

**STAFF SUMMARY
CITY OF MINNETONKA
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
MONDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2009
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Council Present: Dick Allendorf, Bob Ellingson, Amber Greves, James Hiller, Brad Wiersum, and Mayor Terry Schneider. Tony Wagner was excused.

Staff: GERALYN BARONE, Julie Wischnack, Perry Vetter and Elise Durbin

Others: Bob Kost, Chris Behringer, Linda Carlson, Dale Riley, and Terry Egge

1. Glen Lake Plaza

Schneider welcomed the group and said the point of this study session was not to make decisions on the Glen Lake plaza, but to look at goals and objectives of what this space should look like and then turn it back to the design. He said once the design is done it will be put on a city council agenda where the community will get a chance to provide input.

Introductions were done by those participating.

SEH consultant Bob Kost reviewed the site including existing neighborhood and site conditions. He provided context about the site, including that it receives a large swing of daily sun, has a large amount of vegetation which has been looked at by the city forester and it has a busy roadway that it abuts. He said the pending redevelopment is likely to create more activity and more users. He also noted it connects to various pedestrian links, there is a newly created rain garden in the area, and it is located across the street from the substation.

Kost also detailed specific features the plaza as it exists now. These features include the slope near the bank, the role water once played in the plaza, the number of game tables in the area that are seldom used and hard to find. He said there is a lot of hardscape in the plaza, the retaining wall near the grocery store, the concrete wall near the roadway intersection, and the mature trees provide a sense of place.

Egge said the Dairy Queen and the Mighty Mite ballfields also contribute to the existing neighborhood. She added that the fountain in the plaza defines the area.

Hiller said he has received a number of public comments about the plaza. He said the plaza needs curb appeal, and that the entry way is important in order to define the area.

Kost said the identity and the gateway into the plaza do not need to be the same as the park program. He asked what the programming in the plaza has been and is anticipated to be in the future. Vetter responded that it should be a gathering spot, but not to force that. He said it should be used for people's leisure and

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should be informal in use. Vetter questioned whether the site could be used in the evening, and also noted that there is vehicular traffic and noise that impact the area.

Schneider said the plaza is a gathering space and provides an identity and focal point for the area.

Wiersum said the plaza needs to be a multi-targeted gathering spot, but it shouldn't be designed specifically for events that are only held a few times per year. He said connections should be made from the plaza to different areas, such as the coffee shop. He said curb appeal and a focal point is important and that historical elements should also be included. He added that people want a water feature, but it needs to be something that works.

Carlson said that summertime events should not be dismissed because there is interest not only by the bank to do something in the plaza. Kost responded that flexibility can be provided to accommodate such events.

Greves said the plaza has the opportunity to be more than just a coincidental place and that it may be a destination. She said that there needs to be some way to tie in the history of the area into the plaza such as through art or the water feature.

Kost said he was hearing that the plaza needs to be multi-generational.

Egge said the Chicago Avenue Arts Center takes kids from home school and brings art into a park. She gave an example that word or art could be incorporated into a park bench. Egge added that the eastern end of the plaza area was tough to engage in and that the plaza needs to open to the full extent of the area.

Hiller said that the plaza needs to be a gathering space so people can talk with each other. He said isolated park benches such as there is now don't allow this to happen.

The Glen Lake area history was discussed.

Allendorf said there needs to be a theme for the history. Kost responded that area types such as built into benches or as a stand-alone piece can help to do this.

Schneider asked if was possible to get a park easement over the area to the east of the plaza where the new rain garden is at and to expand the plaza into this area.

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Wiersum said if there is a focal point, area, curb appeal, and functionality then the plaza will define the area. Kost replied that it is possible to set the plaza up for such success.

Allendorf requested more information on the history of the area and that this is shared with the entire group.

The group toured the plaza.

Kost suggested starting with looking at specific elements of the plaza. He provided examples of vegetation, paths, site furnishings, and water features.

