

Videra Park

Neighborhood Workshop # 1 July 18, 2006

MEETING REPORT

Workshop time: 6:30 to 8:00pm

Workshop location: Churchill Estates, 1919 Bailey Hill Rd., Eugene

Workshop facilitator: Philip Richardson

Other City staff present: Adam Steffen, Justin Grishkin, Tod Schneider



BACKGROUND

City of Eugene Parks Planning staff hosted the first of two or three neighborhood workshops to discuss upcoming improvements to Videra Park. Improvements to the park are funded by systems development charges (SDCs). The workshop included a brief presentation on the project, the process, and the context of the park. This was followed by a general, informal discussion of issues and ideas relating to park improvements. Goals for the evening included 1) providing information to the neighborhood, and; 2) gathering ideas for a new park development plan. About 25 neighbors and interested parties including City staff attended the workshop.

ADVERTISEMENT

Advertisement for workshop #1 included the following:

- A postcard invitation was mailed on July 3rd (15 days prior to the workshop) to 1168 Willow Creek-area residents and businesses within approximately 1/2 mile of the park.
- An article on the event was included in the July 13th issue of the Council Newsletter
- A news release was distributed on July 13th.
- The workshop was included on the City Manager's Office public meetings calendar and the calendar of events on the Parks and Open Space website.

PRESENTATION

Meeting participants convened at the Churchill Estates multipurpose room.

A PowerPoint presentation was given, detailing the process of neighborhood park funding, design, and development, including examples of previous neighborhood park projects. Typical elements of a neighborhood park were discussed, including a children's play area and informal field space, as well as benches, paths, and picnic tables. The purpose of neighborhood parks – which are primarily to serve local neighborhood residents within safe walking distance – was contrasted to that of other parks, such as community parks and metropolitan parks, which offer a wider variety of uses, such as programmed sports fields, serve a wider audience.

The planning process for Videra Park was outlined briefly and it was explained that there will continue to be opportunities for public comment throughout the process. The schedule was given for park construction in the summer of 2007. Several maps were displayed, showing the Willow Creek park service areas as well as an aerial photo of the site taken in 2004. The existing site was reviewed in detail, including a description of major elements such as street frontage, site dimensions, existing uses, and proximity to neighbors.

It was explained that the site offers opportunities for passive and active recreation. Generally, much of the

site slopes significantly and is densely vegetated, but there is a portion of the site that is open and graded gently enough to allow construction of a level play area and other amenities. Two important constraints include the size of the park and the budget. The site for Videra Park is roughly 5.88 acres and the budget is \$200,000.

DISCUSSION

With a group of about 25 neighbors, a productive discussion was held around issues and ideas for the park. All participants had an opportunity to share ideas and comments. Participants asked questions as well as shared their thoughts, including concerns, ideas, and preferences for improvements to the park.

A number of opinions were expressed regarding elements such as sidewalks and paths, parking, basketball courts, shelters and lighting. While concern was expressed about the implications of the park on the neighborhood -- in terms of traffic, noise, and public safety -- the discussion was positive and enthusiastic. In general, there was strong group consensus for concentrating standard neighborhood park features such as a play structure, picnic area, and an informal field space on the east end of the site while maintaining the rest of the site as a natural area, possibly including improvements for passive recreation, such as benches and trails, and improvements to the vegetation and waterways. The following summary of the comments made by the meeting attendees is organized by issue although the discussion itself was less structured.

Children's Play Area

Participants provided good feedback about the children's playground. Some participants noted that while they did not desire a play area for their own use, it was generally agreed that play areas are needed for the many children in the neighborhood. Multiple participants commented that there should be play features safe and appropriate for toddlers, noting that the playground at nearby Skyview Park is geared towards older children.

