didn't identify specific areas for more intense gardens other than to say there needed to be some

Stormwater management

- Briefly talked about capturing stormwater in the proposed tree trenches or curb extensions.

Views in and out

- Liked how you can see into the park from the street and sidewalk even with the hedge.
- All views were desirable, except for the neighbors on the NE corner of Linwood and Athens with the dogs

Edges

- Would like some defined edge all the way around. Edge needed on the N and W sides.
- Like the hedge for the barrier it provides.
- Fence not necessary.

Circulation

- We assumed the existing circulation across the site. Some wanted to rethink this idea and change entrances and exits.
- The group felt the main entrance should be at the corner. The main entrance should make a statement, be paved for events or performances, have seatwalls, be slightly higher, so you walk up to it, possibly a water feature.
- Secondary entrances should also be gateways, entrances visible, marked.

Seating

- Ideas ranged from having seating on the entrance plaza in the form of seatwalls to having benches under the perimeter trees and in the quiet garden space at the NW corner.
- More structured vs. informal

Materials

- Desire to have materials reflective of the neighborhood and of recycled materials

Art

- Could be incorporated into many of the park elements (seat walls, benches, water, climbable pieces, paving, etc.)
- Suggested community art projects

Water

- Desire water in the park. Some education around the source of the water and how a system works is needed. All felt a fountain, 'stream', or other water feature would be great for kids, cooling effect, etc.
- Seatwalls could be incorporated w/ water feature

Landforms

- Everyone likes the idea of some elevation change

Maintenance building

- Necessary and suggested it be located close enough to an entrance for access with a small vehicle.
- Should be attractive. Maybe recycled outbuilding from a development site

Lighting

- Group assumed it was a given, solar is great

Top Visual Preferences

- 'naturalistic' planting of redbuds and dogwoods
- curvy seat walls
- populated gathering spaces
- water images

Common Threads: Children (Workshop held 4.05.08)

- Climbing Structure/Art for Children and Adults
- Getting Higher Up (treehouse, landforms)
- Paths for Multiple Uses
- Water Elements
- Wildlife Habitats/Gardens
- Trees
- Multi-Purposed Paved Areas
- Plaza (stage) with Shade Structure
- Lawn
- Defined Gateways
- Bridge
- Unique Site Furnishings
- Bike Racks

Common Threads: Adults (Workshop held 3.29.08)

- Traffic Calming
- Amphitheatre/Plaza with Shade Structure
- Water Element
- Defined Gateways at Three Entrances
- Paths for Multiple Uses
- Wildlife Habitats
- Active & Passive Spaces
- Seating
- Bridge
- Elevation Changes/ Landforms
- Trees
- Lawn
- Climbing Element/Art
- Lighting
- Place to Hold Community Events