Allendorf asked if all of the water features flow during the winter. Kost responded that some have more multi-seasonal effects than others and the winter look should be kept in mind.

Kost reviewed the main components of the including the water feature and performance area. He said that with the water feature, the purpose of it, its winter appearance, maintenance, and cost should all be taken into consideration.

Schneider said he sees the fountain as a focal point and that it should focus on the sound of running water rather than having it spray. He said it should be visible from the street. Schneider added that in some cases he has seen the water freeze over the underlying structure giving the water feature a unique winter appearance.

Kost said that maintenance for the winter and dealing with soap can be expensive. Schneider said he is also concerned about cost and does not want to have a water feature that requires full chlorination.

Kost reviewed a variety of different types of water features, their general costs and their maintenance.

Greves said she envisions cobbles arranged in a conical shape with small spray jets around the edges.

Wiersum said he wants the water feature to be inviting yet safe. He gave an example of the spray jets in Edina, and that they are inviting and have a natural look. Greves responded that with this type of fountain you miss the sound of the water. Schneider added that some of the sound could be provided by having the water over boulders. Kost said that you would be able to hear this if there is enough volume of water. He said that there can be a hybrid of a trickle and spray.

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Egge gave an example of Old Faithful at Yellowstone where there are low bubbly jets and then occasionally it shoots up.

Carlson said the water feature should be attractive to those of all generations. She likes the idea of the fixed cobbles and thought that it will look good in the winter.

Riley said if there is a water element that it should be designed so that kids enjoy it, because if kids enjoy it then it will bring the people to the plaza.

Wischnack provided clarification on the chlorination needs of water features.

Wiersum said that if there is a water feature then there will be kids.

Hiller said the water feature doesn't necessarily have to be naturalistic because it doesn't really fit into this area.

Egge thought the water feature should be interactive with benches around it. She said that while she agrees there should be a water feature, the entire budget of the park should not be spent on this one item. She added that the water feature should also look good in the winter.

Allendorf agreed with the cobbles idea. He said in the previous plan drawn that the water feature was placed near the back of the plaza, but thought it was more appropriate to be located in the middle of the plaza.

Kost said the water feature can be more integrated and can also be turned off during certain events.

Egge said the corner of the plaza at the intersection should be opened up. She said if the Glen Lake Station signage is so important to keep then it should be moved across the street by the shopping center. Egge liked the communal feel of the green area in the middle of the park.

Kost recapped that the group liked the cobble water feature in the middle of the park as long as it provides some sound, some natural feel, and that it needs to be larger than the one shown in the example picture.

Wiersum responded that the size of the water feature is a big issue because it impacts the cost of it. Carlson asked what the appropriate size water feature is for a park this size.

Hiller and Egge both questioned where the water feature should go and how visible it should be from outside of the plaza. Wiersum said the water feature

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should be important, however people need to be invited into the plaza first in order to get to the water feature.

Schneider asked whether the water feature or the performance area should be more visible. Kost said that these can be put together and have multiple uses.

Wiersum asked what determines the cost of the water feature. Kost replied that it is the amount of water and the size of the pumps. Wiersum said he does not want to compromise and get a water feature and a performance area that no one likes.

Schneider asked what the appropriate size of the water feature should be for the park. Wiersum and Hiller responded that it should be larger than a family size. Greves, Riley, and Ellingson all agreed. Kost said that it can be a community size.

Wischnack suggested that there could be three pieces to the fountain so that it is a community feature, but yet fits families around each of the three pieces.

Carlson said that the water feature should be family sized to fit six to eight people. She said the plaza is small and intimate.

Egge said the grass knoll invites people and that there should be one larger fountain that has multiple-purposes. Carlson agreed about the multiple-use, but there should be the opportunity for some privacy as well.

Allendorf said the water feature should be a focal point and should be visible. He said it should be able to be seen from the corner. Allendorf agreed with the multiple-purpose. Schneider concurred the water feature should be a focal point and should be significant enough to draw visitors in.

