

## BROOKS LANDING – PHASE II PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - MEETING #2  
NOVEMBER 12, 2009 – GENESEE WATERWAYS CENTER

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### ATTENDANCE

Members of the CAC met on Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>. The following project team and CAC members were in attendance:

- Sheila Bazil
- Sally Steinwachs
- Doris Meadows
- John DeMott
- John Curran
- Bill Nichthausen
- Mary Larkin
- Linford Hamilton
- Jeff Mroczek - City of Rochester
- Allen Topolski, artist/UofR
- Dennis Kennelly - FRA
- Tara Boggio - FRA
- Anthony Bellomo - FRA

### I. INTRODUCTIONS/OVERVIEW

Jeff Mroczek, landscape architect and project manager from the City of Rochester, started the meeting by leading introductions, reiterating how the project team was chosen, and also what the role of CAC is. All present then introduced themselves.

Jeff then provided a brief overview of the project objectives, scope, funding sources and process. Tara Boggio from FRA directed people to the meeting minutes from the July CAC meeting for more information. Jeff reviewed the project as follows:

#### Objectives

- Enhance Brooks Landing public open space, Genesee Valley Park, waterfront
- Complement ongoing development
- Olmsted park design – respect history, enhance / restore Olmsted park features if so desired; mitigate impacts
- Regional trail connections – connect the neighborhood and the park to larger trail network
- Provide Signage – Way-finding, History
- Provide links and smooth transitions between the neighborhood, private development, University, the river waterfront
- Public access improvements – inviting; providing destination points
- Gateway to the park from all points - neighborhood, hotel, waterfront
- Public art – at focal-points - neighborhood, park and waterfront and/or integrated into park

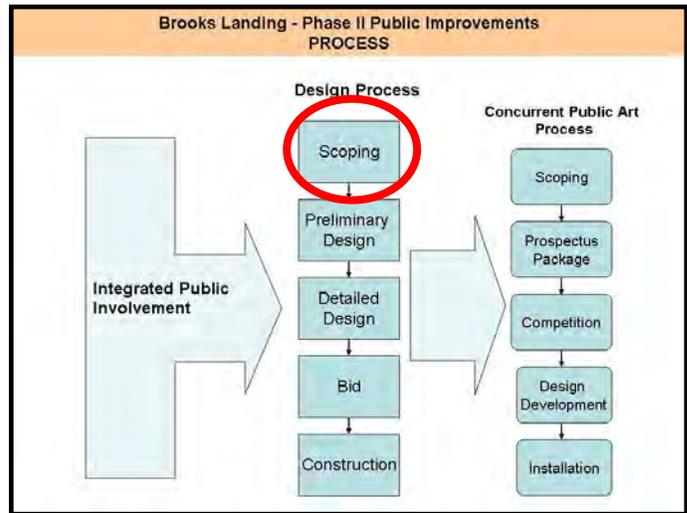
#### Scope

- Roadway
  - Park Road Design
  - Create gateway at intersection w/Elmwood Avenue
  - Enhance safety, Lighting
  - Provide pedestrian access, and interconnection with park
  - Address hotel area connections with the park and the waterfront

- Trails
  - Link to River-way Trail & GVP Ice arena
  - RR / Canal corridor trail link to existing trails
  - Connections to neighborhood
  - Existing Trail Enhancement
- Park
  - Viewsheds of Waterfront, Park – Natural / History / Cultural
  - History – uncover several layers of area history including Olmsted design; build upon work completed to date
  - Plantings – existing and proposed
  - Signage – way-finding, interpretative, history
  - Parking
- Public art
  - assist the City and the selection committee in establishing and implementing the public art program
  - Identify Focal Point Locations – Neighborhood, Park Users, River
  - Site lines and view sheds – coordinated with Design
- Public participation
  - continue the decade-long efforts with a solid public informational program
- Environmental
  - provide appropriate testing and remediation plan
- Regulatory Approvals
  - provide assistance and documentation to ensure that the requirements of all applicable laws, polices and procedures are met (state, local, federal)
- Construction Administration and supervision

