

MEMO

To: Mike Brennan & Megan Henderson, Near Southside, Inc
From: Alessandra Galletti & Priti Patel, Project for Public Spaces, Inc.
Date: March 13, 2017
Re: Summary of the 1616 Hemphill Park Workshop and Stakeholder interviews

In December 2016, Near Southside Inc. invited Project for Public Spaces, a non profit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities, to facilitate *Envision Hemphill*, a Community Visioning Workshop to spark and collect ideas for the newly purchased 1616 Hemphill Street parcel and the park area adjacent to the existing Fire Station Community Center including the existing playground. *Envision Hemphill* also included Hemphill Street Visioning Workshops that took place in the days preceding.

Over the course of two days, PPS met and interviewed key stakeholders and held a community workshop that attracted over 70 participants, including children and teenagers who devoted 2 ½ hours of their time to re-envisioning the new Hemphill Park. The diverse mix of attendees worked together to develop overall concepts for the Park.

The stakeholder interviews helped identify specific opportunities, desired uses and the character of Near Southside. While security, homelessness, noise and safety are serious concerns of the community, there is a passionate consensus that activating the new Hemphill Park will spur positive behavior in the area.

In order to shape the dialogue initiated by the workshop, and to tie the park activation to other neighborhood planning efforts, we are outlining the major themes and ideas that emerged from the meetings in the following summary report.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

A number of very important themes emerged from the stakeholder interviews and Placemaking workshop. These concepts should serve as the foundation for creating a great destination in Near Southside.

1. Identity & Image - There is a strong, largely intuitive, underlying sense that what are deeply desired in the new park are uses that address the values and needs of the Near Southside neighborhood. For example, strong support for a skate park was evident during the interviews and workshop as many participants expressed their interest in skating and emphasized the number of skaters in the surrounding neighborhoods. Other participants mentioned that the new park needs to be “a place that is innovative and makes a grand

statement.” The very popular after school program at the Community Center is at its peak and as the need for additional space grows, reconfiguring the spaces surrounding the center to better accommodate more children could spur some larger improvements. There is currently a desire to concentrate the play areas to increase visibility and thus, safety.

2. Seasonal Strategy - It was clear that the park needs to re-imagined as a major year-round destination and gathering place for the neighborhood. Ensuring that the design includes climate protection features and provides shade will create a space that can be used throughout the year.
3. Flexibility in Design - The new public space should be implemented in stages in order to flexibly serve a community undergoing significant changes. What is important is that the infrastructure is planned now to allow for growth and evolution. Water supply and electricity requirements should also be carefully examined and installed as part of the initial construction. In the interim, many of the activities within these public spaces may be temporary. For instance, temporary food options and temporary retail stalls or pop up markets were identified as programming features that could be accommodated as provisional arrangements and potentially replaced by more permanent structures as the neighborhood develops and the spaces build a constituency of supporters.
4. Attraction and Destinations - Even over the long term, there seemed to be an emerging theme of active recreation in the park, such as basketball, interactive play features, dance classes, volleyball, skating, jogging, yoga, and games. Many identified a desire for a skate park, food, and a farmers market. Uses should be triangulated, or clustered together, to create a critical mass of activity, as well as revenue for ongoing management. A Park for everyone in the community where no one use dominates. A place that is vibrant, active and relaxing.
5. Traffic, Transit & Pedestrian Access - Workshop attendees agreed that transit, walking and biking should be the primary means of reaching this destination and the basis for integrating the public spaces with surrounding areas. The upcoming restriping of Hemphill Street allows for a great opportunity to pull bicyclists and pedestrians in from the eastern edge.
6. Network of Destinations - This effort also begins a community-wide effort to identify and continue to create a system of destinations in the neighborhood using the “Power of Ten” framework. How these destinations connect to one another—“reach out like an octopus”—is essential to their collective greatness.
7. Edge Uses - The streets, sidewalks and uses surrounding the Park need to be improved upon in order for the new Hemphill Park to become a great neighborhood park. Currently, the ground floors of the adjacent buildings such as the Southside Preservation Hall building and the Community Crossroads facility do not engage with the outside. Parking lots and the backs of the convenience stores to the south also create a harsh barrier.

