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SOUTH PARK RENOVATION PROJECT  
COMMUNITY PARK PLANNING MEETING  
September 25, 2013

MEETING NOTES

Project Manager, Mary Hobson, opened the meeting with a review of the Recreation and Park Department's goal for the renovation project: 1) address infrastructure needs, 2) advance sustainability through design, and 3) respond to the wants and needs of park stakeholders. She outlined the meeting format, which included a design presentation by Fletcher Studio, followed by open Q/A. She concluded with objectives of this meeting: 1) review the design progress to date, 2) address comments received during the community event held on 8/11 as well as through calls and emails, 3) present the updated concept plan, with a focus on development of the children's play area design, and 4) collect stakeholder feedback on the design to facilitate the finalization of a conceptual plan for the park renovation.

Toby Levy, president of the South Park Improvement Association, followed-up with a greeting to the group, gave a brief update on the progress of the project since the last meeting, and announced that the project would be receiving a sizable financial contribution from the Eastern Neighborhood Fund.

Design Presentation

David Fletcher, from Fletcher Studio, presented the history, concept development, and updated schematic design for the park renovation. The design presentation touched on the following (please refer to the presentation materials for more information):

Summary of design progress to date:

- A brief history of the park;
- Results of the team's Park Use Analysis, with a map illustrating how visitors used and traversed the park;
- An assessment of the park's current condition;
- A review of the park program and how it plays into the park's current and proposed designs;
- A review of drainage issues at the park, and what strategies are proposed to reduce run-off, such as the use of bio-swale landscaping and permeable pavement; and
- A review of accessibility to and within the park;

A review of the updated concept plan:

- An overview of points of access and the circuit of paths connected them;
- A review of the program spaces; including open lawn areas, children's play area, seating and picnic area;
- A comparison of the park before and after - with a comparison of the % of landscape, hardscape and play area between the current and proposed designs; and

Design details and modifications made in response to stakeholder feedback:

- A summary of key feedback received at the 8/22 meeting;
- A review of changes made to reduce the amount of hardscape within the park, including narrowing of pathways, plazas and platforms, and the introduction of synthetic wood rather than concrete for seat walls to 'soften' both physically and visually;
- Update on the incorporation of more picnic table seating at the plaza areas;
- Overview of the proposed design of the designated children's play area:
  - The single play area will utilize a containment concept using low walls and landscape, rather than fencing. Two points of entrance are proposed.
  - A review of the fall-zone requirement associated with traditional play equipment was presented. Given current safety standards, a traditional swing would occupy almost all the available space.
  - To maximize play value, and custom designed net-climbing structure is proposed. The structure will combine multiple play features into one component to maximize space and minimize fall zones. The structure will include individual elements, including a saucer swing that would appeal to the greatest age-range of users.
  - Remaining space within the play area will be filled with natural elements such as stones and logs for climbing and imaginative play.
  - A synthetic grass specifically designed for use under play equipment is proposed for inside the play area.

### Questions / Answers

The meandering path concept was positively received. Meeting participants noted that it was interesting and that the resulting 'journey' through the park was a good thing.

While the overall increase in the park's hard to softscape is only 6%, the group expressed a desire to see the area of hardscape reduced. Thinning the plazas, narrowing the benches, and eliminate some or all of the platforms were suggested.

One commenter was disappointed with the amount of hardscape in the south side of the park. They would like to see more green space on that side of the park.

A meeting participant was interested in hearing more about the history of the planning process, as well as status of funding. The team provided a summary of the efforts of SPIA and RPD to develop the concept plan, and then secure funding from the 2008 and 2012 Park Bonds, and most recently the Eastern Neighborhood Fund.

One commenter noted that the existing curbs around the park are too tall. The team responded that they were aware of the problem that the existing curb height poses to cars parked at the edge of the park. The curb, however, is one of the features of the park that pre-date the renovation of the park performed in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the interest of preserving the historic resources that remain, these curbs will likely need to be retained. The City's Planning Department is reviewing the plans and will provide us with guidance as to what, if any, modifications to the curbs they considered appropriate.

The points of access at the west end of the park were discussed. The flow of traffic coming off 2<sup>nd</sup> Street makes that corner a dangerous location to cross. One person commented that many people cross from the north side of the park (Mexican restaurant/housing) into the park. Traffic calming and/or a cross walk and access path in this location was requested. One commenter noted that the heavy foot traffic cutting through to the interior park path would result in damage to the landscape.

Traffic calming issues were discussed. People expressed an interest in seeing more marked cross walks and traffic calming features. The design team promised to approach DPW to see if these types of improvements could be implemented along with the park renovation.

Participants expressed general support for the proposed net-climbing structure.

The designers reviewed the concept of 'subtle containment' of the play area using seat walls and landscaping to enclose the play area. A comment was received that dogs should not be allowed inside the play area, so perhaps a gate might be needed.

One person asked how the City covered liability for playground structures. The team explained that playground designs must meet certain safety standards and that as part of the process a certified safety inspector will be hired to inspect and sign-off on the playground after it is constructed.

A commenter asked if the play area would have a grass. The team explained that natural grass would not meet the safety criteria for fall zones under play structures. RPD does not support the use of sand due to maintenance problems, so safety matting is the most common material used in renovated playgrounds today. However the project team is proposing a new synthetic turf material for this play area. It is designed to meet the fall safety standards, but has the look of natural grass. One commenter said they did not like synthetic grass because they thought it would look worn to quickly. One commenter asked how it would be kept clean. The project team explained that this product could be washed down, and noted that this is not the same product used for synthetic turf fields. A similar product has been used at one recently renovated playground, and RPD is in the process of evaluating its performance over time.

The group discussed what access and amenities would be provided for dogs in the park. The team noted that dogs will be welcomed, on-leash, in all areas of the park with the exception of the play area. One meeting participant suggested that the park include designated dog waste locations (w/ hydrants).

A question was raised about what type of lighting was proposed for the park. The designers explained that no specific light fixture had been selected; however, the project would include lighting for night-time security as well as low-level path lighting. This would most likely include a mix of pole lights and lights embedded in the pathway and/or seat walls. One participant advised that the team take steps to guard against wire theft.

The group discussed what trees would be removed as part of the project. The project team reported that a professional arborist has evaluated all the trees, and the plan is to remove perimeter and interior trees deemed by the arborist to be in poor health. These are primarily the sycamores. The project would provide replacement trees based on the recommendation of the consultant arborist. A copy of the arborist report prepared by HortScience will be posted on the project website.

### Next Steps

The meeting was closed with a review of the project schedule. The team's goal is to wrap up the planning process this month, and secure approval for a park renovation concept from the Recreation and Park Commission in November. If successful, we would expect construction to begin in early 2015 and for the renovated park to reopen to the public around the end of that year.

People who are interested in providing comment on the concept plan are welcome to attend the Recreation and Park Commission hearing on the project, which is tentatively scheduled for 11/6 at 2 PM in City Hall, Room 416.

In conclusion, the team reported that people should sign-in to receive notices of future community meetings, and to visit the project web-page for updates on the team's progress: <http://sfrecpark.org/project/south-park/>

With that, the meeting was closed.