**II. WHERE WE ARE TO DATE**

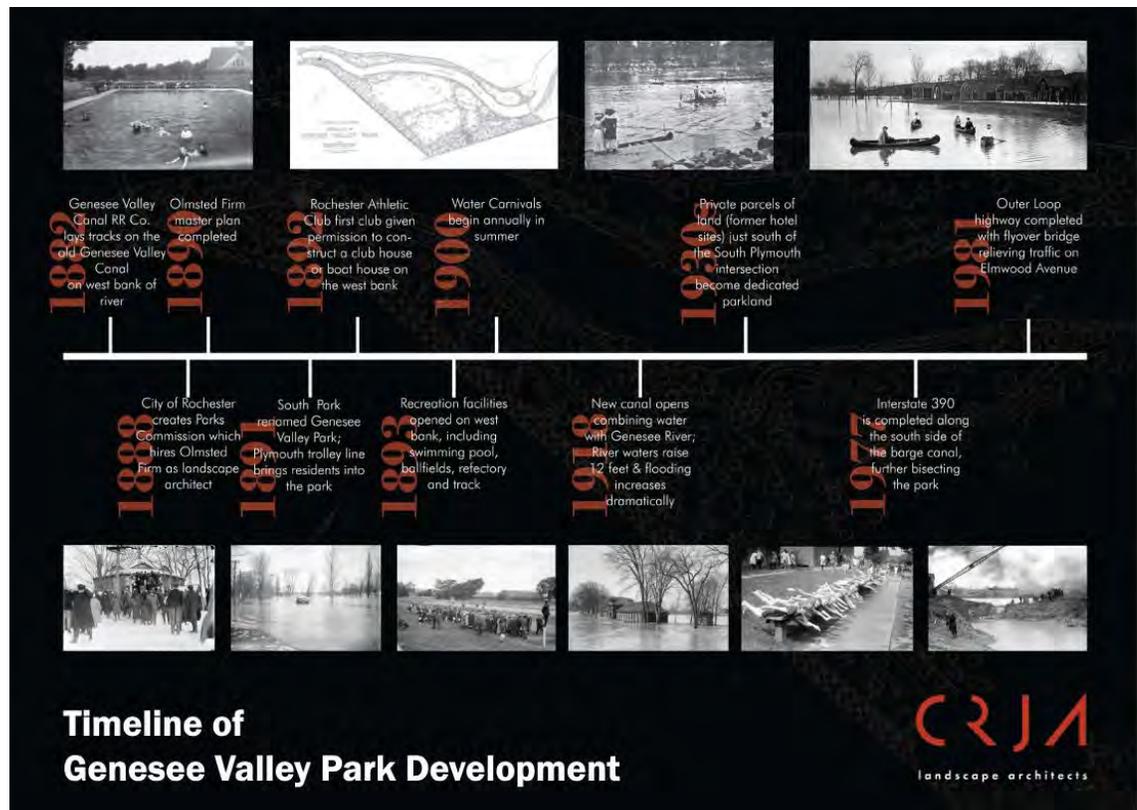
Jeff reviewed the concurrent design and public art processes, noting that we are still in the Scoping Phase, and as we move through the process the park improvements will become more refined. For this Scoping Phase we are concentrating on site analysis and public input that leads to the development of three alternatives, which will be at a concept level. Once a preferred alternative is chosen, the concept is further detailed during preliminary design, and finalized during detailed design, with construction drawings produced.



