

SEPTEMBER 6 WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

During our community workshop on September 6 at Autumnwood Senior Center, we began with a recap of the August 16 workshop and distributed copies of the PowerPoint presentation from that meeting ([click here for the presentation](#)).

Councilmember Bryan Bollman spoke about project, intention and actions behind the scenes to support the project further. The consultant talked about:

1. Highlights from the survey results and community activities ([click here for survey highlights](#))
2. Outcome of analysis walks and information from a community member on the areas that were in disrepair
3. Efforts to determine if there are sport leagues interest (both youth and adult leagues)
4. Conversations about historic aspects of the original park design with City
5. Efforts to connect with the Police liaison

Following was an open question and answer period about the project. Here are the main takeaways:

- Security and safety were strong issues
- Returning the park to more active status is a strong issue
- Impacts to the neighborhood and adjoining residential streets if the “park returns to being active”

Attendees were invited to choose images that expressed what they would do if they could:

1. Snap your fingers and have anything
2. Snap your fingers and fix something egregious

Here are some highlights of what they said:

Have anything:

- Connect to the water
- Keep some area for a preserve, strengthen nature
- Passive recreation, treed areas to sit under for shade
- Things for teenagers and seniors
- Multiuse courts
- Enroll more advocates
- Parking solution for Spann Street, consider parking and traffic impacts for residents

Fix anything:

- Security needs to be 24 hours, cameras and alarms
- Fix the shelter house
- Fix water drainage issues and infrastructure to create safe walking conditions
- Guard stones to keep garbage dumpers out, esp. at the Spann Street parking lot
- Clean up and excavation of the whole park

- New bathrooms/bathroom facilities

A second workshop activity asked the attendees to imagine that Houghton Park has been chosen as the cover story for a national magazine because of the successful revitalization of the park. What would the cover say? Here's what the groups of attendees came up with:

Group 1

- **Headline: Kaisertown Community Takes Back the Park**
 - Nature and Sports
 - Restored pool
- **Quotes:**
 - We have seen a new day!
 - Where would you rather be than right here, right now?

Group 2:

- **Headline: From trash to pristine**
 - Houghton Park unites us
 - Expanded range of activities
- **Quotes:**
 - I used to hate to come here
 - It's easier to keep your community than to try to take it back

Group 3

- **Headline: Kaisertown Shines** accompanied by a picture of people action in the park

Alignments the group created for the park included:

- Shining
- Keeping
- Pools
- Nature
- Activity: Being in action
- Strengthening wellness: Physical and mental
- Telling our history
 - Create historic landmark?
 - Interpretive signage: the future knows the past
- Medina sandstone gates may need stabilizing/rebuilding

During a third activity, the attendees explored together and were actively considering how "Fix what we have" differs from "create what could be"

- **Overarching Themes**
 - Fix infrastructure issues that are hazardous
 - Fill all ruts and low spots in the lawns, they are causing unsafe conditions

- Remove invasive species in Conservation Area
- Connect Conservation Area to rest of park in meaningful way
- Lighting throughout
- Family supporting activities/ programming
- The group explored potential to move away from the park being dominated by ballfields, and instead linking the walking loop in the active area near Spann Street with a new walking loop in the “center of park” and connecting rehabilitated paths at the historic entry. Additionally looping more formal Conservation area paths to the Spann Street area creating a series of connecting loops for walking, biking, running. These could be constructed to support City vehicle loads and not deteriorate when City vehicles need to access them
- The group also explored:
 - The idea of multi-use field areas scattered along the looping walks, supporting more diverse types of activities
 - The potential for event area in location of the existing large ball field. Event area could be for concerts, festivals, or other group activities
 - An expansion of court areas into a “multi use” court facility (questions about how nets work in that type of facility, opening up the Spann Street facing section to better function as a “Park Entry”
 - Other considerations and thoughts:
 - Reimagine or replace the pool building to better support park needs, universal access, rest rooms, and possible police substation
 - Expansion of splash pad
 - New, multi-age (toddlers to teenagers) playground experiences
 - Realignment of Spann Street parking area for better functionality, eliminating dumping access, as well as creating a Main Entry feel for the park and supporting defined entry to the Conservation Area.
 - Expansion of community gardens, better leverage water source in park, include covered seating to support activity, programming
 - Strengthen the historic Clinton Street entry:
 - Replace historic “horseshoe” shaped walk
 - Connect to proposed new park loop trail, rather than rehabilitate the historic spur walk
 - Consider additional pavilions in the area for shade, and direct “park experience” from Clinton Street
 - Original sandstone gates need to be looked at for structural stability

The have anything/fix anything conversation has continued on Facebook where one of the attendees posed the question: *if you had to choose between equipment & park improvements or park security improvements to start, which would you choose?* The consensus that emerges is that the two go hand-in-hand. Here are some highlights from that Facebook conversation (responses have been edited for clarity and brevity):

- As the park’s infrastructure is upgraded, the park will need security 24/7. This community deserves the assurances that once started, that there will be a security presence.
- Have committees explore ideas with other parks. We can establish a growth pattern that way.

- Equipment and improvements come first but security should be part of the plan. Cameras and officers. Or just workers in general. When I grew up there was always someone in the shelter house to go to if there was a problem.
- Security. otherwise the improvements will be destroyed.
- Fix things first, then when people start to come back, add security.
- Equipment & park improvements.
- Tough question. Sounds to me like everything is important. No sense in getting new stuff if it's not being secured.
- Much like the suggestions above. With 24/7 park caretakers and workers, improvements in facilities and equipment could be implemented over time.
- Equipment and improvements. The Olmsted parks illustrate what studies have also shown: parks that are used are largely not vandalized.
- No community can move forward unless you have unity.
- Park security improvements. Without better security, policing, and prosecuting vandals, any equipment improvements will just be destroyed. Identifying the people destroying the park and getting them out of the area will be the only way to improve it in the long run.
- They should put a police substation in Kaisertown at the very end of Spann Street backing up to the Conservation Area.
- Equipment and improvements.
- Making improvements are great if there are a lot of people using them ... making it safe.