Caroline Freeland Urban Park:
Summary of Comments from Community Meeting #1

November 6, 2013
Bethesda Library

1. What is the best thing about Caroline Freeland Park today?
    - Park acts as a buffer for the residences.
    - Fenced-in playground for young children.
    - Mature trees and green space within a highly-urbanized area.
    - Benches provide places to eat and talk quietly.
    - Great place to eat lunch.
    - It's heavily used during all daylight hours.
    - Sculpture that responds to the Bethesda art scene.
    - Nice place to walk and pass through.
    - Pedestrian-oriented Park – Hampden Lane is closed to vehicle traffic.
    - Slight rise in elevation provides a separation from the noise of the street.
    - Located close to downtown.
    - Community-oriented multi-use space.

2. What is the worst thing about Caroline Freeland Park today?
    - Park layout is confusing, wasteful, and without a clear focal point.
    - Lack of separation (gates/fencing) between play areas and street – concerned about kids playing near busy roadways.
    - Raised planters and flower boxes.
    - Location of sculpture.
    - Dirty and poorly maintained park.
    - Trash cans are not attractive, although functional.
    - Covered shelter and benches attract homeless and encourages sleeping.
    - Noise pollution and unsafe sidewalk conditions along Arlington Road and Elm Street.
    - After hours use – noisy for neighbors, teens drinking & smoking, perceived as unsafe.

3. What elements of the park today should change as the park is renovated?
    - Increase the barrier between the neighborhood and park, especially along the playground.
    - Overall park use should be family-oriented.
    - Expand playground elements, since it is the most popular park activity.
    - Increase shade around playground by adding trees and reduce temperatures by installing light-colored play surfacing.
    - Add trash can near playground.

- Greater deterrent for unwanted night time activities.
- Pavilion should be removed – it can only be used by one group at a time and is usually occupied by sleeping homeless, since the benches are long. Shorter benches or chairs could deter sleeping.
- Sculpture is not attractive – should be more sophisticated
- Deter sleeping homeless, while allowing them to use the park in more acceptable ways.
- Benches should be improved.
- Improve steep slope along Arlington Road.
- Arlington Road streetscape should incorporate tree pit plantings and a more generous and safer sidewalk.
- Hampden Lane – doesn't serve a purpose and should be reconfigured.
- Outdated raised wooden planters should be removed.
- Design park to better integrate and connect uses (including the playground). There are parts of the park that are currently inactive.
- Integrate the park better with the library and the elementary school. Consider having access from the library to the park.
- Consider incorporating nature into the play area.
- Add better signage.
- Open grass area near the sculpture is too sloped – not usable.
- Add more evergreen vegetation along the fence.

4. What elements of the park should remain as the park is renovated?
- Seating areas
- Playground area – keep in place, reconfigure, or add to it (don't reduce size).
- Fencing around playground (add gates back).
- Maintain current policy of "Park Closed After Dark."
- Sculpture has history and represents Bethesda, could be relocated, some people like it and some don't like it at all.
- Trees
- Paths
- Stone pavers – should reuse existing.
- Benches and picnic tables.
- Green space and grassy areas.
- Entrance to the library. Some kids use the steps as a skate area. Try to keep that element. Even though not a formal skate park, it is a fine use.
- Low lighting at night for safety.
- Maintain balance between open green space and park facility for all ages, including adults.

5. If you could add one element to the park, what would you add?
- Water element / feature.
- Variety of play elements – water play (trickle, splash), sand, more swings and more open areas for running.
- Increase shade around playground.

- More trees and flowering vegetation.
- Improve signage: Park rules, hours of use, no smoking, "closed after dark."
- Public art to provide a connection to Bethesda.
- Trash receptacles / Recycling
- Fencing / Barriers / Buffer:
    a. Fencing / element of separation along the Arlington Road and Elm Street sides of the park to protect children from busy traffic. Consider fence around the entire park.
    b. More buffer / separation along the residential side of the park.
- A mid-block crosswalk to the Giant grocery store at Elm Street.
- More green space along Arlington Road.
- A nice grassy elevated area to sit down on a blanket.
- Different kinds of places to sit and eat.
- Bike station – at least add bike racks.
- WI-FI, if it does not already exist.
- Improve the elements already in the park.
- Signage for ADA accessibility.
- Basketball area (1/2 court).
- Furnishings:
    a. Seating (benches/chairs) that encourages gathering in groups as well as individually.
    b. Long table for group interactions.
    c. Umbrellas for shade.
    d. Picnic tables.
    e. More seating surrounding and within the playground area.
- More useable space. Parts of the park are a waste of space. Don't need meeting areas.