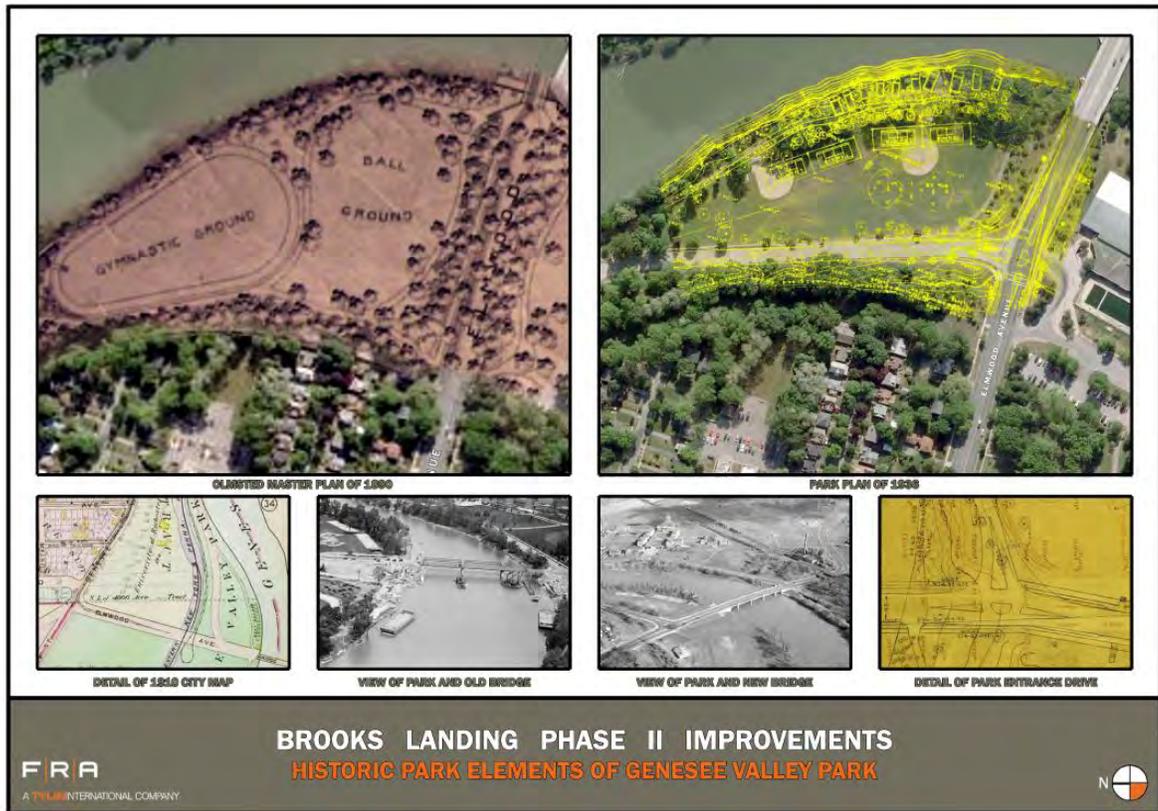
The art process has not formally kicked off yet but will be soon with the development of an Art Advisory Committee.

