

Father Callahan Playground Renovation  
Public Meeting #1  
November 17<sup>th</sup> 2005  
Meeting Notes

The first public meeting to discuss the renovation of the Father Callahan Playground took place on November 17<sup>th</sup> 2005 at the John M. Tobin School. The meeting began with a brief presentation by City staff on park renovations, and in particular, the roles that residents, park users, and city staff have in that process. Also presented was the criteria used by the City in developing the designs for park renovations. Residents then had an opportunity to comment on current park use, any issues or problems at the park as well as preferences for future park features and uses.

Use of playground

It was noted that both the surrounding neighborhood as well as students from the Tobin School frequently use the park. A meeting attendee that is also employed in the Tobin School stated that often there is not enough time for teachers to take their classes to the playground area during the lunch/recess period. Also, for the most part, classrooms above the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade don't use the playground during school hours. It was further mentioned by another meeting attendee that the park is in fact, very busy during afterschool hours with older kids from the afterschool programs in the school.

Meeting attendees felt the current playground's challenging structure and good flow are favorable features, and give children the opportunity to use it in many different ways. They also felt that the small house in the tot lot area is very popular. Someone stated that the paved areas at the park were good places to learn to ride a bike. Someone asked if there are other examples of parks in the City with similar levels of use that are successful. Raymond Park was noted as a seemingly successful park for its surrounding community. It was stated that the park should also feel like a part of the community, and that the social aspects of the play space are very important.

Current issues

There was some discussion on current issues with the park that meeting attendees felt should be addressed in the new design. Some concern was expressed regarding the need for better separation of the tot lot area in order to keep older kids from using it. There were several comments that the distance from the school was a negative feature, and that the playground would be used much more often if it were closer to the school building. Also, it would be easier to safeguard children in the park. Some in attendance had concerns with the proximity to Concord Avenue, which is a busy roadway. Also, the sand in the playground tends to get dirty especially near the bus stop. Someone also pointed out that foul balls from the adjacent Little League field were a problem for the playground area. A meeting attendee stated that there seemed to be a problem regarding belts getting ripped from the ADA swings installed at some of the other new parks.

There were a few questions regarding the budget for the renovated park and how long the construction is anticipated to take. Someone mentioned that a youth center had been discussed for the area previously. There was also a question about how successful the rope structures at other new parks have actually been. It was further noted that the rope structures seem popular at first, but it is possible that kids will get bored with it after mastering the structure.

#### Specific suggested improvements

Those in attendance shared some other ideas for specific features that were felt might be appropriate in a new playground at the site:

- Waterplay feature (similar to the one at Bergin Park)
- Shade features
- Swings that are strong enough to hold adults
- Energy efficient/ educational features
- Signage in many languages
- Some kind of virtual fence that people can see through and integrated into park design
- Climbing walls that could also serve as a barrier to Concord Avenue
- Train feature similar to the one at Raymond Park
- Sand chute feature
- A tag area that allows a full circuit of climbing structures and challenges
- Additional big tree
- Hard surfacing for 4 square, and jump rope
- Accessible features (example Perkins school)
- Bigger play house
- Wall for wall ball
- Box to hold suggestions / completed surveys

Staff informed those in attendance that information from the meeting would be used to help generate a concept plan for a renovated Callahan Playground. Staff also encouraged people to fill out, as well as distribute, the park questionnaire that was handed out at the beginning of the meeting. The next meeting will tentatively take place in February 2006 at which point there will be an opportunity to comment on a concept plan.