**Pedro Park Workgroup Meeting**

**9-23-21**

Present: Gina, Julie, Jean, Andy Hestness, Jon Fure, Merritt, Katie

**Community Inteview Read-outs**

Katie sent a message to people in her building asking to have a conversation but she heard nothing back from residents. She gathered feedback from emails but no in person meetings. She will compile something and send it on.

**Ranked-Choice Voting on Options**

Everyone was asked to fill out the survey, ranking their choices of the options for the park/PSA from most favorite to least favorite.

Everyone participated!

Scoring:

Full Block Park First Choice

City Plan Lite Second Choice

Based on feasibility people chose City Plan Lite whereas others chose a full block park because it’s what people always wanted. The group agreed that a half block park seems like an idea that the city should try and figure out.

People want trees now. People want a usable park now.

Julie was hoping this exercise would get a closer to a solution. It was an interesting exercise and helped us have the right conversations.

Merritt wasn’t sure about the choice of a public private option.

Jean: if we address options and include criteria it will address funding.

Nicole wants us to address funding options in our recommendations.

Andy shared Public Safety Annex Scenarios that were developed in the past as an example. One of the scenarios included “Mothball PSA” which is really the current state of the building. Currently, the building is leaking and needs repair.

Julie: there must be some consideration of testing the waters on selling PSA.

If they decide it isn’t sellable or no one wants it then let’s first determine that.

If they put the building up for sale and no one wants it, would they leave it out there or lower the price?

Andy: HRA will accept offers down to zero. We can do things like sell the building for a dollar and then put conditions (take TIF or receive some money back) around it. We don’t have a “floor” price in mind but with Ackerberg we were trying to get the money to invest in the park so the floor of the investment was the money it would cost to develop the park. We drew that line in the sand regarding development.

City real estate dept. doesn’t really need to get paid back anymore. The terms between HRA and City were to sell the building for park investment. It’s all negotiable at this point. We have less money at this point for the building—do we have enough money to develop the park?

Merritt: Andy do you think the parks dept is ok with a bare bones park?

Andy: The barest bones they’d like to define a downtown high usage park: fountains, lights, etc., with infrastructure and maintenance costs. The challenge they had with this park was with leveling the site, retaining walls, structural changes. Solid portion of that budget was grading for ADA.

Julie: we’re constrained by the future of the PSA. It just remains a question and needs to be put to bed.

Merritt: Andy do you think it’s more or less likely now to find a new user?

Andy: good question. I think finding an office project is less likely. It’s hard to compare now. My sense is that the overall development market is still looking for housing deals now and could be a possibility. If you look at the market broadly, we’re seeing more housing deals and the viability of that is more likely now. Also, I shared that spreadsheet the exercise was to look at scenarios—it’s not a policy. It was one tool we were providing. I can update it because it’s 3 years old. If it’s helpful we can review it. We tried to weigh strategies short term and long term.

Julie: We will want to hone down our scenarios first. Did you ever estimate the full block park?

Andy: Yes both with acquisition and with development project with building. It didn’t seem like there was an option of doing the whole park at the time. The park board did at one point look at that.

Julie: I think it would help to have that full park cost to help frame up the discussion of what we actually CAN do.

Merritt: People can’t give informed preferences to the city without full information. The more able the city is to transparently inform us, the easier it will be for people to make their preferences known.

Judy: the real estate value will go up with a lovely park. Long term there will be funds that will feed the city funds from taxes. I was torn but want something to happen but I would love more to happen than I think we are able to ask for. It was hard to do this exercise without having some numbers.

Julie: we can throw our support behind that.

Andy: the one factor we did discuss in product schedule we were trying to take clean dirt from one site and move it to the Pedro Park site.

**Which Options Do we want to Pursue?**

**“Half block park”**

Gina: Go South for better light.

The group agreed we didn’t need to specify whether the ½ block park included the PSA land or went south. We can describe both ideas so we are combining options 4 (Half-Block Park with Demo of PSA) and 5 (Half-Block Park Extending South into one.

**City Plan Lite (Option 2)**

It would be good to articulate what the city’s base “Standards” are?

We could articulate a base level (ADA compliant, lighting, etc.) in terms of need/nice to have.