**III. SITE ANALYSIS**

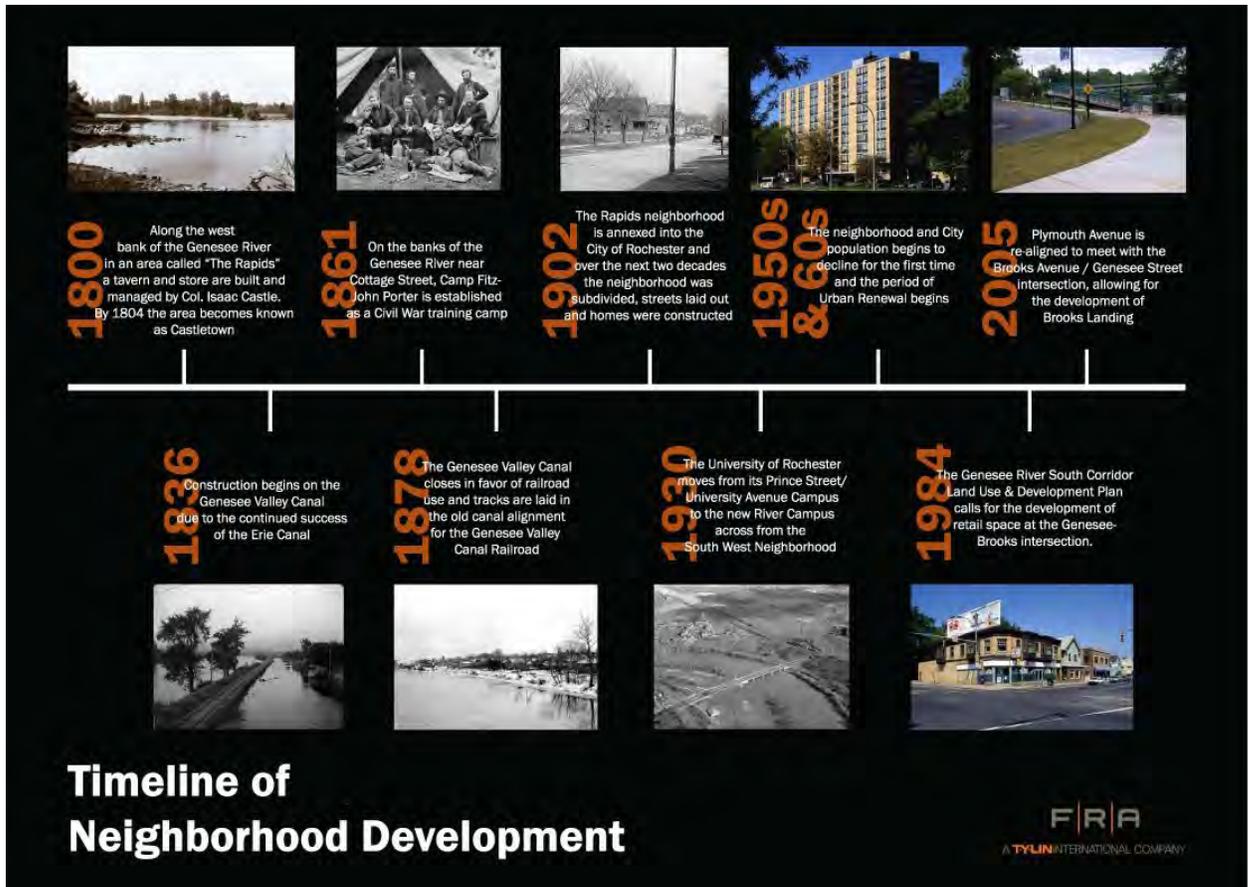
**A. HISTORICAL TIMELINE (PARK AND NEIGHBORHOOD)**



Anthony Bellomo from FRA provided an overview of the history of the park and the surrounding neighborhood. Given the rich history of the area, identifying the layers is important for incorporating historical elements into the park improvements. Walking the CAC through the timeline boards, Anthony discussed how the park was master planned by Olmsted in 1890, however much of the plan was not implemented until approximately 1913. The 1930's saw the dedication of the parkland, which was then bisected during the construction of I-390 in the 1970's. When overlaying the Olmstead Park Plan of 1936 (this is more a detailed site plan that is considered to be more of an "as built") with what exists today, areas of trees that may have been existing during the Olmsted Plan, or planted as a result, can be seen. The road alignment and site amenities such as the ball fields can also be seen.



The development of the neighborhood surrounding the present Genesee Valley Park went through several largely transportation-inspired eras including the canal period of the early 1800's; the introduction of the railroad in the late 1800's; the annexation of the neighborhood into the City of Rochester in 1902; the siting of the University of Rochester at its current location in the 1930's; the transitional time of urban renewal in the 1950's and 1960's; and the realignment of Plymouth Avenue in 2005, which allowed for the development of the Staybridge Suites Hotel, which was originally conceptualized in 1984.



### B. CAC SITE TOUR FEEDBACK (ANALYSIS OF CONDITION/ TREATMENT/ PRIORITIES)

Over 20 people took the time to walk the site and complete the site analysis form. Many were CAC members, and others were from the adjacent neighborhood. There were several common themes and ideas expressed, including:

- Improve visibility at underpass (area 1)
- Rehab and enhance the overlook (area 2)
- Address drainage issues and overall field use (area 3)
- Create a more park-like road (area 4)
- Preserve the "grove of trees" (area 5)
- Improve look and function of the interface with private development (area 6)
- Opportunity for public art (area 7)
- Keep upper greenspace as natural as possible (area 8)
- Create park gateway/entry feature (area 9)

A summary graphic was reviewed showing how each area was classified by the majority. Only area 2, the outlook area, was deemed to be in "POOR" condition, with all others in fair to good condition. No areas were thought to be of a "LOW" priority, all were either a medium or high priority. The grove of trees, the upper green space, the pedestrian

crossing at Elmwood and the potential public art space at Plymouth were classified as being appropriate for “PRESERVATION” while the remaining areas were noted as needing to be rehabbed or changed.



