Preliminary Report:
Central Park Design & Implementation Task Force

Background

For several years the City of Madison, the Center for Resilient Cities (CRC, formerly known as Urban Open Space Foundation), neighborhood residents, local businesses and many other stakeholders have discussed and planned for the creation of a Central Park in the East Isthmus of Madison. The City of Madison has noted this park in both its adopted Comprehensive Plan and the adopted East Rail Corridor Plan. Informed by an extensive public process involving multiple stakeholder groups such as neighborhood associations, gardeners, skateboarders, the Center for Resilient Cities (CRC) (formerly known as Urban Open Space Foundation) has developed detailed plans, acquired parcels of land, and raised and expended over $1,000,000 in funds to make the park a reality. Stakeholder groups such as neighborhood associations, gardeners, skateboarders, and others have all been involved in helping to craft a plan for the Park.

As a way to manage the process, have effect review of Central Park reviewed by affected City agencies, and to give guidance to advise the Mayor and Council on the role of the City in the Central Park initiative, on January 16, 2007, the Common Council adopted Amended Resolution RES-07-00256, was adopted by the Common Council, creating a 12-member ad hoc Task Force that would work on answering a series of questions regarding the implementation and governance of the proposed Central Park.
The Task Force includes the following members:

- Marsha A. Rummel - District Common Council Member
- Joseph R. Clausius - Common Council Member
- William W. Barker - Park Commission Representative
- Nancy T. Ragland - Mayoral Appointee
- Joe Sensenbrenner – Center for Resilient Cities Board Representative
- Bradley C. Mullins - Area Property Owner
- Leslie C. Schroeder - Neighborhood Resident
- Benjamin R. Sommers - Neighborhood Resident
- Phyllis E. Wilhelm – MG&E Representative
- Amy T. Overby - Madison Community Foundation Representative
- Susan M. Schmitz - Downtown Madison, Inc. Representative

As per the adopted Amended Resolution, the charge of the Task Force anticipated a multi-phase approach. At the beginning, the Task Force was to examine and offer a recommendation on the following:

- Review all work to date on the project.
- Consider all of the outstanding issues and determine whether the project should move forward.

Once the preliminary work was done, and the Task Force concludes that the work of the Task Force should continue, the Task Force would answer the following questions:
• Do additional lands need to be purchased to make the Park possible?

• Are options for developing the Central Park in phases possible, and if so, develop a phased implementation strategy for the Park.

• What is the final concept plan for the park?

• How does the relationship in terms of governance, financing, management and maintenance of the Park work among the parties involved?

• What is the best plan of action regarding moving the railroad tracks?

• What do stakeholder groups think about this plan?

• What is needed in terms of private fundraising?

• How does the proposed footprint address the relationship of park space to redevelopment plans in the corridor?

• How does the Park’s design integrate with other nearby green space?

Lastly, the Task Force shall engage the community and conduct several public meetings as part of the process, and report their findings to the Common Council by January 2008.

The Task Force’s final report shall include:

1. A final plan of the park to recommend to the Common Council;

2. A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among all parties to deal with ownership, fundraising, implementation, management, and maintenance of the Park;

3. A phased implementation strategy for the Park;
4. A draft fundraising plan.

**Work to Date**

Since its first meeting in June 2007, the full Task Force has held 18-21 (update—how many??) meetings. In addition, the Task Force has delegated much of the work to various sub-committees to handle the larger issues the Task Force needs to address:

1) Land Acquisition/Rail Relocation (three 3 meetings to date)
2) Concept Park Plan (11 meetings to date)
3) Fundraising (no meetings to be scheduled)
4) Memorandum of Understanding (two 4 meetings to date)

While good progress has been made, there are many hurdles that must be overcome to bringing this Park to fruition. Issues regarding remain, such as the question of moving of the rail line, additional land purchases, moving of the rail line, fundraising for needed capital and operating endowments, and developing a plan to phase park construction development of the park need to be developed. Additionally, the committee must identify and make recommendations regarding park ownership, governance and fiscal responsibility for the park. All parties need to agree on how funds will be raised. Issues related to funding mechanisms, as well as and how the park will be developed, managed, and maintained, development, maintenance and management must be resolved. Further progress on Central Park depends on workable answers to these questions. These and many other issues need to be investigated and an implementation plan needs to be developed in order for the community to move forward on the creation of this park.
Here are the responses to date regarding the charge of the Task Force follow:

- Review all work to date on the project.

