

Meeting Notes: Vilas Park Master Plan – Resident Resource Group

Attendees: Ann Rivlin, Linda Feiler, Keith Feiler, Maia Chen, Tag Evers, Ben Yahr, Wendy Fearnside, Jim Lorman, Ann Freiwald, Kate Kane, Dan Schmitt, Marcus Pearson, Melissa Huggins

Date: Wednesday, November 6th, 2019

Location: Barriques on Monroe

1. Introductions

- Resident Resource Group members, Parks' Staff, and the consultant team introduced themselves.

2. Project Overview (See presentation)

- Melissa Huggins, Urban Assets, provided an overview of the project scope and timeline.
- Dan Williams, MSA, presented information on the history of Vilas Park.
- Marcus Pearson, Urban Assets, presented information input gathered from the community to date.

3. Discussion

- Why aren't we counting wildlife as well?
 - Birding as a junction between humans and nature.
 - Need to study impact of construction on amphibians and stormwater.
 - Friends of Lake Wingra work.
 - Network with additional groups already doing this work.
 - Impact study necessary? Part conversation moving forward.
- Consider Neighborhood House for working with youth.
- Question about what streets have been included in parking count. Include parking on Orchard?
 - Need to include school bus traffic/parking..
- Make sure you hit every zone for intercept interviews, not just playgrounds.
 - Targeting people who appear open to take the time to answer questions.
- Seems like a lot of the park is sports fields. If nature is most important thing, then will need to change playing fields.
 - Field condition is too soggy to book for soccer etc. and is not on Park's reservation list.
 - Walkway along zoo is muddy and flooded.
- Wendy Fearnside shared her analysis of the results from first public meeting:
 - Focus on nature
 - Open views
 - Trees
 - Natural beauty
 - Vilas is a unique park
 - Regional park
- How do we handle the trade-offs?
 - Should we do new survey to get people's trade-offs?
 - Exercise for next meeting and neighborhood meeting?
- There have not been enough idea generation for good ideas.
 - Jim Lorman suggested that World café is a good exercise to generate ideas.
 - Focus groups are generating new ideas.
 - More focus groups from neighborhood.
- Lots of diversity in Vilas Park. Different uses by different ethnic groups.
- Accessing existing groups – Kwanza, Freedom Inc (Pantry, Hmong leaders).
 - Need to reach out to youth. West HS groups, student groups, Wright Middle School (chemistry, social sciences groups).
- Ben Yahr from Friends of Lake Wingra shared that the youth event held earlier in the year was very successful.

- Wendy Fearnside from Vilas Neighborhood Association shared some recommendations developed in collaboration with other VNA members, Ann Rivlin and Lee Lazar. They do not represent a formal position on behalf of VNA.
 - Vilas Park should be:
 - Attractive to many different kinds of people.
 - Welcoming to out-of-towners.
 - Kid- friendly.
 - Retain the essential character of the park.
 - Open space, views, and access to nature.
 - Flexible space, that allows for a variety of uses on the same land.
 - Suitable for recreation that does not require permanent structures that prevent or interfere with other uses.
 - Upgrade and improve current space and facilities.
 - Drain or fill frequently flooded or wet areas.
 - Keep bathrooms clean, open and available for use.
 - Upgrade the playground equipment.
 - Maintain or improve existing facilities (e.g., tennis courts and shelter/warming hut)
 - Avoid adding to the number of permanent structures, with the possible exception of new bathrooms. Difficulty in accessing bathrooms is a problem, especially for families with young children using the playgrounds.

4. Next Steps

- Due to the meandering nature of the above discussion, the questions included in the agenda will be sent to RRG members and the neighborhood associations to generate additional ideas for the master plan.
- Next meeting of the RRG will be scheduled using a Doodle Poll.

Tasks:

- Send community engagement tools to RRG.
- Send link for survey to:
 - Maia
 - Tag
- Provide more legible milestone timeline.
- Provide tool for neighborhood associations to generate ideas.