

SIERRA/LINEBERRY DRIVE PARK MASTER PLAN

Citizen Planning Committee (CPC) Meeting #4

April 29, 2014

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Carolina Pines Community Center

2305 Lake Wheeler Road

Raleigh, NC 27603

Meeting Overview:

- Finalize outcome measures
- Develop a preferred concept

Attendees:

CPC Members: Mr. Brian Ayers, Ms. Lisa Barr, Ms. Martha Crowley , Mr. Jason Hibbets, Mr. Keith Lukowski , Mr. Colin Lowry, Ms. Trina Moore , Ms. Mary Belle Pate, Ms. Shawna Shnorr , , Ms. Amy Simes, Mr. Johnny Tillet , , Ms. Lori Winklestein

Absent: Ms. Barbara Brenny, Ms. Lisa Marshall, Mr. Mohammend Bournham, Ms. Gracey Vaughn, Reid Huntley (relinquished his position on the committee)

City of Raleigh (COR): Ms. Emily Ander, Mr. Matthew Keough, Ms. Diane Sauer

Planning Communities: Ms. Karen Creech, Ms. Ann Steedly

Surface678 (Surface): Mr. Charles Bradley, Mr. Jeff Israel

Agenda (as amended)

- I. **Outcome measures Consensus Check, and Concept review**
- II. **Preferred Concept Review**
- III. **Amended Preferred Park Plan Consensus**

Following a brief welcome by Matthew Keough (COR) – recognizing attendance of committee members as well as Diane Sauer, COR Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Director - Charlie Bradley (Surface) assumed lead facilitation for the meeting.

Mr. Bradley explained that the goal of the meeting was to arrive at a synthesized park concept that can be incorporated into a Draft Park Master Plan. He reviewed the work to date and the process ahead, specifically the presentation of a draft master plan at the next public workshop, scheduled for Tuesday, May 20, 6:30-8:30pm at Carolina Pines Community Center.

I. Outcome measures Consensus Check, and Concept review

Outcome Measures: Review and Consensus Check

Previous vision and value work resulted in a list of primary outcome measures. Mr. Bradley reminded the committee that these outcomes help guide the master plan process and gauge whether or not the developed park is a success, per the committee's vision. The following comments and revisions to the primary outcome measures were discussed by the group.

- "Lighting available within the park": **Measure Replaced**, see below

Clarification that lighting was really a safety issue and not meant to encourage park use into the night. Identification that the City has a policy to close parks at dusk.

Decision to amend to instead measure security and safety for users and neighbors.

- "Security of park - safe for user and neighborhood": **New Measure**
- "Incidents of vandalism to gauge security": **New Measure**

A committee member recalled previous listing of incidents of vandalism such as graffiti as a good indicator of security concerns. Committee agreed.

Public comment offered by Mr. Miles Wilhelm that neighbors to the park are interested in security fencing to limit direct public access to adjacent private yards, as well as "cutting-through" the neighborhood.

Later discussion raised possibility of developing access points within the power easement area to adjacent property owners, particularly to Orchard Pointe Townhomes. The committee suggested an interest in accomplishing this over time and understood that it was not something to recommend for immediate implementation.

Mr. Keough (COR) said that the City must work with all adjacent neighbors over access easements and to negotiate with neighbors who express interest in securing property boundaries.

Outcome Measures Consensus Check: Once discussion and input was incorporated into the outcome measures, Mr. Bradley asked Ann Steedly (Planning Communities) to lead the group in a request for a consensus decision. The consensus decision process was quickly reviewed. Consensus was reached; three CPC members showed a (1), seven CPC members showed a (2), and two CPC members showed a (3) on the five-point decision scale.

Design Concepts Review

The 3 design concepts, initially studied at CPC Meeting #3 and highlighted at Public Workshop #2, were reviewed along with public input on the concepts. Highlights of each were noted, to include specific items that received strong comment (positive and negative) in the public record, including results from the on-line survey results about the 3 design concepts.

Meadow Question: Can the power easement area be utilized and built upon? What kind of access will be provided for the proposed "Meadow" there? Can structures be placed there? Can trails be paved?

Answer: Much of this has to be determined and negotiated with Duke Energy over time when specific uses and interest are in place. Trails and structures are sometimes possible – giving clearance for the lines and vehicle access - but not primary uses in these concepts. The concepts focus on the committee’s vision for environmental stewardship and meadow use in this area.

- The committee supports new plantings in this area that are acceptable within the power easement and which might help with screening of the park from adjacent neighbors.
- The committee recalled their goal to offer a high level of accessibility throughout the park and wanted to ensure ADA access to this meadow area, in some capacity.

Community Garden Question: Are community gardens acceptable to the City? Is there any management system in place for them?