Generally, participants supported the idea of a small play structure. A number of participants expressed their desire for the play features to look as natural and simple as possible. Swings for all ages were suggested as a basic play feature that are widely used and appreciated. Many participants expressed support for the play area to include sand and water-play features. Other suggestions for play elements include a slide (appropriate for toddlers), monkey bars, and a climbing feature. One participant noted that slope, root zone, and proximity to neighbors are all issues that must be considered when choosing the best location for the play area. Another participant noted that retaining walls should be minimized when developing a level play area as a cost-saving measure.

Basic Features

The group was supportive of basic park features, including benches, picnic tables, and a water fountain. One participant noted that at least two picnic tables are needed so that multiple groups can enjoy a table at the same time.

Sidewalks and Paths

A number of participants expressed support for a trail connecting the developed park area on the east to the natural area and waterway in the center and west of the site. Although some connected sidewalks and concrete paths will be needed in the developed park area in order to comply with accessibility requirements, many participants expressed strong interest in keeping paths as simple as possible. A destination point on the west side of the park – in the form of a bench, open area, or other park feature – was suggested as part of the trail through the natural area.

One participant noted that the path through the natural area should be setback away from the creek so that the vegetation isn't trampled. Staff noted that there are basic setback requirements when developing paths along

waterways.

One participant asked if there will be a sidewalk along Randy Lane when the east and west stubs are connected. Staff noted that if there is a sidewalk, it will be part of the right of way, not on park property, and that Randy Lane will likely wind through the future cluster development, as opposed to run parallel to the park boundary.

Noise Considerations

Many participants noted that sounds carry very far from the area that will likely have the playground and other park features, and expressed a desire to design the park in a way that minimizes noise for the nearby residents.

Traffic Safety

Speed bumps were suggested by a few participants, particularly for Blacktail Dr, and 29th Ave. One participant expressed a strong desire for a stop sign on Blacktail. Although park planning staff does not make any decisions on improvements to roadways, staff will work with traffic engineers to analyze the site and determine the best options for calming traffic and providing adequate access for residents.

One participant asked if there would be any issues with parking once the site is developed. City staff commented that parking is rarely an issue at neighborhood parks, because most people who use the park live within the neighborhood.

Irrigation

Staff commented that the size of the site – and the limited funding – suggests that no or low irrigation be used to maintain the grassy field space in the developed portion of the site. Some participants expressed concern that the park would be unattractive in summer if it was not watered adequately, while others voiced their support for no or low irrigation. Staff noted that many neighborhood parks successfully use no irrigation.

Trees

Multiple participants requested that existing trees be preserved when possible and that additional trees be planted, in order to provide more shade for park users.

Picnic Shelter

A number of participants supported the proposal for a small shelter that provides shade and year-round protection from inclement weather.

Restroom / Portable Toilet

One individual requested a portable toilet be available, and a second participant noted that this would be especially useful for senior citizens who may live close to the park but, given the slope and size of the park, may find it difficult to return home to use the restroom. However, the group in general was strongly opposed to the idea of a restroom of any form due to concerns of cost, maintenance, and negative uses.

Lighting

The group was generally opposed to any lighting in the park.

Basketball

While most participants expressed strong opposition to a basketball court in the park due to noise considerations, some participants noted that a small court could improve public safety because many children currently play basketball along the sides of the street.

Additional Acquisition & Ridgeline Connection

One participant strongly supported using the \$200,000 in park development funds to acquire additional land north of the park to preserve as wildlife habitat. Other participants noted their support for this idea. City staff said that, while additional undeveloped property around Videra Park would be beneficial, available funding is limited and designated for capital improvement of the existing park property.

Another participant asked if there are opportunities to connect Videra Park to the Ridgeline system, and staff responded that there is a potential for future Ridgeline acquisitions to be very close to Videra, providing an indirect connection.

Pesticides / Herbicides

Some participants expressed interest in a pesticide and herbicide free park in order to achieve as natural a park as possible, even if it means more weeds in the turf areas. Staff noted that there is currently a pilot program testing pesticide and herbicide free park maintenance in a handful of parks, and that while Videra Park is not in the pilot program there will be minimal to no use of pesticides and herbicides.

Dog Waste Bags

The group was generally in favor of a post that supplies waste-bags for dog-walkers.