8. Place Management - The key to a successful place is the management. Near Southside, Inc. and the Historic Fairmount Neighborhood Association seem eager to be involved in hosting events at the new park. The Fire Station Community Center staff expressed strong interest in utilizing the new park space for outdoor classes and programs. Local skateboarders showed interest in being very involved in the maintenance of the potential skate park and teaching classes to new skaters. It will be critical for these partners to work closely with the Parks and Recreation Department to ensure successful management of programs and events as well as maintenance of design features.

The ideas above should serve as the foundation for an ongoing conversation around creating a great destination. These overarching themes, in conjunction with the specific ideas from the workshop, will also form the basis of PPS's programming and management recommendations for the new public space, to be developed in the next phase of planning and conceptual design.

Interviewees

Daniel Leach, Supervisor, Fire Station Community Center

Kaitlyn Diehl-Miller, Fire Station Community Center

Katie Crim, Fairmount resident

Joan Kline, Community advocate

David Motheral, Chair, HCTF Development Committee

James Zametz, Neighborhood leader

John Shea, local leader, skate community

Isiac Ramirez, local leader, skate community

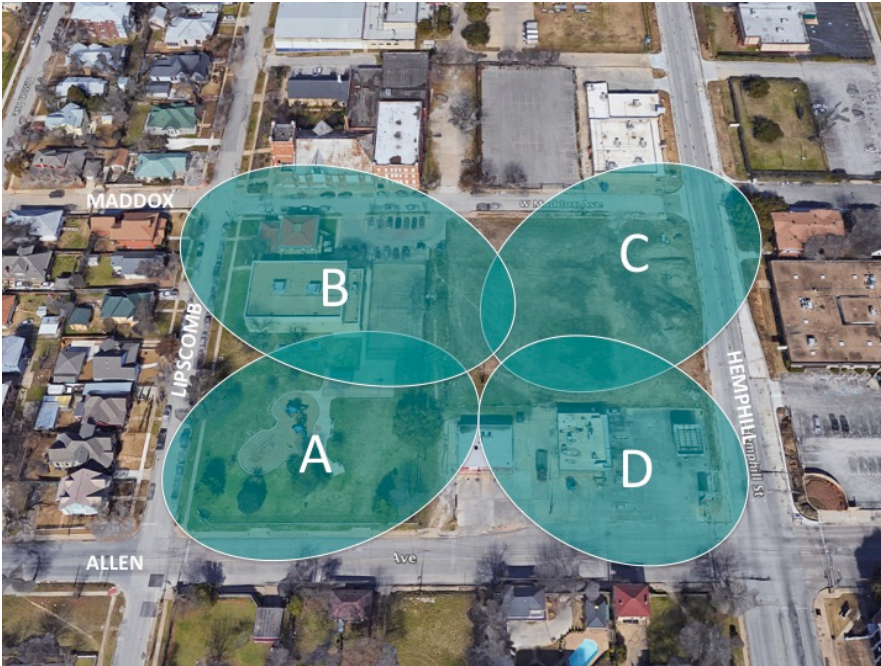
Patricia Bradley, President, Historic Fairmount Neighborhood Association

Joel McElhany, Manager, Parks & Recreation Department

PLACEMAKING WORKSHOP

December 10, 2016

PPS conducted a public workshop on Saturday, December 10th, from 10:00 to 12:30 pm. After a presentation on placemaking, the participants were divided into groups that evaluated different parts of the site:



Site A: The Southwest quadrant of the site where Lipscomb Street and W. Allen Ave intersect, an area that includes the existing playground. Private homes line the western and southern edges. Many participants requested that this remain the children's area because it is an opening to the neighborhood that will be using it.