6. If you could take away one element from the park, what would you take away?
- Pavilion (aka – "Gazebo, Wood House, Shelter Area, Covered Seating Area"). People use the pavilion for sleeping and it's always dirty. Is there a need for it?
- Keep the pavilion, but modify it so that it does not encourage sleeping.
- Raised wood planter boxes.
- Sculpture
- Hampden Lane – it is not an inviting space.
- Any existing park feature that promotes poor behavior.
- The middle portion of the park, which is confusing and has no clear path circulation.

7. Name a park that you have been to that reflects your vision for Caroline Freeland Park?
- Friendship Park/Turtle Park in D.C – has nice playground with sand and water play. http://www.turtlepark.org/about/   http://www.dcparks.org/friendship-turtle-park http://www.turtlepark.org/ https://foursquare.com/v/friendship-recreation-center-turtle-park/4b54b6f3f964a5208bc827e3

- Ruby Hill Park in Denver (has nice playground).
  http://www.denvergov.org/betterdenver/ProjectsOLD/1EParksandRecreationCentersOLD/RubyHillPark/tabid/437925/Default.aspx
- Geneva, Switzerland – use of sand and water play.
- Meridian Hill Park - likes park although may not be comparable to this one.
- Quebec City – swings are public art and create sounds, located in the central lanes of the city. http://www.thisiscolossal.com/2012/09/musical-swings-on-the-streets-of-montreal/
- A park that's more formal and elegant.
- Parks in downtown DC.
- Cuttermill Park, Great Neck, NY.
- Playspaces in DC – Livingston Park in Chevy Chase has good turf, but needs more shade.
- Parts of Cabin John Park are wonderful.
- Park in Dupont Circle/Kalorama.
- Cain Park in Cleveland, Ohio. http://www.cainpark.com
- Georgetown Waterfront Park. http://www.georgetownwaterfrontpark.org/
- The park at Friendship Heights.
- Don't' know the names, but there are pocket parks in New York City that invite contemplation, appreciation of gardens, quiet, etc.
- Love Norwood Park, but much different footprint.
  http://www.montgomeryparks.org/parks_facilities_directory/norwoodlp.shtm

Other Comments:
- At the next meeting, provide some good examples of parks similar to this one as sources of inspiration – public comments may be limited by personal experience and there may be better examples available.
- Lighting is an issue. Sometimes it's good and sometimes it's not. Decisions on lighting could set a precedent for other parks.
- Do not provide skate elements.
- Investigate whether emergency vehicles use Hampden Lane at all. It seems rarely (if ever) used, even for emergencies.
- Drainage patterns make Hampden Lane very wet when it rains.
- Don't make the entire park a playground. It should be for inter-generational use and should also provide nice areas for people to sit and read a book.
- Is the park meant only for nannies to use or is it also for the CBD?
- Consider adding chess tables instead of traditional picnic tables. Existing chess tables along Hampden Lane are not in desirable locations.
- The design team should spend time in the park to see how it is used, especially after dark. Drinking and smoking occurs in the park during daylight hours, as well as evening.
- Talk with Bethesda Cares to see if homeless can be sent there.
- There was interest expressed in starting a neighborhood watch group around the park that could potentially help with volunteer clean-up of the park.
- Lots of families use the park on weekends.
- Analyze the origins and destinations for circulation through the park.

- Please do not change Hampden Lane – it should remain a pedestrian-only street for safety.
- The park doesn't really have any coherence. Move the sculpture to the entrance at Arlington and Hampden. The iron base with the children on top would help provide a connection between the business community and the park. People could walk under and through the sculpture into the park.
- Park should be attractive for all ages – not just a playground for young children.
- Noise-producing (music) swings would not be a good idea – not fair to neighbors living close to park.
- Playground needs to stay fenced with benches inside the fence. Please do not put walkway inside fence at Elm. We want as much buffer between business district and neighborhood as possible.

Park Staff & Consultants Attending:
Mary Bradford, Director of Parks
Mitra Pedoeem, Park Development
Tricia McManus, Park Development
Lucas Bonney, Park Development
Erin McArdle, Park Development
Rachel Newhouse, Park Planning & Stewardship
Bill Tyler, Southern Region
Jeff Devlin, Southern Region
Scott Geasey, Southern Region
Sabrina Pirtle, Park Police
Tina Schneider, Area 1 Planning
Dennis Carmichael, Parker Rodriguez
Steve Sattler, Parker Rodriguez
Kent Hipp, Parker Rodriguez

Other Agency Staff Attending:
Karen Thon, Bethesda Regional Services Center
Jeff Burton, Bethesda Urban Partnership