FINDINGS

Based on feedback from workshop participants, a mix of typical neighborhood park elements seems to be appropriate for the park, including a play, picnic area, connecting paths, and a trail through the natural area. A picnic area combined with a children's playground, and possibly a covered gathering place, should be developed on the eastern portion of the site in the open area of the park but adequately set back from neighbors on the opposite side of 29th Ave. to the east. The western portion of the park should be left open as natural area, possibly including trails and waterway improvements. Trees should be used for shade in and around the play and picnic area, for buffering the street, and along with plantings for habitat restoration in the natural area.

CLOSING

Participants were reminded that there will be at least one more public meeting for Videra Park, probably in September 2006. It was explained that, at the next workshop, participants will be able to respond to a park design that will be developed based upon discussions and suggestions from today's event. Participants or other interested parties are welcome to discuss the project or submit comments at any time via phone, email or delivered mail.

ATTENDEES

Mark Lawrence	Heidi McDowell	Eileen & Garry Kunkel
Sarah Forsyth	Roger Holmgren	Larry & Vida Ellins
Norine Madden	Matt Sheinin	Tod Schneider
T. & S. Saylor	Lloyd Helikson	Rick Tromel
David Wiebrecht	Kevin & L Williams	Teresa Grondona
Larry & Laurie Ormsby	Deborah Killian	Bob & Mandy Forester
Luanne & Craig Koch	Dan Galpera	George Hermach
Peggy Perry	Debra Nash-Galpern	Ray Wiley

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

The following comments were recorded on comment sheets provided at the workshop and turned in to City staff at the end of the event. As more comments are received, they will be added to the most current version of this report, available on the city website.

- Park Benefits: Leaving wild will allow the wildlife a small area.
 - Important Issues: Animals – forest.
 - Existing Features to Preserve: All should be designated a wildlife preserve.
 - Needs Improved: Limited development and more wildlife corridors
 - Activities & Facilities: None.
 - Other Comments: Let it be! Use any monies to purchase more land adjacent.

- Park Benefits: We would use a nature trail for bird watching – just a small bark path
 - Important Issues: Keeping it natural and free of dogs
 - Existing Features to Preserve: Natural vegetation
 - Needs Improved: More fir trees and big leaf maples (native)
 - Activities & Facilities: Porta-potty for seniors

- Important Issues: Impact on surrounding homes. Don't want to attract too many people to the park. Noise problems.
 - Existing Features to Preserve: The beautiful trees, stream, natural beauty.

- Park Benefits: Gather place
 - Important Issues: Keeping it herbicide free
 - Existing Features to Preserve: Trees, creek – path around the creek
 - Activities & Facilities: Natural play structure including climbing structure for toddlers including monkey bars, swings (at least one baby swing) & another swing and small, safe slide; sand and water feature (like oakmont); picnic table and shelter overhead for winter picnics (like 17th/Charnelton); pull up bar for grown ups.
 - Other Comments: Would love basketball hoop like Oakmont: multiuse for basketball and riding tricycles.

- Park Benefits: By beautifying the park area. More trees.
 - Important Issues: Keeping it safe and small scale.
 - Existing Features to Preserve: Keep it natural; some walkways; if a play area, keep it natural and small scale.
 - Needs Improved: Limited development and more wildlife corridors
 - Activities & Facilities: None.
 - Other Comments: Let it be! Use any monies to purchase more land adjacent.

