

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: October 3, 2018

TITLE: 614 E. Gorham Street – Public Project:
James Madison Park Master Plan and
Shelter Concept. 2nd Ald. Dist. (53254)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: October 3, 2018

ID NUMBER:

Members present: Richard Wagner, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Christian Harper, Cliff Goodhart and Michael Rosenblum.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of October 3, 2018, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION**

Registered in support of the project were Melissa Destree and Zia Brucaya, both representing the City of Madison Parks Division; Ken Saiki and Tom Martin, both representing Saiki Design; and James Tye, representing Clean Lakes Alliance. Registered neither in support nor opposition were Dawn O’Kroley and Robert Klebba.

Brucaya introduced the project team and reviewed their planning process, public engagement meetings/reviews and their meeting with the Landmarks Commission. The team has been working on historical review and chronology, stormwater and water quality, hydraulics of the lake and shoreline, tree survey, wetland delineation, ADA review and public safety, as well as public outreach and engagement. This process also relied on the City’s new RESJI programming to include people of all incomes and ethnicities in the planning process. The planning process focused on key elements, including:

- Improving the park shelter amenities and attractiveness.
- Basic park amenities (benches, bubblers, etc.).
- Precedent imagery to get a sense of what type of design people are interested in.
- Top likes that informed the master plan include reconfiguration of the parking, keeping the natural stormwater filtration exhibit, doing a pier at the Capitol view corridor, a sunset overlook and better views of the park.
- Improving ADA accessibility.
- Maintain the basketball courts and parking lot. Traffic Engineering is not supportive of increasing the density of parking on nearby residential streets.

Destree talked to the historical context of the process. They looked at Native American culture, a canal that once existed in the area, and study of different structures on the property. All of the sailing/yachting culture of the last 150 years was a tremendous help. They looked at past park master plans and the push to maintain the historic buildings.

An emerging wetland in the northwest corner of the site to filter stormwater before it enters the lake. They moved the basketball courts away from the Gates of Heaven building, moved the parking lot and made it parallel to Gorham Street both for safety and access, and added a number of pedestrian/bicycle amenities. A boardwalk will wrap the emerging wetland so people can better understand the processes happening in that area and may include educational signage. They have increased the amount of greenspace in the park by a small margin. In the southwest corner they developed more of a buffer space and a small gathering space for events that occur at the Gates of Heaven. The new shelter will be located where the existing shelter is housed. Designated spots for picnicking and grilling are identified. They have preserved the front yard condition for the boathouse and reconfigured the piers and docks so rentals for canoes and kayaks can occur within the shelter. During the initial data gathering phase of the project they heard about safety concerns, they talked to Police and learned there had been over 700 calls to the park in 2017, with 81 calls directly addressed to the Gates of Heaven area. As they worked with Police and Traffic Engineering, the reconfiguration of parking will make it much easier to monitor and access. There will be safer ingress and egress for both vehicles and pedestrians. There was a desire to move impervious surfaces further from the lake and a great interest in ADA accessibility. Existing today are 39 parking spaces, proposed is a reduction to 33 spaces. The parking is necessary if the City is providing a large public shelter building. If the expectation is that everyone using this park would park on the street that would be extremely problematic.

They reviewed adjacencies within the park while looking at locations for the shelter. The potential of having food and a paddle vendor were key amenities requested during the public engagement. There is an interest in having a more urban park with a café, and renovating the existing shelter with an addition out toward the lake. By having the café on the lake side, visitors can enjoy the views. Feedback from the City was a non-compliant structure from Zoning. They also worked with Landmarks about the siting and spacing of the boathouse and keeping it a pleasant distance from the new structure. As this moves forward in the master plan, the shelter design will evolve. They reviewed the shelter program elements and roof garden. Indoor and outdoor public restrooms will be available, a community room that fits 175 people, as well as a flex room. There is storage for tables and chairs, gardening tools and boating equipment.

Public Comment:

Dawn O’Kroley spoke asking the Commission to address building placement and the surface parking. This is a significant opportunity for views to the lake. The City has reiterated these views in the Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Plan and the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Plan. If the shelter has outlived its useful life and not placed in the same location, that would open up a lake and shoreline view to everyone on Gorham Street. There are problems with the current park siting and the Police Department requested that any new building entrances face the street; this proposed concept does not accommodate that. No publicly shared option showed a public entry on Gorham Street. She asked the Commission to put an asterisk on the plan for this reason. The public pier would be more appropriately located on the west to keep boat traffic separated from swimmers. The glowing highlight of this plan is the wetland area. The parking lot is approximately 750-feet long; no other public park has that parking nearby but this disconnects people from the street. That should not be a program goal in this project. She and her neighbors gathered over 100 responses from people on a Saturday who do not support maintaining this parking lot as part of the master plan. She encouraged further study into other parking options. The importance is that from Gorham Street everybody gets the long lake view and the shoreline view.

James Tye, Executive Director of the Clean Lakes Alliance. They are currently working with all local governments regarding public access to the lakes. There are 58 miles of shoreline, basically half of which is in public trust. This is an opportunity to make Madison known for our beaches. Maximize the potential to support balanced recreation (swimming, fishing and natural appreciation of the park). Other parks in the City system can balance other recreational activities (basketball, volleyball, etc.). Offer safe access to the water, protect the lakeshore from erosion, and provide a habitat for lake dependent fish and wildlife. Because we've hardscaped so much of our shoreline, we don't provide the natural shoreline. Protect against stormwater impacts that lead to water quality issues. All the trash that lands on the street ends up in the lakes; think about being more naturalized and protecting the lake. Removal of hard surfaces would be good, along with setbacks from everything.

Robert Klebba spoke as a park resident who has been working with the Parks Division and design team. He reviewed the history and the goal of creating a large greenspace with access to the lake. He likes the plan as it respects the existing buildings, but it does not respect the existing Kenton Peters designed park shelter, although it has come to the end of its useful life. The park incorporates environmental considerations and many features for the shelter. He did express concerns about the inordinate parking in the park, the layout is inefficient. Is it the Parks Division's responsibility to provide parking? There is plenty on the streets and the nearest municipal parking garage. A reduction of impermeable surfaces near the lake should be considered.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Reconsider proposed parking number, location and layout.
 - Concerns regarding interruption of lake views by parking lot.
 - You're just scratching the surface on the parking needs. No matter how much parking you offer, it would never be enough.
 - Other parks are destinations for MSCR and other organized sports to use those fields. This is much more of a neighborhood park and doesn't need parking. ADA and drop-off/pick-up would be necessary. The proximity of the children's play area to the basketball courts is problematic, there's a lot of foul language.
 - Unfortunately I don't think the Parks Division would build a shelter if there was no parking. Is there a way to move forward with parking at all in this park?
 - The YWCA actually asked for the basketball courts to be closer to the children's play area. What people love most about this park is the diversity of users; that's probably the number one comment we got. We intend to broaden the perspective of who uses this park.
 - Look into widening Butler Street and putting the parking there.
- Further study proposed location of new shelter, playground and basketball court.
 - If your priority is the basketball courts then I question the need for a shelter.
 - By moving the basketball closer to residential you create an active center directly across from residential properties.
 - The shelter location is still creating a hidden area.
 - Study fencing options for playground area, make sure it does not block views.

ACTION:

Since this was an **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** no formal action was taken by the Commission.