



## **Caroline Freeland Park - Facility Plan Project: Community Meeting #2 Notes**

March 12, 2014

Bethesda Chevy-Chase Regional Services Center (Room A/B)

7:00-9:00 PM

### **Presentation**

Lucas Bonney welcomed attendees and gave an introduction. Dennis Carmichael presented the Site Analysis, Program, and three (3) Concept Plan Alternatives.

- Concept Plan 'Option A' Synopsis: The dynamics of circulation create a social meeting ground and celebrate the patterns of movement within the site.
- Concept Plan 'Option B' Synopsis: A microcosm of Caroline Freeland's legacy as urbanist and Chair of the Planning Commission. A clear edge juxtaposes city and garden and connects nature to culture.
- Concept Plan 'Option C' Synopsis: A civic gesture using pure geometry that visually connects park to library and creates a centered and singular space.

Input from the meeting will be used to develop a preferred alternative, which will be posted on the project website in Summer 2014. Notification will be sent to the community to review the plan and provide any additional comments. Once the preferred plan is finalized, it will be presented to the Montgomery County Planning Board in a public meeting in early 2015.

### **General Comments**

Initial public comments and discussion are outlined below.

- There was a question regarding the timeframe for funding the project. Staff explained that the current facility planning phase of the project establishes an overall program of requirements for the park, a design and budget. If approved by the Montgomery County Planning Board, the project will be included in the Department of Parks Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for final design and construction in the Fiscal Year 2017-2022 CIP. The funding and timing of the project would be determined by the Montgomery County Council.
- There was a request for staff to provide an adequate public comment period for the project. Staff assured participants that ample public comment time would be incorporated into the process and offered to attend community association meetings to provide additional project updates if requested.
- The Parks Department should consider adding elements in the playground and other areas of the park that attracts a broad age group. Oftentimes, 9-12 year olds tend to get bored with play equipment rated for ages 5-12 and therefore seek a different engagement.
- Staff clarified that the design of Bethesda Pool is not part of this project.
- An acknowledgement of "Families" is missing from the plan. The original concept of the park was to provide a community place for family gathering and activities. The park was

intended to serve families, residents and visitors. The study is missing demographic analysis.

- The design needs a vision or mission statement.
- Provide flexible, multi-purpose open space.
- There were questions regarding the square footage of the playground and lawn areas in each concept. Staff agreed to measure the plans and post the sizes of the spaces on the project website.
- There were questions regarding the grade changes of each plan and a general comment that the existing grades limit the useable areas of the park. The design team responded that each plan has steps at the corner of Elm Street and Arlington Road and the lawn area is elevated and leveled to provide a useable open space.
- Explain the primary accomplishment of each plan, since all of the concepts look very similar. The design team explained that each plan applies the program of requirements requested by the community (from the prior public meeting) and organizes it with clarity and focus that does not exist in the park today. Each plan creates a more open and welcoming entrance, useable spaces, a central focus of lawn and gathering space, and enhanced visibility throughout the park for security.
- There was a question about how the park would be entered. The design team responded that all of the entrances make the park more open to the community, and there's a more graceful and gradual ascent with stairs from the corner of Elm Street and Arlington Road.
- The park should be an immersive experience, where you can get lost and there is mystery around the next bend in the path.
- The plans do not consider that this park is adjacent to people's homes. There is a need to provide a buffer at the residential edge of the park. Push the playground back slightly from the edge of the park to protect the neighbors' homes from noise.
- What is the intended capacity of the park and playground? With increasingly more people moving to Bethesda and new park facilities, the park could get overused and overcrowded, and the increased use may be too loud for the neighbors. Be mindful of the residential edge. The playground should not be over-emphasized.
- There was one request that the sculpture be located more prominently than shown on the plans. Others preferred it in a more integrated location as shown in some of the plan alternatives.
- Ensure that accessible entrances are maximized and accommodated in each concept.

### **Discussion of Plan Options**

Each concept was discussed separately, and participants were asked to identify aspects that they like or dislike about each concept. The discussion of each plan is summarized below.

#### **Option A:**

- A combination of Options A and B is preferred. The seating in Option A is nice, and the idea of encapsulated play in both options is good (with one area fenced and the adjacent area unfenced). Prefers the curvilinear path, boulders and softness of Option B.

- The diagonal path of Option A that terminates exactly in the corner of the park at Hampden Lane is preferred, although the path could be curvilinear. Does not like how the path in Option B ends just shy of the corner. The sculpture location in Option B near Hampden Lane is in the way, but the ability to walk through the sculpture is a nice feature.
- The maximized play space of Option A is preferred with the idea that there will be clear views and connections between play areas of different age groups. The large open space and use of Hampden Lane works well in all concepts.
- The sculpture location near the playground in Option A is preferred over the location near Hampden Lane in Option B.
- A neighbor does not like the large playground in Option A and prefers the smaller playground in Option B. Provide a planted buffer along the neighborhood edge.
- The location and type of tables and chairs at the top of the stairs near Arlington Road and Elm Street in Option A is good. Moveable furniture is a good idea. Picnic tables do not appeal to a broad audience.
- The expanded play opportunities in Option A that would appeal to broader age groups and not necessarily consist of “play equipment” is good.
- There are experts who research and study how children play. The design team should study how teenagers play.
- The entry steps in Option A are more appropriately scaled than the steps in Option C.
- The flat usable green space is good, and seems to be well-represented in all concepts.
- All three plans are wonderful.

#### Option B:

- The water feature is not appropriate, will be attractive to kids and may be abused, and it is not good to encourage play so close to Arlington Road. It may also attract mosquitos.
- Consider art display cases for the community to put up art in the park. There was a discussion that this may be difficult to curate or manage but that public art could be incorporated in the park design.
- Consider providing sound attenuating fencing along the residential edge of the park.
- Confirm that we are able to manipulate the area next to the library and Hampden Lane. The grass incorporated into Hampden Lane is a nice idea.
- This concept appears to have a larger lawn area than the others, which is nice. Consider whether enough shade has been provided for the lawn area.
- Reducing pavement along Hampden Lane is a good idea.
- Consider providing art along the main path through the park. The walkway with the flowering trees and boulders is artful.
- Consider whether there is enough shade for the playground. The current plan preserves existing trees but does not add a lot of new ones. Some trees, such as the Japanese Maple, could be transplanted from on-site. Consider shade structures in the play area.
- The boulders, curved walkway and juxtaposition to Arlington Road is great, but the playground needs to be expanded.
- The boulders are good for older kids. The lower right boulder photo with plants in the slide show is very nice. There are safety concerns that would need to be generally accepted if boulders are used in the design.

- There were reservations about the proximity of the lawn area to Arlington Road, whether it would be used, and whether it's safe. Balls could go into the road unless there is a good separation or barrier.
- Older kids like to meet and interact with each other. Provide social spaces that allow people to interact. Consider how the spaces work as a group throughout the park. Provide more seating areas further within the park. Create gathering areas for games and spending time with friends.
- The tables and chairs are important – especially away from Arlington Road. They offer opportunities to gather in different ways.

Option C:

- The corner of Arlington Road and Elm Street is too loud for this kind of entry feature. No one will sit there.
  - Option C maximizes the variety of types of seating and pulls the seating into the park instead of placing it at the edges and closer to the noise.
  - Don't compromise the design of the park to save one tree.
  - The green space of Options B and C seems to be most useable.
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