

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Project: **Linwood & Athens Avenue Park Master Plan**
From: Sara Pevaroff Schuh, SALT Design Studio, & Kim Douglas, Studio Gaea

RE: **Public Meeting with Ardmore Community**
26 February 2008
Household of Faith Deliverance Worship Center

Facilitators: Kim Douglas – Studio Gaea, principal
Sara Pevaroff Schuh – Salt Design Studio, principal

Notice to all participants: SALT Design Studio and Studio Gaea will rely on these notes as the approved record of matters discussed. If any of the following items are incorrect or fail to record discussions at the meeting, please contact the writer of these minutes within 3 days.

Introduction

Commissioner Jane Dellhiem welcomed the attendees and introduced Kim Douglas of Studio Gaea and Sara Pevaroff Schuh of SALT Design Studio. She spoke briefly about the history of the project, how the community organized to persuade the Township to purchase the parking lot, and that in December 2007 the Township selected a consultant team – Studio Gaea and SALT Design Studio – to lead the master planning effort.

Presentation

Kim Douglas of Studio Gaea first presented an overview of the project planning process, which began in January and will culminate in August 2008, with the completion of a park master plan. She presented the history of the site, why the Welsh settled in this area, and how Athensville developed into what is now Ardmore. Kim pointed out that by comparing the Township in 1851 to the Township in 2008, it is clear that Ardmore remains an economic hub of the Township, functioning like a small but very diverse town. In addition, though Ardmore is a prime growth area in the Township, streams have been filled and open space developed. Ardmore has the highest density of housing and people, and the least amount of tree cover, making this park even more important for the quality of life. Kim also discussed circulation patterns and key environmental factors affecting the park site, such as regional and local watersheds, native plant communities, potential habitat corridors and the urban heat island effect. The site lies within two watersheds, Cobbs Creek and Indian Creek, which will impact the design of the park, use of water and management of stormwater on site.

Sara Pevaroff Schuh of SALT Design Studio presented a series of park precedent studies, to help the community understand the scale and potential function of the park site as compared to other parks. South Ardmore Park is 18.2 acres and offers numerous recreational fields and other amenities. The park site is only 1 acre, and therefore, will not be able to support the same types of activities. Sara spoke about 3 other successful urban parks, including Rittenhouse Square in downtown Philadelphia. The design team also inventoried local parks to gain a better understanding of what 'green space' amenities are currently available to neighborhood residents.

Sara concluded the presentation by speaking about the inventory & analysis process as a time of discovery. The consultant team is interested in learning who the community is, and identifying their needs and goals for this place. To date, many conversations with neighbors revealed a desire for a place that is flexible, offers social opportunities and places to play. The design team

wants to encourage the creation of a park that is connected to the larger ecological context of Ardmore and Lower Merion Township and integrated with the green network of the neighborhood through native plants and habitats. The design team also wants to create a park with potential to tell the story of the site, and of the rich history of Ardmore.

The opportunity and the challenge of creating this park will be about balance – balancing the ecological piece with the human piece so that neither dominates, but both inform the other. This design team is genuinely interested in creating a park that is unique to this site, to this place in Ardmore and one that will be inspiring, well-loved and innovative.

Community Question & Answer Session

The design team invited the community to ask questions about the presentation, the planning process and to express their ideas, concerns and interests for the park. The following is a summary of this Q & A session:

Schedule & Comments about Design Process:

- Park Planning Process runs from January – August 2008
- Two public charrettes are scheduled. Information about the dates and signing up for these charrettes will be posted on the Township website.
- Questions were asked about reaching consensus, and how the consultants will synthesize all the ideas into one plan. The design team reiterated that the planning process would provide for a variety of public forums, including public meetings, charrettes and one-on-one discussions in order to elicit ideas and set priorities for the park.
- Links to existing park web sites will be posted on the Township site to assist community members in understanding the scale of this park site.
- Anyone interested in suggesting ideas for a park name can submit those to the Township or the design team

Park Budget

- Budget has not yet been established
- Commissioner Dellhiem noted that the fundraising drive is paying for design of the Master Plan. Some funding is coming from CIP, and some plantings are coming from Penn Valley elementary school. Water and electricity to the site may come with help from State Senator Connie Williams through a grant from PECO.
- Chris Lesswing, Assistant Director, Building & Planning Commission, LMT added that further funding can come from grants and fundraisers, and a “Friends of the Park” group can help with these efforts.

Ideas & Comments about Park Program

- Charrette will help the design team in sorting out the community’s priorities.
- Need to factor in constraints imposed by neighboring homes and church
- Community Gardens
- Places to run, ride a bike, plant
- Interesting topography, especially as buffer for neighbors
- Would be helpful to review the Bird Sanctuary in Haverford for potential ideas and scale

Will the Park be handicapped accessible?

- Yes

Parking

- Consultants will review with Township options for on-street parking and whether it is necessary to revise existing parking regulations
- Community members expressed an interest in keeping the park “car-free.”

Park Ownership & Maintenance

- Lower Merion Township owns the park site and will be responsible for basic park maintenance throughout the year, as they do with all Township owned parks. The Township will encourage the formation of a ‘Friends of the park’ group to assist in this effort.

Bicycles

- Many in the community talked about how they use the parking lot to ride bikes with their children. Some are interested in continuing this activity while others expressed a preference for minimizing paving.

Township Policy on Dogs in Parks

- Several asked where dogs can be walked, on or off leash in the Township. The following is a list of parks where dog walking (on leash) is permitted in the Township:
 - Austin Memorial Park
 - Black Rock Road Site
 - Cynwyd Station Park
 - Eco Valley Nature Park
 - Henry Lane Park
 - Kenealy Nature Park
 - Merion Square Road Site
 - Mill Creek Valley Park
 - Pencoyd Park
 - Righters Mill Road Site
 - Rolling Hill Park
 - West Mill Creek Park
 - Williamson Road Site
 - General Wayne Park (north of elevated path)
 - Shortridge Park (area bound by paved walk entering from Parkview Drive to East Wynnewood Road)
 - Penn Wynne Park (wooded area between tennis courts and Lankanau Hospital property)
- Additionally, Township has plans to allow a dog park near the new Cynwyd Trail.

Conclusion:

The drawings, presentation and survey, along with minutes of the Community Meeting will be posted on the Township website in the following week.

Next Steps:

- The Design Team will meet with Study Committee on Tuesday March 4th.
- Charrette for adults is scheduled for Saturday 29 March from 9:30-12noon. RSVP will be required in order to plan for multiple sessions.
- Charrette for children ages 5-12 (grades K-6th) is scheduled for Saturday 5 April from 9:30-11:30. RSVP will be required as the Charrette will be tailored to the participants.