- Park Benefits: The park can generally enhance the neighborhood and make it a more welcoming place. A place to meet neighbors. A place for families to gather with children. The park can preserve a natural setting within the neighborhood that will benefit all the residents, both human and animal.
 - Important Issues: Noise concerns. The need to minimize traffic issues - - speeding cars versus playing children. The need to manage potential increases in on-street parking. The need to preserve the natural setting of the area.
 - Existing Features to Preserve: Preserve the Oak Savannah. Save as many fir, pine, and other deciduous trees as possible. Maintain the natural grade as much as possible. Do not build structures such as sun or picnic shelters - - integrate play areas near existing trees or plant additional trees for shade.
 - Needs Improved: Very little needs to be or should be changed, but assuming a small play area is

- included, the equipment should be kept simple, natural colors used, and installed with minimum landscape grade changes. Pathways within the park are needed, and should be kept natural, using such materials as bark or gravel in walkways, but no concrete or asphalt.
- Activities & Facilities: Simple play equipment, pathways using natural materials, a few benches, a couple of picnic tables.
 - Other Considerations: Since the park is sure to continue to attract dog-walkers, maybe include dispenser for plastic bags to keep the park cleaner; Do not include concrete or asphalt surfaces within the park; Do not include basketball court or hoop; Do not include restrooms or porta-potties; Do not include a kid's sandpile - - it is likely to attract neighborhood cats and be more of a problem than a benefit; Do not include night lighting.
 - Other Comments: In general, we prefer to see the park maintained in as natural a state as possible.
- Park Benefits: An oasis of open space
 - Important Issues: 1) crime problems; 2) maintenance of park; 3) keep litter picked up on daily basis.
 - Existing Features: Develop the portion along 29th into a nice neighborhood park and leave the strip that runs along Randy to Hawkins in a natural state with a hiking / walking path (circular). Put sidewalk along @ 29th & Blacktail perimeter for pedestrian safety. [Diagram included: shows waterfeature, play structure, benches, and picnic tables in southeast corner, grass field in northeast corner, and natural area in remainder]
 - Needs Improved: Area of park along 29th Ave needs to be developed with sidewalk around this area (on all sides).
 - Activities & Facilities: path & benches; leave natural area in large portion of park area.
 - Other Considerations: it be maintained well.
 - Other Comments: no basketball court; no bathroom.
 - Park Benefits: by providing more usable space for people to exercise (the hills are a bit daunting, and the streets less safe as traffic increases). Play equipment that differs from Skyline Park would provide variety and also cater to a greater age range of kids.
 - Important Issues: I agree with the thought from the meeting* that it's important that the wildlife 'feel welcome', they are already being pushed into our yards. *I did not attend, but got notes from a neighbor.
 - Existing Features: see #2
 - Needs Improved: some flat space(s) would be great!
 - Activities & Facilities: some more traditional, simplistic play equipment geared toward younger kids – older kids don't seem to frequent parks so much, but sometimes the equipment (such as some of Skyline's) seems geared toward them anyway.
 - Other Considerations: a water fountain would be great.
 - Other Comments: just to give you an idea of our demographics: my husband (33) and I (31) have one child (almost 2), and are adopting another (who will probably be 1) next year. Thanks for listening!

OTHER COMMENTS

- This is a written response to my idea verbally presented at the July 18 workshop at Churchill Estates. I strongly recommend that the City allow the Videra Park 7.5 acre area REMAIN undeveloped and consider this a wildlife preserve.
The south hills, especially between 29th Ave and Hawkins has been virtually stripped of forest. The Planning Commission has allowed development to take place next to Videra Creek (so lawn runoff

would contaminate the area). There will be further development that will continue to negatively affect the forest and its inhabitants over the next few years until little remains of this wonderful forested area. No wildlife corridor was proposed or included with the development. Wildlife must now cross lawns, streets and other areas dangerous and difficult.

When the current Braewood development began, the developers took out 85% of the trees. We have many deer, wild turkey, owls and other wonderful wildlife that is negatively affected by the uncontrolled development in this region.

By allowing the 7.5 acre area to remain forest, it gives a tiny section for the deer to birth, the turkeys to breed and other animals a small sanctuary from the overdevelopment of what is their home.

The City funds are limited. Any formal park would be difficult to maintain with the current budget and if funds should be available, they would be better spent acquiring additional land adjacent to this park to save the Oak savannah, the forest and the wildlife.

Please, let us allow SOME area for the animals.

