Carroll Park Master Plan Update, Community Meeting January 21ST, 2014
Tonight

Recap of Approved Master Plan and Consensus Community Recommendations from 2005

What has been accomplished so far

Potential next phase of improvements
Near term and Long Term
(year of construction to be determined)

Discussion of alternatives
Carroll Park and Lincoln Elementary

Carroll Park - Central to the Community
Master Plan process 2005
Focus Groups and then
Community Meetings
3 Votes Held on Six Schemes

After changes and caveats Concept 1 got a wide majority
Main Issues 2005

- No N-S path
- Playground needed to be replaced
- Turnaround and playground occupied the center of the park
- Major sightline issues
- Lighting and safety
- Condition of fields
- Condition of Center
Playground in 2005 reaching the end of useful/safe life, sightline issues and lack of pathways.
Turnaround & new playground moved east, green space gained and pedestrian scaled lights introduced
Playground needed to be replaced

From meeting in 2005
Tiles have too many joints, glued to asphalt, falling apart, Mike (Grandy) prefers wood chips, 4-5 years they become soil, wood chips good but inconvenient. Roberto said “bolts break”, some plastic composite boards replaced with boards from benches. Playground reaching end of its life.
Phase 1 Construction $370,000
Recommendations carried out

- Relocated the turnaround
- Relocated and updated the playground
- Added a tree-lined path through the park to make a link for residents and to demarcate school playground from the ball fields
- Added seating
- Added lighting to improve safety
- Improved drainage under the playground
Rec center neighbors favor razing Carroll

By Holly M. Anderson
STAFF WRITER

Conceptual plans for renovating Carroll Center came together last week during a second public meeting to review options to demolish and replace the building elsewhere in the park.

A final plan is scheduled to be presented to the Park District of Oak Park Board at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 1 at the Oak Park Conservatory.

Twenty residents who attended the meeting Nov. 2 worked with John Mac Manus and Josephine Bellalta, of village-based landscape architecture firm Altamani, to narrow six concept schemes for the space at 1125 S. Kenilworth Ave. at Fillmore Street. The six concepts were based on comments from residents at an Oct. 5 public meeting.

A majority of residents in attendance liked a plan that calls for building a new center north of Lincoln School. The proposed new building could be two to three stories, matching Lincoln School's height, if located to the north of the school, Mac Manus said.

Park District Director Gary Balling said the proposed changes would take place in eight to 10 years, and would be worked out in collaboration with Lincoln School officials. Both school and park district offices would be located in the new building, under the plan.

Park Board President David Kindler said the first phase in redesigning the park could be addressing drainage issues, making the play fields more desirable and improving the surrounding area by removing remnants of a street from below the park's surface.

Residents' review

Residents on hand Nov. 2 discussed what they liked and didn't like about the proposed concepts.

One asked why the park district has designed a new center and park space before settling on what programs will be located there.

"We're looking at space allocations first," Balling said. "Then we can determine programming. We know we need more space for more active programming. We have a deficit in adult programming and need more multi-purpose spaces."

Another speaker asked why the center should be torn down.

"To me the whole idea of Oak Park is about its history," she said. "The center isn't the greatest thing, but it's not the worst either."

Mac Manus said the current center needs extensive repair and isn't large enough to provide space for new programs such as martial arts, aerobics and a gymnasium.

Park District Buildings and Grounds Director Mike Grady, who was Carroll Center director until 1987, said the 1927 building by Prairie School architect John Van Bergen has been extensively altered, and isn't sound enough for renovation.

"It's a tired building," he said.

One resident suggested the buildings original fireplace and beams be salvaged for reuse in the new building.

Marty Haedl of River Forest, an author and authority on Van Bergen, was dismayed Thursday to learn of plans for Carroll Center.

"A case can be made for preserving it."

In addition to Carroll, four other centers - Field, Anderson, Barrie and Stevenson (now demolished - also were designed by Van Bergen. The latter was later demolished.

A 2004 report by the Oak Park (Continued on page 12)
The difference in plan before and after Phase 1 construction

1. Relocated the turnaround.
2. Relocated and updated the playground.
3. Tree-lined path makes a link for residents, demarcates school playground from the ball fields, seating added, green space gained and field widened
Eventually the Center is to be replaced by a new Rec Center attached to the school and the Tot Lot moved to make a contiguous green space. But this outside current funding.
Please Note: District 97 remains interested in the New Center, however Funds are not currently available to construct the New Center.
Background: Comments by Community Members
Carroll Center First Meeting 2005

- Carroll Center: Ca. 1920's Architect John Van Bergen
- Building changed many times, not original design.
- Building has been maintained but is older and “tired”
- Small footprint, using basement for programs
- Site lines an issue-policie/school concern. Center/play ground block views
- Could make an open space that has a multi purpose green
- Not rented very often, most people do not know that you can rent the Center, residents often use River Forrest facility on Madison, the building could be rented for parties and weddings, needs additional space
- Should be open all day (as it used to be)
- Access to bathrooms during games, kids use the trees