Site B: The Northwest quadrant of the site where Lipscomb and W. Maddox intersect, includes the old fire station/Community Recreational Center, the parking lot and the tennis courts. The vacant building on the northern edge of Maddox was also considered.

Site C: The Northeast quadrant of the site where W. Maddox and Hemphill Street intersect, encompasses the newly purchased parcel. The northern edge faces a large parking lot and Community Crossroads, a religious organization housed in a one-story box building. A newly renovated 2-story apartment building and JPS Healthcare facilities create the eastern edge. The restriping along Hemphill Street will offer a new opportunity to draw pedestrians and bicyclists to the park.

Site D: The Southeast quadrant where W. Allen and Hemphill Street meet, includes the A&A Food Mart, 7-Eleven and gas station as well as a bus stop on Hemphill. This corner faces private homes on the southern edge and the JPS parking lot to the east.

IDEAS FOR THE ENTIRE SITE

The groups brainstormed ideas for their site as well as the park as a whole and there were many that were mentioned by more than one group. Here is a summary of those suggestions:

ACCESS & LINKAGES

A successful public space is easy to get to and through; it is visible both from a distance and up close. The edges of a space are important, as well; for instance, a row of shops along a street is more interesting and generally safer to walk by than a blank wall or empty lot. Accessible spaces have short-term and long-term parking options, are conveniently reached via public transit, and support walking and biking.

At the workshop, people generally felt that connections to the surrounding areas should be strongly considered for many modes of travel, including wheelchairs and bicycles. Good accessibility and public transit modes would eliminate the overuse of cars and parking. Community Center drop-off and pick-up causes congestion at times along Lipscomb Street and was mentioned as a concern. The following specific ideas came forth during the workshop to improve access to the space.

- **Improve 7-Eleven building and integrate it with the park.** The long term repurposing of the 7-Eleven would provide an opportunity to bring positivity on the block rather than fencing it off. Some participants suggested locating the skate park closer to the 7-11 area to deter negative activity there by bringing “eyes on the street.”
- **Create an entrance to the park from the Hemphill and Maddox intersection.** Use natural rocks or sculptural archways to highlight entrances and welcome visitors to the park. An entry to a walking/running path circulating through the park could encourage jogging and exercise.
- **Provide functional wayfinding signage. Informational signage could tell the story about what is happening on the block.** Historical informational signs can tell the story of the neighborhood
- **Create a walking/bike loop from Hemphill to draw bicyclists and pedestrians in and tie the whole park together.** The planned restriping of Hemphill Street provides a great opportunity to highlight the new Hemphill Park as a major destination in Near Southside. A bike path that draws riders in from the street and pedestrians in from the sidewalks could serve local runners and joggers as well. Bike racks should be located nearby.
- **Remove the fence that is currently acting as a barrier.** Creating more permeability through the park will make it more inviting to all.
- **Remove parking on residential side.**

USES & ACTIVITIES

Having something to do gives people a reason to come to a place—and to return again and again. When there is nothing to do, a space will remain empty, which can lead to other problems. In planning for uses and activities, it is important to consider a wide range of activities: for men and women, people of different ages, different times of day, week and year, and for people alone as well as in groups. Community events such as outdoor movies that are already being projected on the southwestern wall of the Community Center will engage the surrounding neighbors and bring families to the park. Referring to the Park and Recreation Department Needs Assessment performed in 2013 will further help evaluate the popularity of certain ideas.

Below are the desired uses and activities for the park as mentioned during the brainstorming session:

- Permanent skate park
- BMX pump track
- Walking, jogging trail
- Outdoor movies
- Farmers market
- Dog run/park
- Flexible splash pad and play area
- Creative spaces – art wall, murals, games
- Art wall, currently movie screen
- Pool
- Water fountain/feature, splash pad
- Full court basketball
- Climbing wall, rock wall
- Dance pavilions on courts
- Pop up vendors
- Learning education tools – plants, trees
- Educational labs – rain water collection, flora/fauna
- Performances
- Beach volleyball
- Community garden
- A cooking area
- Keep tennis court, currently used
- Exercise stations – pull up bars, running path, obstacle course
- Reading areas, chess tables, games
- Lawn games
- Classes (biking, skating, music, ecological methods, etc.)
- Yoga
- Zen space
- Food vendors in alley
- Attractive passive areas
- Play for all ages (slides, swings, jump pads, see saw)