- It sounds as if there are a lot of differing ideas about the development of the park. We hope, that as it is the only park in walking distance from our house, it will have some of the features that can so enhance childhood experiences. Including basics such as a slide, swings (with at least one baby swing), and monkey bars would be nice. The basic elements of sand and water together is so very enjoyable for children, as you pointed out. We would love to see a picnic table with shade over it for year-round picnics. We also love the multi-use basket-ball hoop that Oakmont park features. We would love to see the materials used be more natural (more so than the plastics used at the other nearby park).

We really like the idea of making it an intergenerational play space by having a trail near the creek. Dan had thought that creating a Par Course could be an inexpensive way to include people of all ages in terms of various exercise "stations" (including a chin up bar and other activities).

Depending on our kids needs, we may not always be able to attend the meetings, but our sentiments are for keeping the neighborhood kids in mind as park features are decided upon.

- If I could advocate for a particular addition to the Videra Park, I would support providing a small or 1/2 basketball court. Having boys who are in their early teens, the kids greatly enjoy the Skyline Park built several years with the Ross Murray development. One regret though is that I did not speak out for some kind of structure such as an 1/2 court. At the time, the thinking of the park was to create a neighborhood park that wouldn't become an attractive nuisance.

Now there are thoughts to develop another city park with the same ideas. To provide a children's play area or walking paths are fine and rather innocuous, but there's a niche of kids who are too old for the children's play structures (11-15 year olds), but too young to simply go down to Bailey Hill. My 13 year old will ride his bike down Timberline to play basketball at the Bailey Hill Skate Park. This always makes me uncomfortable with the hazards with car traffic, hills, etc.

On our driveway we have a basketball hoop for him and his friends. Again the space, slope and street becomes limiting. A neighborhood park would possibly help resolve this dilemma with a small court. Also, it might dissuade other neighbors on the narrow streets from placing hoops on the street curbs for their kids.

Last, with the amount of funding for the Videra Park, maybe minimize any play structures and leave the area for paths or walking. But, make a small and basic improvement to the Skyline Park. With its large level area, a small court would be cheaper and easier to add. Children's play structures are very pleasant, but seem to cost a fortune. Preclude adding these to Videra Park and either add to Skyline Park or maybe spend the funds to somehow incorporate the retention ponds into more of an understanding of the natural setting for walkers.

- My wife and I do not have children. We love our friends' kids. We see no benefit to having a play ground. One has already been provided in the immediate area, plus a grass field to play in. It is only one block away from the proposed park. Secondly, there are a staggering number of play grounds in

Eugene for kids. Lastly but most importantly, placing a play ground, especially the modern plastic ones that are lawyer approved, on the side of that hill will ruin the look and feel of the neighborhood. We would much rather see a low key, low impact park that help to preserve basic open spaces. Like Palo Alto CA has done. Only trails, no structures.

We would like to see a gently switch backed winding trail, ideally two, traverse the hill side and wind up at the top. I promise you, it will be used continuously. It was mentioned that neighbors with children weren't represented very well at the meeting. This is because there aren't a lot of kids in the area. What there is a lot of is adult residents out on walks. Lots and lots of walkers. It is wonderful to see. We would like two trails. Not bark dust. 3' wide, graded flat from side to side, 6 inches of quarter or half minus rock compressed, topped by 1.5" of decomposed granite.

Two benches, maybe three. spread out along the trail and positioned for the view.

The doggie poop station idea is brilliant. This should be the only structure, besides the benches.

I was aware of the fir tree history. We absolutely love oak trees, and really dislike fir trees. They are opportunistic weeds that have ruined eugene's hill sides. I realize Eugene has had some programs in the past to encourage oak tree growth. Bravo. We would also encourage the erratication of the fir trees. Let's have Eugene look like the Roseburg valley. Open rolling hills dotted with beautiful oaks. This is the problem with tree-huggers. They are not arborist planners or landscaping architects. They are also missing Oregon's history. Not all trees should be saved. Oak trees are actually quite delicate and are becoming rare. Let's work to save them by cutting back the firs... before it is too late.