Kost reviewed the performance area. He said it is possible to do lawn on the slope near the bank and add terracing later if that is what people wished for.

Wiersum said he would rather put money somewhere else besides the terraced area. Kost said it's possible to have a slope and no terrace. Carlson added that this slope area needs to be watered.

There was discussion on lawn irrigation.

Schneider asked how many people a performance area of this size could hold. Kost said it would be possible to get up to 20 people.

10-minute break

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Schneider asked if there is a priority to have a water feature rather than a performance area. There were multiple yeses.

Hiller said the privately owned area to the east of the plaza should be incorporated into the design. Schneider said he likes how the trails wind into this area. Kost said this area can be accessed from Excelsior Boulevard.

Hiller asked what the area just east of the bank is for. Kost said this is park area and some program elements can be incorporated into this area. He said it takes the pressure off doing everything in the main plaza area.

Egge said the performance area should be small, but still encourage people to come out. Carlson said that it is not necessary to have a stage, but a flat space would do just fine.

There was clarification that the water feature should be in the center of the plaza, and that the key is visibility for it. Hiller said the water feature should be situated first.

Kost said the water feature could be turned off or on as needed and that some other spaces may work for smaller performances.

Greves suggested a water feature with a performance area around it.

Kost said there are a lot of pedestrian connections that meet in the middle of the plaza. He said there should continue to be connectivity to the east of the plaza.

Allendorf said the grass area should remain. Kost said that can happen and it helps reduce the hard surface area that is currently out there.

Hiller suggested the seating be integrated and not just off to the sides. Kost said seating can be built around the water feature as well. He asked if the group was interested in seeing picnic tables off of the crushed gravel walkway. Carlson said they should be in the shade. Barone added they shouldn't be near the roadway.

Wiersum said he was interested in the crushed limestone walkway.

Hiller said there just needs to be seating and not necessarily picnic tables too. Schneider added the benches should have backs and that small tables are okay. Wiersum said picnic tables make sense, but there shouldn't be a lot and they need to be placed in the right areas.

Kost inquired about garbage receptacles. Vetter said there needs to be a dome on top to keep the water out. Barone added that they need to be carefully located.

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Hiller asked about the maintenance of all of the plantings. Schneider said volunteers such as the garden club and others can help with it. Kost said it is possible to make the plantings localized and Egge added that it should be coordinated.

Wischnack said natural plantings were shown on the hillside in previous plans. Allendorf said he likes prairie grass. Egge agreed.

Egge said with the pergola that it should be brick. Barone said that historic pictures of the area can help give some design direction.

Hiller asked about art. Wiersum responded that it is good if it can be incorporated and that it is an opportunistic thing. He said incorporating art into the park benches makes sense.

Greves said that the art can be designed for now, but added later. Wiersum agreed that it should be allowed for in the future. Kost said it is possible to have area called out in the plan where art may go. Greves responded that she would like the art with the fountain.

Allendorf said the art should go along with the history of the area in order to build upon a theme.

Schneider said he supports incorporating art, but not necessarily having the city pay for it. He said getting the plaza redone is more important.

Wiersum said there needs to be context with the history. It should be noted what it is about and what it means. He suggested small historical plaques or markers.

Barone asked if there was support to moving the Glen Lake Station signage elsewhere within Glen Lake. There were multiple yeses.

Carlson asked what the park should be named because a name is important for the park's identity. Allendorf responded it should be Glen Lake Station. Schneider said that the name can be incorporated with other park features. Riley suggested The Park at Glen Lake Station. Wiersum said the name is not mutually exclusive from others if the signage is moved.

Kost said he would begin on a new design. Wischnack said tentatively the design would be reviewed by city council in late November at a regular city council meeting. She said a postcard will be created and mailed to the neighborhood.

2. Adjournment

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The study session adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David E. Maeda
City Clerk