COMFORT & IMAGE

Whether a space is comfortable and conveys a positive image is key to its success. Comfort includes perceptions about safety, cleanliness, and the availability of places to sit—the importance of giving people the choice to sit where they want is generally underestimated. Creating a positive image can require keeping a place clean and well-maintained, as well as fostering a sense of identity. Many participants expressed their desire for the park to be open to all and be a park without boundaries so that activities can be seen and felt from the edges and even the streets that extend outward.

Reorient the Community Center outward so that the entrances are more inviting. By animating the ground floor uses of the existing structure and ensuring a multiuse facility, with public restrooms even, the Center can become an anchor within the park and brand itself as a hub for activities and information. Creating visibility from the Community Center to the play areas will allow more eyes on the space and provide a sense of safety for the children.

Provide shade opportunities to allow for comfortable seating and gathering areas.

Provide seating options in different areas as well as moveable chairs and tables that allow for a flexible space that can transform into multiple spaces for different uses.

The workshop participants identified a number of elements that will help create a unique and welcoming identity for the new public space. These are listed below under the following categories: amenities, landscaping, and art/aesthetics.

Amenities

Whether temporary or permanent, a good amenity will help establish a convivial setting for social interaction. For example, lighting can strengthen the place's identity while highlighting specific activities, entrances, or pathways.

The following amenities were identified to make the spaces comfortable and to allow for their use during different times of the day and year and in various weather conditions. These amenities support the activities that will take place in the park and should be considered now in the design phase. The amenities that need to be lent out or rented would be the responsibility of the management entity.

Picnic tables

Hammocks for rental

Shade structures

Gazebos – Trinity Park as a reference, create natural meeting spaces

Moveable chairs and tables

Awnings – water collection system – sustainability

Multipurpose poles

Gaming tables

Trash cans, recycling

Large game templates

Food trucks
Outdoor sinks
Exercise bars

Landscaping Comments

Buffer play area
Keep existing trees and add more
Curvilinear design
Landscaping!
Trees and shade
Remove fence between food mart
Noise buffer, consideration
Trees/landscaping
Walkway that connect all major points/activity centers
Hills

Art/Aesthetics Comments

Murals for buildings
Intersection – public art
Lighting
Improve lighting, Lighting! At night, Lighting to deter the negative activity
Lighting – it's too dark

SOCIABILITY

When people see friends, meet and greet their neighbors, and feel comfortable interacting with strangers, they tend to feel a stronger sense of place and attachment to their community—and to the place that fosters these types of social activities. The workshop participants identified the following opportunities for achieving this level of sociability in the new public space.

People want a place to gather day and night that appeals to a wide range of demographics. By making these spaces accessible everyday and programming evening and nighttime events, professionals, families, tourists, seniors, and even transients can share the space. Engaging the art community can further invoke public and regional interest by providing the community with attractions that can generate economic and cultural growth.

Welcome dogs into the public spaces, even going so far as to provide a leash-free dog zone, to expand the set of people who frequent this area.

Provide family-oriented programming that encourages kids to engage and be involved.

Provide places to gather for community events

Partner with local organizations, shops, talents to build programming into the daily uses of the park. During the workshop, participants identified the following partnerships to foster their ideas and help implement them:

Folklore Farms

Ryan Place

NSI

JPS

7-Eleven

Elementary school gardening clubs

SPA skateparks

Local pro shop

Local musicians/artists

Preservation Hall – next door

Design competitions

DeZavala Elementary

Skin cancer foundation – grants

Horticultural

TCU

MasterGardens

Rose Chapel (swing dance)

City Forestry Dept

Private funds