Answer: There has been recent accommodation for community gardens, however, none are currently in place on City property. The City does not have the capacity to manage community gardens at this time. In later discussion, one committee member suggested that raised beds might allow sufficient structure to define spaces and interest. Mr. Tom Fuller, member of the public, suggested it was an opportunity to encourage local children towards community involvement and park ownership.

- The committee recalled the vision for low maintenance requirements and concluded that communal or even individual plats for growing should not be prescribed by the plan.
- Resolved (in later discussion) to have a flexible gardening space with an educational opportunity that is connected to the play area. Educational garden with seasonal plantings should be considered for this area. Pollinator plants should be used here in response to the park vision. Limited areas could be introduced over time for community gardening, depending on adequate arrangements for maintenance.
- There should be protected areas in the garden and ideally within the adjacent meadow area for no-spray of chemicals, especially for edible foods and for native flora and fauna.

Adult exercise Question: The amenity area just south(west) of the basketball court was questioned and suggested for better use, especially if the half-court shown could be expanded in place of the adult exercise area.

- Committee decided that dedicated adult exercise areas can be reduced and instead integrated throughout the park. A full court was strongly preferred.
- It was suggested that adult fitness equipment be possibility installed alongside of trails and be artfully designed.
- One suggestion was to use natural-looking aesthetic materials in play and fitness areas that invite activity, be it climbing, pull-ups, simple stretching, etc. A committee member recalled an earlier popular image of a log-like artistic play structure for all ages.

II. Preferred Concept Review

Mr. Bradley presented a single “Draft Preferred Concept” that was representative of the CPC discussion and of public preferences expressed leading up to the meeting.

He indicated that concept recommendations raised at this meeting are to be incorporated “live,” into a working copy of the preferred concept, with assistance from Jeff Israel (Surface). For example, the full-court was already inserted into the preferred concept, covering the adult exercise amenity area shown, bringing the court closer to the street. Committee members were encouraged to interact with that concept during discussion.

Key points discussed for each site element were recorded on flip charts by Karen Creech beginning with those comments above that arose during the review of design concepts. Questions along with some site element preferences or discussion points are captured below.

Parking Question: Can the parking area be lessened or enlarged, as needed, over time? Could parallel parking within the lot be an option, possibly to reduce parking areas? Do on-street parking spaces reduce the need for parking here?

Answer: Parking requirements cannot be fully determined until design is fully detailed, with site measurements, especially regarding square footage of structures. On-site parking is code-required, independent of the available on-street parking spaces.

At present, the Design team feels confident that 7 spaces is an adequate response. The parking layout could be developed in stages and it could be widened to the east, allowing parallel parking that runs north and south. However, this would reduce the expanded buffer area provided in this concept for the adjacent homes to the East, per public input.

- The committee liked the layout of the parking area, with cars turning into the site to park so to keep lights and door noises towards adjacent residents.
- Stormwater management feature related to the parking area should be maintained – possibly expanded to further reduce runoff/retention uses and to provide educational opportunity.
- Later discussion concluded that the least number of required parking by code is preferable with an exception to provide handicapped parking above code standards. 2 ADA spaces were discussed, one being over-sized for van access.

Park Entrance Question: Please explain the multiple park entrances shown along Sierra Drive.

Answer: These are points of connection to the existing sidewalk along Sierra Drive. Users will generally come on the park property from various places so the entrances are there to provide that convenience with designated safe arrival points with good sightlines into the park.

Bus Shelter Question: Why is the once-suggested bus shelter not shown on this concept?

Answer: The Design Team felt that the bus shelter proposal fell outside the scope of the current project and outside the influence of the master park plan, especially as buses do not currently stop along Sierra Drive at the park.

Traffic Calming Question: What is meant by the suggested “Traffic Calming” devices on Sierra Drive?

Answer: Traffic Calming is intentionally undefined; it is the purview of city and/or state regulations. Generally, any encumbrance within the travel lanes is not allowed. Vertical features (speed bumps) are specifically discouraged by the City of Raleigh. Crosswalks, pavement textures, and possibly curb extensions/bump outs into on-street parking areas, however, are possible design solutions to address the committee's interest in slowing traffic where park users come/go.

Basketball Question: Is there demand for basketball courts in the neighborhood?

Answer: Yes. Outdoor basketball is lacking in the area and there is a high level of interest. It will bring much-needed activity here, off of streets. One committee member recalled that in her investigations of local parks, basketball was the one constant activity when it was provided, regardless of the time of day.

- The half-court for basketball was rejected as not useful enough for basketball or for the multi-purpose vision for the park facilities.
- Basketball posts should be tall enough to discourage undesirable behavior. The committee briefly discussed the possibility of installing moveable posts and lower heights for youth but concluded that it would bring management and maintenance challenges.
- A full court should provide flexibility in its use/design, ideally allowing basketball play in both directions, as well as half and full court options. Pavement markings can help delineate various uses to maximize the flexible quality of the court.
- The committee strongly favored the concepts showing basketball on the western part of the park, away and buffered from residential areas. Members reiterated that courts should be highly visible and not on the interior of the site.

