



City of Rochester

Vacuum Oil BOA River Trail

Meeting with PLEX Neighborhood Association

October 16, 2022 – On Site / Carlson Commons

MEETING SUMMARY

Attendees

Dorothy Hall - PLEX

Dorian Hall - PLEX

Donna Hodgins - PLEX

Gwendolyn Kelly - PLEX

Kevin Lester – PLEX

Patricia Neal - PLEX

Jeff Mroczek – City of Rochester

Tyler Burke – City of Rochester

Zak Steele – Sue Steele Landscape Architecture

Ted Liddell - Bergmann

Sit Down Meeting & Site Visit

Part 1 of the meeting took place at Carlson Commons with members from the PLEX Neighborhood Association and project team members from the City of Rochester, Sue Steele Landscape Architecture and Bergmann, and was followed by a site visit to PLEX Park. Below are the key takeaways from the meeting:

- Dorian Hall (PLEX) stated the community wants to make sure available project dollars are being used for the purpose of making the park space usable.
 - Tyler Burke (City of Rochester) stated the intent of this project is to provide an ADA accessible path through PLEX Park between South Plymouth Avenue and Exchange Street. This project will accomplish Phase 1 of the neighborhood driven 2015 PLEX Park Master Plan and will set the stage for future improvements and programming as funding becomes available.
 - Safety is the number one priority. Making sure the park is open and visible will be key to enhancing the sense of safety. The design team explained that this will be accomplished through select tree removals, pruning select trees to remain, removal of brush along
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property edges, removal of fence between park and former fire station site, and proper trail alignment.

- PLEX expressed concern regarding lack of park maintenance. They suggested making everything as low maintenance as possible.
- The 2015 master plan showed shade structures to be used throughout the park instead of trees to minimize leaf cleanup.
- Gwendolyn Kelly (PLEX) stated that foliage is important in the park, it's what makes the space a park.
- If new trees are proposed in the park, they should be minimal and kept to the edges of the park to keep site lines open between South Plymouth Ave and Exchange Street.
- Signage for the park is key. It can be difficult for people to find the park, especially for events. Signage is desired on both the South Plymouth Ave and Exchange Street sides of the park. Jeff Mroczek stated the City is working on new park sign standards and he will request that DRHS provide signage at this park when the new signs are being installed.
- Concern over the runoff from the manufacturing facility on the north side of the park being contaminated. Tyler Burke stated the runoff appears to be from roof drainage and does not visibly look contaminated. A Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment will be done in the park over the next few months, which will investigate for the presence of pollutants and ground contamination. The findings will be used to determine if any remediation is required prior to construction of the park improvements.
- The former fire station lot is desired for parking. The current vacant lot has been used in the past for event parking. Dorian Hall stated providing parking will be critical to the success of the park. Dorian Hall asked if the current paved areas could be used for parking. Use of the existing pavement for occasional event parking, as was done during the most recent event, is a workable solution for now.
- Tyler Burke explained that if the former fire station lot is to be made a formalized public parking lot, it will have to be done to city code and meet the necessary requirements for drive aisles, parking spot sizes and accessible parking. The lot will also need to be accessible to users of all abilities. The current site does not meet those requirements.
- Dorian Hall stated the concept plans for the parking lot provided by the City (7 parking spaces, 1 ADA space, 1 ADA loading zone) did not offer enough parking spaces. The layout should be looked at to maximize the number of parking spaces while still providing programmable areas identified in the 2015 master plan.
- There was a conversation on site about the idea of filling in the park space, to level the site and provide more usable space. Filling in the site would require the removal of all the trees and the amount of fill needed for the site would be cost prohibitive.
- If the wall between the park and former fire station property is to remain in the short term, ADA access at a couple points through the wall should be considered between the fire station parcel and the park. An additional option would be to grade soil up against the wall to provide an even grade from top of wall to the interior of the park space.
- Jeff Mroczek /Tyler Burke will as Parks Operations if they have the capacity to remove the existing fence that is on the wall and clear the undergrowth. The two large mature trees will remain.



- In the 2015 master plan, it was intended the wall of the neighboring manufacturing facility on the northeast side of the park would be used for viewing movies and a paved area in front of the wall provided for amphitheater type seating. During the field walk, the idea was discussed to possibly to set up a portable screen on the southwest side of the park adjacent to the former fire station property and use the existing grade that slopes up from the trail to the manufacturing facility as the informal amphitheater seating.
- At the southern end of the site, it was discussed if the trail entrance shown in Concept B could be moved closer to the southern property line. This would help clean up the scrubby area along the southern property line and allow for a sledding hill into the park.
- Along the southern property line, cleaning up the scrubby understory plant growth was discussed to provide open views into and out of the park. To provide separation between the park and the back yards of the homes on Edith Street, some form of screening was desired. The design team will explore cost-effective options to include in the Phase I project, including installing privacy slats in the existing fence.
- Amenities in the park were discussed. Having adult fitness equipment throughout the park is important to the community. Other amenities including benches, picnic tables and grills are desired. Jeff Mroczek will talk with City Parks staff to see if they have any picnic tables and/or grills that could be installed in the park.
- Dorian Hall mentioned Senator Kirsten Gillibrand pledged \$100,000 to be used in PLEX Park for amenities. When the money is available PLEX and the City will need to coordinate how best to implement the funding.
- Dorian Hall mentioned that there had been discussions with past City Administrations about selling/donating the park to the PLEX Neighborhood Group. Jeff mentioned that this would be considered parkland alienation under NYS law and require City approval (Administration and Council) as well as that of the NYS Legislature. This is very unlikely to be approved by the City or NYS.

Next Steps

- City of Rochester agreed to develop a cost estimate for a potential parking lot on the former fire station property. Based upon current project bid pricing, the parking improvements as shown on the City provided sketch and as marked out in the field (7 parking spaces, 1 ADA space, 1 ADA loading zone), would cost approximately \$195,000 to construct. At this price the current project cannot afford to construct the trail improvements as shown on Trail Route Concept B (the favored alternative) AND the parking lot. The design team recommends that the parking lot be delayed to a future phase so that the entirety of the Trail Route Concept B can be implemented including: tree and brush removals and trimming; new fully accessible path; correcting and updating drainage infrastructure; lighting improvements; and, amenities and plantings.
- The City will coordinate with Dorian Hall on a date for an official public meeting for the project. It is desired to have the meeting in November/December.