

AGENDA # 3

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION

PRESENTED: 10/1/18

TITLE: 614 E Gorham St - Master Plan for a
Designated Madison Landmark
Site, a portion of which is also in the
Mansion Hill Hist. Dist. (James
Madison Park); 2nd Ald. Dist.

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: William Fruhling, Acting Preservation
Planner

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: 10/10/18

ID NUMBER: 53199

Members present were: Stuart Levitan, Anna Andrzejewski, Richard Arnesen, Katie Kaliszewski, and David McLean. Excused was Marsha Rummel.

SUMMARY:

Melissa Destree, registering in support and wishing to speak.

Tom Martin, registering in support and wishing to speak.

Ken Saiki, registering in support and available to answer questions.

Robert Klebba, registering neither in support nor in opposition, and wishing to speak.

James Tye, registering neither in support nor in opposition, and available to answer questions.

The applicants provided a brief background on the project, explaining that they are in the third phase of the planning process and will move into development of the final plan after they receive input from Landmarks and other City commissions. They said that they have solicited feedback from the public in various meetings, and community engagement has been a priority throughout this process.

Destree provided information on the history of James Madison Park and the historical homes that are located on the site. Martin described the various elements of the master plan, highlighting changes they intend to make to the park. He said that there were some issues with Gates of Heaven being so close to the basketball courts, so they created a buffer area to separate the building from the activity areas. He mentioned that they created more space between the proposed shelter and existing Bernard Hoover boathouse so that the boathouse is more visible, and reconfigured the docks so they are more usable and will allow for new activities. Martin pointed out an open lot off of Blount St, where they are proposing that a historic home be relocated in the future. He said that they tried to create access for pedestrians and vehicles to Gates of Heaven and the boathouse, while also pushing the parking lot to a lower elevation so that cars will not be at eye level.

Destree noted that they evaluated multiple schemes, and in feedback received from the public, they heard themes of restroom accessibility near the beach, bringing activity areas closer to the shelter, and creating additional spaces in the shelter for a café, community room, and rooftop gardens. She said that one of the most common themes was to maximize views of the lake from all areas of the park.

Levitan asked how the design was developed. Destree said that before they created the design, they held public input sessions and ended up with a long list of ideas the public would like to see at the park. She mentioned that they also worked with the adjacent property owners to create a collaborative plan and

performed extensive historic research, which informed them of how to approach the various areas of the park. Destree said that at the public meetings, the majority of people preferred a glass shelter structure that disappears into the landscape and allows one to focus on the view of the lake.

Levitan asked how many of the current and projected users need to drive to the park. Destree said that they have done research on parks of similar size in the area and the average parking lot size in those parks. Levitan pointed out that this is an urban park in the immediate area of people who walk or bike everywhere and tend not to drive, and wasn't sure that a meaningful comparison could be drawn to other similarly sized parks. Ann Freiwald, Parks Division, stated that this plan has one less parking stall than they currently have at James Madison Park, and many fewer stalls than at Tenney Park, which she said is a comparable park. She said that they need to accommodate people coming to the park to vote or visit Gates of Heaven, and she believes the proposed parking location is an improvement from the current parking area. Destree said that they listened to feedback on how different areas of the park were used, and decided to use the transitional, noisier space nearer the street for parking rather than using any of the large greenspace.

Levitan stated that he was happy to see the basketball courts moved further from Gates of Heaven in order to provide more of a buffer for that area. Destree said that by moving the basketball courts, they have also created more space to put up tents and hold events near the synagogue in order to extend people's experience in the City's historic buildings.

Klebba said that he lives in one of the historic homes located in the park and is also the Parks Chair for the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association. He stated that he does like the master plan as presented for its respect of the historic buildings in the park; however, it is not respectful of the Brutalist park shelter designed by Kenton Peters, of which he will regret the loss. He voiced support for relocating another historic building to the park in the future. Klebba said that everyone has been very pleased with the sensitivity shown for the environment in the creation of the plan, and specifically mentioned the living shoreline and stormwater retention improvements. He discussed the history of the plan for the park, and said that it was originally proposed to be a great greenspace that is now marred by the parking lot. He said that he and many neighbors feel there is too much parking, and pointed out the many bus lines that run nearby. He asked the Commission to consider the history of the establishment of greenspace for the park, and said that it should not be polluted with more parking.

Levitan asked Tye for the perspective of the Clean Lakes Alliance on the master plan. Tye provided background information on a partnership that has been formed with the City and Dane County to examine the amount of land that is in the public trust and to develop a grading system for public parks. He said that one of the reasons for making stormwater retention a priority in this plan is that everything in the Capitol square area flows down into the park and then runs out of a pipe into Lake Mendota. He explained that the stormwater retention area was created on the far west side of the park in order to hold back as much silt and trash as possible from entering the lake. He also noted the benefits of removing the seawall and creating an ecologically friendly shoreline along the whole park. Tye said that Madison is not known for our gorgeous parks on our lakes, and we are missing a big opportunity.

Levitan asked Tye if he had any thoughts on the aesthetics or ecological aspects of the parking lot. Tye said that moving hard surfaces away from the lake is a good thing, but he also understands the importance of having parking available in the park. Levitan asked if he had concerns about the placement of the basketball courts. Tye said that he would prefer for the basketball courts to be further from the lake. Arnesen mentioned that the basketball courts are less impactful than parking lots near the lake. Tye pointed out that in terms of how the laws are written, private homeowners have stricter regulations about how close hard surfaces can be to the lake, and our public parks should be held to a higher standard as well. Levitan asked if pervious parking is an option. Destree said that they intend to install pervious basketball courts; they are currently working on calculating pervious and impervious areas and plan to do a combination in the parking areas.

Fruhling brought the Commission's attention to an email they received from Dawn O'Kroley regarding her comments on the master plan. He also mentioned that staff will need to do some research regarding what on

the site is a landmark versus what is not, and what approvals will be needed from the Commission based on that determination. Levitan asked how soon the applicants would be ready to request Certificates of Appropriateness for the work, and Destree said that it would be a year or so.

Levitan asked whether the plan would have had an impact on the flooding had it been implemented in August. Martin said that he thinks this plan would have made things better because of the softer transition of the living shoreline and added stormwater retention that provides specific areas for the water to go instead of flooding. Saiki said that it may have reduced the amount of runoff into the lake, but would not have solved the flooding problems, as this space is only a small part of the Lake Mendota watershed. Destree said that in the plan, they have raised the park shelter one foot. Freiwald pointed out that the material behind the current seawall is being washed out, which was made worse by the high lake levels and wave action. Arnesen asked if the new plan would allow for fluctuating water levels so they would have less of an impact on the shoreline. Freiwald said that it will be more resilient, and pointed out that the current engineering in the park is from the 1950s, so the new plan will definitely be an improvement.

McLean asked whether the living shoreline will have a buffer to prevent it from being washed away into the lake. Martin acknowledged that there is heavy wave action there, and said that throughout most of the shoreline, there will be a riffraff edge with a planted living shoreline behind it to prevent erosion.

Freiwald mentioned that the shelter design shown in the plans is just a placeholder diagram, and is not what it will actually look like. Once they have the shelter design finalized, they will return to the Landmarks Commission for review.

ACTION:

No action was taken.