Later discussion focused on various pavement types for courts, softening of courts with natural colors and plant materials, adjustable spaces for different sports, ball barriers, separation of court users from trail users, and enclosure ideas for sports like a backdrop for baseball on the adjacent lawn. One committee member suggested that a simple large asphalt slab would not be welcoming to the park and not in line with the park vision.

Water Feature Question: Have we responded to the interest in water spray feature?

Answer: A water spray feature can definitely be included in the design recommendation for the play areas shown.

- A water feature that offers cooling opportunity in the summer is highly desirable and a draw for all users.

Trail Question: What is the quantity/length of the trails suggested in this plan?

Answer: This is not known now but will be determined for the committee. The large loop trail shown is approximately 1/8 mile. (Note: Previously, the committee expressed interest in marking lengths of interior trails for runners, including signage listing mileage to greenway and other public recreation.)

Review of Site Elements and Items of Consideration, Hand-out, Facilitated Discussion

Committee members looked over a hand out that identified design elements requiring further consideration and illustrated the Draft Preferred Concept. A number of these items were already captured above. Mr. Bradley facilitated discussion to further resolve design questions to be captured in the draft master plan that will outline preferences and priorities. As above, these discussions were captured in live refinements to the preferred concept and on flip charts for each site element/topic.

Please see the attached images capturing the discussion points on large poster paper.

III. Amended Preferred Park Plan Consensus

Ms. Steedly noted the approaching end-time for the meeting and suggested a consensus check on the preferred concept, as discussed up to this point. Confirmation of preferences for each of the site elements and amendments to the Preferred Concept were reviewed prior to the vote to establish a Preferred Park Plan, as follows:

- Provide a full basketball **court**, extending closer to the street to incorporate multi-functions, but with adequate safety provisions to keep from conflict between activities.
- Expand the **play area** where possible, especially to the northeast along the lawn. That expansion would allow pulling the play area a little bit away from the sidewalk and street for safety.
- Consider use of seat wall there in front of activity areas on the street as an amenity with an enclosure benefit for youth and loose balls.
- Consider incorporation of splash area if feasible.
- **(Park structure)** Ensure a bathroom facility year-round, if possible. Limit the size. Do not climate control the space so to limit unauthorized use - as well as vehicular parking requirements. Suggestion made to use natural ventilation (upper and lower panels could capture breezes by design). Ms. Patricia Brenzy, member of the public, recommended a green-planted roof and rainwater harvesting from the roof for environmental ethics.
- Do not concentrate adult-focused **amenities** in any one area as shown, disperse throughout park.
- Embrace flexible gardening space and not “Community Garden” as a defined use.
- Limit on-site **parking** to minimum per code requirements. Provide “generous” ADA parking (see discussion).
- Traffic calming is desired and required coordination.
- The **lawn area** needs to be designed for maximum use, suggesting a flat consistent grade. The open green space is a critical element given lack of lawns for many local residents.

- There should be access to and within the **Meadow area**, including accessible options, but not connecting to the adjacent properties north of the park. Provide additional buffer (fencing, vegetation) to these properties; buffer to the East works well.
- **(Other site elements)** Park signage - meeting city standards - should be attractive and coordinated with way-finding from the corner of the Sierra and Lineberry Drives. Bike racks should shift to be nearer the courts. Add benches at courts and/or play area.
- Tree preservation areas and **wooded areas** should be accessible, ideally cleared of underbrush and invasive species. Treat these areas as education opportunities, i.e. labeling of plant species, coordinating with educational groups.
- Lighting should be limited for security purposes and pointed down.

Consensus Check on Preferred Park Plan: Following the review of preferences and refinements to key site elements, Ms. Steedly requested a consensus decision. Consensus was reached; eight CPC members showed a (1), while three CPC members showed a (2) on the five-point decision scale.

Priority and Park Phase discussion differed. Ms. Steedly indicated that there would be follow-up with CPC members on this item in preparation for the public workshop.

Priority Question: What is meant by “priorities?” Will follow-up be by way of electronic communication?

Answer: The Master Plan needs to reflect community expectations for this park, to include priorities assuming limited funding and phased development of the site. Phasing of park development will also consider how elements relate to each other, further raising the question of what items are primary and secondary, given the layout and site considerations.

The Design Team will design a survey for CPC members to evaluate ahead of the public workshop. An exercise related to priorities and phases, geared toward the committee, may also be conducted within the workshop on May 20, 6:30-8:30pm at Carolina Pines Community Center.

(Thank you for your participation and patience!)