

AGENDA # 4

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: February 1, 2012

TITLE: Central Park – Brearly Street to
Baldwin Street, Public Space and
Building. 6th Ald. Dist. (25175)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: February 1, 2012

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Marsha Rummel, Todd Barnett, Dawn O’Kroley, Richard Slayton, Melissa Huggins, John Harrington and Henry Lufler.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of February 1, 2012, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new Central Park. Appearing on behalf of the project were Ken Saiki, representing Ken Saiki Design; and Lorna Jordan, representing Lorna Jordan Studio. Appearing in support and available to answer questions were Kay Rutledge, City of Madison Parks Division; and Janet Dailey, City Engineering. Appearing neither in support nor opposition and wishing to speak was Peter Wolff. The complete master plan represents a \$14 million project that includes construction, design and acquisition, with Phase 1 being about \$3 million. The skate park is separate from Phase 1 as there is a separate group raising money for that portion. Pedestrian and bicycle enhancements are also proposed. The idea is to create an environment that is sustainable, aesthetic and that provides a gathering place for the community. The project will treat stormwater and it will have a green roof while also being expressive and specific to this area. The fashion in which glaciers form landscapes have been incorporated into the design. Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- If you’re going to use the landscape in the design you should also use native Wisconsin plants. And stone.
- I like the building a lot and I think it incorporates nice ideas from the area, but I’m stuck on the glacial form. We have a lot of those things (drumlins, etc.) around the City, I don’t know why we need to recreate them in a place that has a different glacial form.
 - I’m not trying to interpret, it’s more inspiration to give it some interest. It’s evocative of, but not intended to be strictly interpretive.
- It’s a lovely plan and I like your ideas a lot, but it almost seems too perfect. You’re pulling a history that was here and there around the area and creating an interpretation of it here. Is there any kind of vestige of what this area used to be within the park?
 - We had to find areas where we could do green infrastructure on what was once a swamp/marsh. You mostly have to go up because if you go down you’re going to get into the contaminated soil. The Brearly block is really much more of a land form park. We’re taking this Phase 1 step and setting the table for the entire master plan development. We’re creating something that had a regional appeal but also having a utility for the neighborhood on a day-to-day basis.

- How does the design fit with the idea of the natural playscape for kids? Do you see it being used that way?
 - Yes I do. I think a larger part of the site can be used that way. We have a designated area with a drumlin but I can imagine the kids would be exploring the whole site.
- I would suggest looking at landscaping on Brearly and extending through to the community gardens, with the City's charge to expand to Willy Street and further north to Breese Stevens. Focusing on that landscaping is a way to welcome the people who have braved crossing East Washington Avenue. A chance to make these cross connection changes.
- Your description of industrial and natural forms is really intriguing. The one place that may need to become more industrial and less natural form is the restroom building. I see that as a juncture of possibly a form that used to be a round house that served rail cars. I'm intrigued as the design moves forward how the industrial and natural forms meet.
- The west end of the park, is there a point where the edge welcomes you to the park? Is it supposed to be a hard edge? That line between street and park, is it meant to invite, intrigue, what's the intent there?
 - There is a little bit of a center of gravity moving to the south because the bicycle commuter route is there. Also we ultimately intend on getting that northwest corner chunk of land and there would be a connection there. Lorna has moved the land form down so it becomes complete in the land we have now, but there are opportunities to connect to that major land form, just not in this first phase.
- The great lawn looks like a ball field surrounded by trees. I'd love to see some more lush plantings.
 - The orientation of the great lawn is due to the tracks on the south edge. It's not even as large as a football field so that's why it is not vegetative in sort of a softer manner because we're trying to establish a play field. The neighborhood is asking for more traditional park-like aspects.
- Can we do more of a link to East Washington? I think the western edge could be linked to help add to that character and cross-connection.
- I think it's very appropriate and very exciting. The big concern I have is maintenance and durability because it's going to get a lot of use.
- Somehow the geometry needs to be retained on the industrial edge along the rail corridor.
 - It sort of grows out of the earth with stone, then there's metal. What I'm trying to do is integrate the industrial materials and also evoke these glacial forms so it's hybrid and trying to make that work together in one piece.

Peter Wolff spoke about the "great lawn" in both support and opposition. He supports the project which is finally getting underway in a very exciting way. The area is just a huge field without any trees or paths through it. The question is whether there can't be a better use for that field. In terms of scale that field occupies 1/3 of the park, not including the rail right-of-way. The use of this great lawn is at issue; looking at the neighborhood recreation use there is another field the size of a square block that's used for recreation but isn't used very much at all. There is an issue with how this will be used. Issues also include traffic, noise, etc. There are other possible uses for that space that would attract people from the neighborhood and around the City.

ACTION:

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

After the Commission acts on an application, individual Commissioners rate the overall design on a scale of 1 to 10, including any changes required by the Commission. The ratings are for information only. They are not used to decide whether the project should be approved. The scale is 1 = complete failure; 2 = critically bad; 3 = very poor; 4 = poor; 5 = fair; 6 = good; 7 = very good; 8 = excellent; 9 = superior; and 10 = outstanding. The overall ratings for this project are 6 and 8.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: Central Park

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings	-	6	-	-	-	6	-	6
	7	-	7	7	-	7	9	8

General Comments:

- Nice beginning to the project.