#### IV. PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF ALTERNATIVES

After discussing the current site assessments, the group discussed elements that could make up the alternatives. Of primary discussion were the future treatment of the park road, and how it would or would not connect to the private development, trail extension along the former rail line, and connections to the neighborhood streets.

##### Park Road/Private Development Connection

The park road/private development connection is one of the more difficult issues to deal with on this project. The easement through the hotel/development site was initially granted at the request of the neighborhood among concerns of losing the direct connection of S. Plymouth Avenue. As part of the approval process the following stipulation was placed on the connection:

*"Non-park uses of South Plymouth Avenue south of the hotel site will be discouraged. There will be no hotel signage allowed at either Elmwood Avenue or the driveway off the cul-de-sac. The park road will be signed "No through traffic" as*

*additional deterrent to cut-through traffic. In addition the hotel operators and the University of Rochester will be instructed to utilize only the major travel routes when giving directions to potential patrons."*

Since establishment of the temporary connection the City has received complaints from the public and the hotel on excessive speeding through the connection and numerous City personnel have observed hotel and UofR shuttle vans using the connection in violation of the above stipulation.

It was also noted at the meeting that local residents living on the streets above the park (Arvine Heights, Arvine Park, Oak Hill View, Grandview Terrace) often have a very difficult time turning south onto Genesee Street, across two lanes of traffic, due to the increased traffic since S. Plymouth was terminated. It is often easier to go south, or the only way, by turning north onto Genesee then entering the hotel and using the connection to S. Plymouth through the park. If the proposed student housing and restaurant are approved and constructed, this condition will likely worsen.

#### Former Railroad Line

While there was some initial hesitation to formalizing a trail through this corridor everyone eventually agreed that it could be a valuable asset. If it were to happen the trail should be of a secondary, lower scale character. This trail should be differentiated from the more active Genesee Riverway Trail by altering the scale, materials, and flow of the trail. It was also noted that the original (unrealized) Olmsted plan had numerous looping trails throughout the park including one that appears to be in this area.

#### Connection To Neighborhood Streets

Another discussion point was whether to create connections from the dead end streets to the park with lighting, stairs, and/or defined pathways. Most felt that the southern streets like Arvine Heights would be the most natural ones for these improvements, while the more northern streets such as Grandview Terrace are not used as frequently for connection between the neighborhood and the park.

## V. ART COMMITTEE

Allen Topolski discussed his role in the project. He will help develop and guide the art process, NOT pick the artists or the art. He has been involved in creating art, judging art works, and leading art competitions in the past. Allen will assist the City and the Art Advisory Committee (AAC) in the development of the process, scope and administration of the public art competition.

Allen discussed his idea for a two-step selection process (1) artist call and (2) jury selection that would result in the installation of site-specific public art that traverses the site at Brooks Landing, furthers development efforts in the neighborhood, and provides links and smooth transitions between the 19th Ward Neighborhood, the adjacent park, the river waterfront, and private development.

Allen spoke about how the artwork needs to be a permanent fixed asset. The artwork will be owned and maintained by the City for the long term and the City will make the ultimate decision

on the final art work. It will be based upon the Art Advisory Committees recommendations but will also need to take into account the public health, safety and welfare. Allen noted that some art may be substantial pieces on display, while other pieces may be functional parts of the park amenities such as benches, or railings.

Those CAC members in attendance felt more favorable to the art being a discovery process that is experienced as you traverse the park, rather than more formal monumental art.

People cannot serve on the AAC and submit work for consideration in the competition due to conflict of interest. Jeff will be issuing a call for nominations, after the first of the year, to begin the establishment of the Art Advisory Council. Anyone wishing to be on the Art Advisory Council, or to nominate someone to sit on the council, will be able to submit for consideration.