The Task Force has held several meetings where representatives of the Center for Resilient Cities, City staff to Transport 2020, the East Rail Corridor Plan and the East Washington Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan have presented their work and how it relates to the development of Central Park. In addition, the Task Force has met on the site and walked it to get a good sense of the context and issues surrounding the development of the Park. In addition, Nancy Fey and Karl Von van Lith provided training in the Natural Step and helped the committee address integration of this conservation ethic into park design and philosophy.

- Consider all of the outstanding issues and determine whether the project should move forward.

The Task Force supports the idea of a Central Park in the Isthmus. It is an idea worth fully exploring and implementing. At a fundamental level, the Task Force believes that a Central Park would not only support other planning and implementation initiatives in the neighborhood and help offset identified park deficiencies, and catalyze neighborhood, business and economic development activity along the Capitol Gateway Corridor. The detail work of the task force related to Task Force is working on these elements regarding design, location of Park elements, budget, etc. The detail work of the Task Force relating to Park development is still ongoing continues.
• Explore additional lands to be **acquired**.

The Task Force believes while some parcels are critical to the success of the Park and that not all of the land identified in the most recent **working** version of the Central Park Master Plan is necessary for the Park to be developed **initially**. More work will be required to identify those parcels as design work progresses.

• Explore options for developing the park in phases and develop a phased implementation strategy for the park.

The Task Force is of the opinion that developing the Park in phases, focusing on the proposed Skate Park on S. Brearly, and the Great Lawn development on S. Ingersoll—both parcels presently owned by the CRC—merit further discussion and detailed planning. However, the ability to raise sufficient capital to develop, maintain, and provide for the long-term maintenance of the Park is a significant issue that the Task Force has not fully resolved at this point.

• How does the relationship in terms of governance, financing, management and maintenance of the park work among the parties involved?

This is a topic for the Task Force in the coming months as the concept design is finalized.

• What is the final concept plan for the park?
The Concept Plan Sub-Committee of the Task Force will complete its report on the review of the existing plan and offer certain changes that, in the opinion of the Sub-Committee, better reflect the context of the Park both in terms of its location and the uses that are anticipated to come out of the early phases of the concept Plan, and ultimately, implementation. These suggested plan amendments will be vetted by the full committee.

- What is the best plan of action regarding moving the railroad tracks?

Task Force consensus exists that realization of a centerpiece-quality urban park requires rail relocation. The rails need to move. This is a topic for the Task Force in the coming months as it develops the finale concept design is finalized. The spur track for MG&E must remain and the ??now allows for this. Additional study on compatibility.

- What do stakeholder groups think about this plan?

Public outreach, including public meetings will occur as soon as the Concept Plan Sub-Committee finishes its work and conceptual plan maps are prepared. The Task Force hopes to have the public meetings in mid-April.

- What is needed in terms of private fundraising?

Total Park cost is estimated to be $30 million. A minimum of $20 million must be raised from private sources to fully fund and endorse Central Park. Full consideration of this issue depends upon acceptance of a park design and The Fundraising Sub-Committee will address this issue in the coming months. Total Park cost $30 million.
• Review the proposed park footprint and address the relationship of park space to redevelopment plans in the corridor.

  With the recent adoption of the East Washington Capitol Gateway Corridor BUILD, TID 36 Plan, Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Plan, and amendments to the East Rail Corridor Plan by Council, the Task Force can address this issue and will by the time of the Final Report.

• Design integration with other nearby green space.

  This will be more fully developed as the Task Force revises the Central Park Plan for presentation to the public. Preliminary analyses indicate that recently completed Isthmus Bike Path and Yahara River Parkway afford excellent linkages of Central Park with other municipal and regional open spaces.

• A final plan of the park to recommend to the Common Council.

  This will be contained in the Final Report.

• A draft MOU between all parties to deal with ownership, fundraising, implementation, management, and maintenance of the park.

  The MOU Sub-Committee is now meeting to finalize this element of the project.

• A phased implementation strategy for the park.

  The Task Force believes that a phased implementation strategy is in the best long-term interest of the Central Park. A phasing plan and budget will be included in the final report.

  —Balance development and fundraising.
  —Infrastructure.
  —Phasing.
A draft fundraising plan.

The Fundraising Sub-Committee members will address this issue in the coming months.

Recommendations

The Task Force is fully engaged in the process and to handle the significant park issues of the Park, public meetings, etc., and would like to recommend extension of that the work of the Task Force be extended to June July 14, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

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