

meeting summary

City of Rochester
Vacuum Oil Brownfield Opportunity Area

Plymouth Exchange (PLEX) Neighborhood Association Workshop
June 14, 2016 • 6:00 – 7:30 PM

Meeting Attendees

Project Team Representatives

- Dorraine Kirkmire, City of Rochester
- Mark Johns, Bergmann Associates
- Ted Liddell, Bergmann Associates
- Pattie Guttenplan, Bergmann Associates

Business & Community Members

- Dorothy Hall, Executive Director of PLEX Neighborhood Association
- Members of the PLEX Neighborhood Association
- Other community members
- Members of the local business community

Meeting Overview

Dorothy Hall opened the meeting at 6:00, welcomed everyone, and immediately introduced Dorraine Kirkmire and the Bergmann Team.

Dorraine gave a brief introduction to the project and commented that there were several pieces of the BOA that were currently being worked on, but that this workshop was for an update on the Parks and Open Space Plan. She then introduced Mark Johns, Ted Liddell and Pattie Guttenplan from Bergmann Associates.

Mark Johns, using the PowerPoint, reviewed the agenda for the workshop and emphasized that this was an open format and that we were there to gather information from them. The agenda items included:

- Workshop Objectives
- Related Studies
- Parks and Open Space Master Plan
- Gathering Ideas, Goals and Objectives in 4 subjects
 - Neighborhood Open Space
 - Accessibility
 - Waterfront

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- History & Interpretation

Mark briefly reviewed:

The Objectives for the Workshop:

- Give an update on specific project activities in the BOA that may impact parks and open space planning. Mark mentioned that Dorraine had just done this
- Define what a Parks and Open Space Master Plan is. Mark mentioned that this would be defined in a few minutes
- Gather feedback from the group to guide the development of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan. Mark emphasized that this workshop was a venue for ideas to be shared and gathered.

Related Studies and Efforts-Mark briefly described the following:

- CFA Floodwall Project
- Floodplain Assessment
- Transportation Analysis
- Wet Areas

Ted Liddell introduced:

What is a Parks and Open Space Master Plan?

- A framework that identifies
 - Overarching goals to support community
 - Open space and recreational needs
 - Programming and capital improvement recommendations
 - Phasing and funding strategies
- The plan will guide decision making for the parks and open space facilities in the BOA project area, supporting community growth, environmental sustainability and future development.

Gathering Ideas, Goals and Objectives in the following 4 subject areas:

- Neighborhood Open Space
 - Existing recreation facilities
 - ¼ Mile coverage from existing facilities (5-minute walk)
 - Vacant and publicly owned parcels (potentially available for recreational facilities)
 - Are there spaces within the neighborhood where additional green space is desired?
 - What types of uses are desired?
 - Community Gardens
 - Playgrounds
 - Passive Recreation
 - Others

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- Accessibility
 - Barriers
 - Physical barriers
 - Visual barriers
 - Perceived safety issues
 - Others
 - Floodplains-limits where development can happen
 - Topography-makes access challenging
 - Are there desired locations for additional connections to the waterfront?
- Waterfront-What would they like to see and where?
 - Amphitheater
 - Floating Barge
 - Kayak Launch
 - Paddle Boats
 - Paddle Boards
 - Fishing
 - Flex Open Space
 - Blueway
 - Picnic Shelter
 - Others
- History and Interpretation-What topics would they like to celebrate?
 - Camp Fitz-John Porter(Civil War era)
 - Underground Railroad
 - Riverine Ecology
 - Vacuum Oil Co.
 - Pennsylvania RR / Genesee Valley RR / Erie Canal
 - Genesee Valley Trail
 - Other suggestions

There was a very lively exchange of ideas, which started even before the whole PowerPoint was shown. The attendees did not make notes on the plan, but did talk about what they wanted to see happen.

Pattie Guttenplan documented the ideas, which are listed within the 4 subject areas as well as one other:

Neighborhood Open Space

- Provide small parks-not necessarily the Rec Center-that kids can walk to
- Question was raised as to how much land is needed and it was answered that it depended on the use-for example a playground versus a ball field
- Block off the streets in some areas and provide access from the alleys and make the old street ROW into a public space/park
- Provide more retail space like a coffee shop where people can stop and visit with friends
- Support the local business already there

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Accessibility

- Kids should be able to walk to the waterfront
- Do not like the dead end streets-need connectivity
- Riverview Place is fenced and they do not like this
- Liked the idea of extending Magnolia Street-although some had a hard time understanding how that would work.
- Would like to see Luther Circle have access to waterfront
- Provide as much access to the waterfront as possible, but not just for cars
- Provide well-lit and safe access
- Accessibility is starting-the Food Link building is being used as a distribution site for “city” bikes-a community program that provides bikes to kids so they can ride to the pool, trails, etc.

Waterfront

- Waterfront should be for the neighborhood as well as for Rochester and tourism
- Provide for commerce/businesses to bring in revenue
- Provide for family-friendly recreation-based businesses
- Provide for active and passive recreation
- Provide Flex Space for activities such as a playground/market area or picnic/gathering pavilions
- Provide for access to water-would like to see docks (recognized that a marina might be too much)
- Provide access for motorboats as well as canoes and kayaks
- Question was raised as to what a Blueway was and it was answered that it is a water trail (site is unique due to its proximity to the Erie Canal)
- Provide more retail space like a coffee shop where people can stop and visit with friends
- Support the local business already there
- Amphitheater for concerts and plays

History and Interpretation

- Interpretive Center/Museum to reflect culture and history of area
- Start this in an existing building at first-more feasible economically
- Evolution of Vacuum Oil to Mobil Oil to Exxon Mobil
- Civil War and Underground Railroad
- Industrial history-which has a public/private partnership potential with a local developer that was there.
- PLEX neighborhood history
- Native American and African American history
- 3rd Ward history
- Transportation history
- Cunningham Carriage Factory-something like this could be done here
- Interpretive signage

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- One local resident said she has found an assortment of artifacts in her yard from the Camp Fitz-John Porter historic site.
- Timeline-Dorraine suggested they start gathering this information and start to find a place to keep artifacts found.

Process and Timing

- There were a few questions about how long would this take-it was mentioned that redevelopment has been discussed for this area for over 30 years (South River Corridor Plan)
- It was explained that the process is slow because it involves state and federal funds
- Some things would be hard to fund, such as a museum
- It was explained that the master plan would have to be phased because of funding
- It was also explained that much of the development has to be done by developers-the city doesn't have the funds, so developer have to step in
- Local developer was present and is doing things in the neighborhood already (DHD?)
- Local Real Estate agent was present and also said there was interest in developing this area
- Question was raised as to if and how this planning work is being protected/documentated and it was explained that everything is on record at the city
- Suggestion was made that we should be looking to see how other communities handle the BOA process (like Pittsford) and it was answered that we have and will continue to look at other communities to see how they do things.

The team from Bergmann Associates and Dorraine Kirkmire left after the presentation.