## **VI. NEXT CAC MEETING**

Jeff closed by noting that at the next meeting the consultant team will present a series of alternatives for the critical design elements. One alternative for each design element must be the “null” (which evaluates the outcome of no improvements) alternate. At a minimum, alternatives, and corresponding estimates of probable costs, shall be developed for the following critical design elements:

- i. Park roadway including road alignment and character, vehicular turn-around, Elmwood Avenue gateway and intersection and link to the public access easement through the hotel development;
- ii. Trail including existing trail upgrades, loop trail/exercise circuit, connection to GVP ice rink and neighborhood connections;
- iii. Park landscape including vegetation and viewshed management, historic landscape treatment, utilities, accessibility, and typical furnishings;
- iv. Signage including historic / interpretive, park & trail wayfinding and park identification, and;
- v. Parking to provide for daily use and special event (overflow) needs.

## **VII. FIRST PUBLIC MEETING**

With CAC comments received and incorporated the next step would be to conduct a public meeting. This meeting would be to inform the public of the projects scope and schedule and shall discuss the process involved throughout the project life. We will also attempt to determine the problems, needs, and priorities of the attendees and shall solicit suggested methods of remedying their problems within the context of the project scope. We shall also solicit input into the proposed alternatives.

## VIII. END OF SCOPING PHASE

Once CAC and public meeting comments are addressed and incorporated into the alternatives, a Project Scoping Report will be developed and submitted to the NYSDOT for review and approval. The Project Scoping Report will present the alternatives and recommend which are feasible and should be carried into the Preliminary Design Phase. Once NYSDOT approval is received the Preliminary Design Phase can begin.

## IX. QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Questions and comments posed by CAC members:

*Is the funding being tracked by what it is spent on? For example, is the money allocated for designing and implementing public art being followed to ensure it is truly being spend on the art aspects?* Yes, the City is tracking the money by category, and assured that the funds allocated for art, will be spent on art.

*Is there a historian on the team?* No, there is not a historian on the team, however Carol R. Johnson are Olmsted experts, and the FRA team members have been conducting extensive research on the history of the neighborhood including referencing the Cultural Resource Report that was complete for the hotel project and the first phase of the public improvements. In addition, the City archives have been researched and Patricia Jackson provided some background information on the neighborhood history. Doris Meadows noted that she had written a booklet in 1984 on the neighborhood history for the Southwest Centennial celebration which will be reviewed and integrated into the process.

*Will you be recreating marshes along the river?* Not intended at this time. We are trying to minimize impact to the waterway. There may be opportunities to improve views to the water that would involve vegetation management – removal of obstructing and/or non-native vegetation and/or installation of native species.

*Do we have to recreate the Olmsted elements exactly?* Not necessarily. There may be opportunities to replicate some of the features while other times the “intent” will just be represented. The NYS Historic Preservation Office will be involved in the process to provide direction and oversight regarding historical significance, impacts (negative or positive) to significant elements, and mitigation measures to deal with negative impacts.

*Are multi-use fields (for soccer, ultimate Frisbee, etc) a possibility?* Yes, that is a possibility that will be explored.

*UofR student and staff parking issue – concern over parking deficit on campus that is causing many students, and possibly some staff, to park on side streets. Worried that if we formalize parking areas with the park that it will become a bigger issue.* Allen noted that the University has issued notices to all staff regarding parking and consequences if staff is caught parking in non-designated places. CAC members noted it was more students than staff and that they have

been calling the police when people seem to be parking illegally. This is an issue that is difficult to address through design. If we provide parking it is largely an enforcement issue to prevent UofR staff and students, as well as non-park users, from utilizing it in a manner inconsistent with the park.

*PLEX is working on establishing a "History Walk" starting with the Genesee Valley Canal route at Elmwood Avenue and heading north to the Susan B Anthony neighborhood. John Curran discussed his interest in seeing the artwork reflect the early neighborhood history with interpretive elements that are coordinated with the rest of the "History Walk". This idea is building off the successful "Art Walk" in the University Avenue neighborhood. This concept will be further explored in both the site design and public art component. An image of a proposed corridor is attached, as provided by John Curran.*

The above represents my recollection of the meeting. If there are any errors or omissions please contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

*Jeffery J. Mroczek, R.L.A. / Landscape Architect*

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