Current Programs 2005:
- Camp Acorn
- West Suburban Rec.
- Center has programs and is staffed but not every day

What age groups use Carroll Center?
- Preschool; K-3 classes; La escuela; Leagues (fields or gym) 3rd through 8th grades
- Tues-Thur exercise adult group
Background: Comments by Community Members
Carroll Center Second Meeting 2005

- The Center had historic significance but had been altered significantly
- It reflected the aims of the social/park movement of the 20's
- At first public meeting there was no support for restoring or keeping the Center
- The Center was described as "tired" and was too small for multiple uses
- Mike Grandy spoke about how the building had changed over time and the difficulties and potential expense of restoration
- 3 residents spoke about the changes made to the building over time
- One resident spoke in favor of restoration, he later informed the meeting that he was a contractor who worked in restoration
- He stated that he believed it would be extremely expensive to restore
- The location of the building and how it divided the park was discussed
- The possibility of a new center was discussed
- The benefits of a new center connecting it to the school were discussed
- Public sentiment is involved and therefore it would be good to incorporate existing building elements into the new building (Artwork)
- Removal of the building would open up park
- Safety Issues - Parking and drop-off takes place behind the existing Center at alley. If Center moved, then alley drop off resolved
- Center would stay until new building constructed
- One resident said that the new Center should be at south end of park
Carroll Center Continued

- **More economic for PD and school to pool funds**
- **A new multi-purpose facility would be very popular**
- Gym Availability? One Entry/Shared after hours, Park/School Relationship?
- If Gym attached to school:
  - Helps with security and staffing
  - Access: Day/night?
  - Pre school & Older kids
  - Could be multi story with main user on ground floor
  - School needs space but would it be really available to the public?
- One resident in particular wanted the Center at the south so that it could be separate and bikes would be allowed. In 2005 the school did not want bikes and roller blades because of small kids
Today

The Park District is looking at the next phase of continuing improvements

The Park District has used the additional community recommendations from 2005 as a starting point

What were those recommendations?
Additional Recommendations

• Add a circulation path around the park with distance markers for school and residents.

• Add a new entry in NW corner

• Improve the field and add irrigation system

• Add "field box" storage for bases, nets, lining material etc.

• Have all baseball facilities installed to high standard of design.

• The concept of creating an outside classroom/waiting area discussed
Tonight we will look at 4 areas of the park
Recommendations: 1. Continue perimeter path & add entry and 2. Improve the field
We will show you some images and then we can discuss
Recommendations: 1. Continue perimeter path add entry
Note diagrammatic only
Periphery paths popular in Park Survey and called for by school representatives and residents
Periphery path waiting to be completed and there is already a small entry on NW corner
Space for path along west side, entry could be moved slightly to the east for safety reasons
Carroll Park and Lincoln Elementary Ballfields in the area: Largest 220 ft. smallest 160 ft.

Ballfields in the area: Largest 220 ft. smallest 160 ft.
Comments by Community Members Meeting 2005

The Field

- Used for T Ball, up to 4th and 5th grade, lighting on poles, additional lighting from school

- Areas of heavy erosion and compaction

- MH in SE of field is not a catch basin

- Flooding occurs occasionally in winter/spring when snows melt (remains of street below grade?)

- Sewer and water are down the middle of vacated street. (remains of street below grade?)

- Gary Balling (then Executive Director of the Park District) stated that “It is always good in the long run to spend money on planning and on underground utilities as a base for the future.”
Potential Improvements to the Field

- Perimeter Path
- Regrading/Resodding
- Irrigation
- New backstop and fencing
- Players benches
- Bleachers
- Park Entry Sign
- Additional lighting
- Landscaping

Issue
In 1965, part of Kenilworth was closed between Carroll Park and Lincoln School to connect school to the park. What are below grade conditions? Some of that street could still be below grade.
We have to understand underground conditions therefore PD having soil borings taken
Comments on Proposed Perimeter Path and Field Improvements
Recommendations: 3. Add an outdoor classroom/waiting area in new space by the drop-off, close to school, playground and Center. But should not block views and elements should be movable if tot lot relocated in the future.
New green space could be a continuation of the playground but drainage needs to be improved.
Idea:
Outdoor classroom and waiting area
Could use natural boulders?

Heavy but
Inexpensive

Allows for creative
free play

Natural products

Boulder Circle at Coonley School
Idea:
Incorporate historic info for kids to discover?
Idea:
Different types of seating?
Used at Irving Elementary
Comments on Outdoor Classroom/Waiting Area
The Park District purchased two properties on Kenilworth and added green space.
The concept was to purchase the remaining houses on Kenilworth if/when they come available, remove the road inside the park and create a new entry and enlarged fields.
This would provide space for more ballfields or whatever the community wants
This would provide space for more ballfields or whatever the community wants
This would provide space for more ballfields or whatever the community wants
In the meantime how will we use this green space?
Space approx. 45 ft. x 72 ft.
It could be a simple sodded area for multi-purpose use?
Potential batting cages
Comments on Open Space 4