If the current park plan changes it would have to be reassessed.

People have already weighed in.

Most of the pRNRC costs are based on a set number. Downtown park standards are based on an average of their construction costs. We could ask those high and low for construction costs to get those boundaries.

Merritt This is more of a neighborhood park than a downtown park. What would be included in a low amenity park? What are the standards for a downtown park based on? Should those standards be altered many years later? Can this function more like a neighborhood park?

Andy suggests we state what we think is the base level – figure out what we want.

**Option 3 City plan with everything in it**:

We should leave it on the plans because it has the city plan in it from the 2018/2019 process.

**Full Block Park** should be on there so we can get some estimates.

Andy : How prescriptive you are is helpful for policy makers. People need to make decisions about the PSA and that needs to happen. Any community guidance would help that along.

Remove option 7 – PSA for public use.

**Conversation about the PSA**

The group agreed that we want the city to explore an RFP.

What other considerations go into that?

Julie: when thinking of the options and value for public use you would need to establish if there’s a community need before doing anything. Can we establish if the city has the will to invest in the building? It sounds like a burden right now.

What would be on our wish list for an RFP?

Identifying the expectation that this is a public park and the building should be consistent with that park.

Don’t build or develop something that is at cross purposes to the public park.

This is a residential neighborhood- it should enhance the neighborhood.

Acknowledging the fact that the buildings facing the park are all residential (it’s the ‘back yard’ for these residents).

It’s an active residential community. That it enlightens or coexists with the community.

Improve the environment. What’s the relationship with the city?

Provide community gathering space (i.e. Como Pavillion)?

Developer should work with the park department on any changes to the building so they are consistent with the park design (so they don’t clash).

Other things to include:

Is demolition allowed or is it purely for reuse?

Is there limit on building height?

Any requirement on first floor use?

What are the revenues committed from this sale that will be used for park investment? (Ackerberg had agreed to make a 20-year commitment to park maintenance).

There are some other tools for revenues to service parks (tax abatement) how do we ensure the beneficiary is the park?

Do we want to include alley access which would affect park design?

Do we require first floor development? ( I think this means retail or something??)

Are skyway connections required?

Uses is another possible restriction. Downtown allows ministorage – would we want that? HRA is not much interested. Would that be restricted?

Liquor?

Require developer to contribute to public art piece that makes up for loss of the mural

Gina: partnership idea could be a way that would connect with people in the community.

Katie:

Whatever the building is developed into that developer is working in conjunction with the park designer and they’re amiable to designing certain features. There will have to be some planning with developers on the park. For example: maybe there’s an installation in the park that lines up with the building that there’s a partnership between the two so that it doesn’t become an issue down the road.

Julie: Was there concern about Ackerberg project?

Andy: We directed Ackerberg to work with the park department and they had to work on designing together. They were just one voice in that design.

City HRA is the owner of this building and has a high level of control

You could consider: is demolition allowed or not allowed?

Is it purely reuse? What are the revenues committed from this sale proceeds to park investment? Ackerberg was going to make a 20 year contributed to park maintenance. There are some other tools for revenues to service parks (tax abatement) how do we ensure the beneficiary is the park?

Merritt: Require developer to contribute to public art piece that makes up for loss of the mural

**We want to try to alleviate some of the community concerns.**

How do we show that there’s community buy in for selling the building?

How do we find ways to get that buy in? How do we know we’ve achieved buy in?

Merritt: if this group is offering support for the RFP is the city offering support for a half block park going south? Otherwise, why would we say anything about the PSA building?

Julie: Would you be ok with that in a phased approach? Merritt said sure.

Gina: Just a thought. When people get the opportunity to make a choice it helps with buy-in. Is it something that would be voted on in an election?

Judy Miller said last meeting that it’s a fact that the opportunity to be part of this group was out there and we got 30 applicants. Those opportunities exist but many don’t take advantage of them.

Continue to aggregate the feedback we’re hearing. This was a well-publicized opportunity to join this group. If people aren’t willing to put in the work, then that’s it.

Are there other well-connected people that we want to interview?

Jon: The people that applied to be on this group may want to weigh in. We wanted to keep it to a manageable size. We could reach out to the rest who wanted to be in this group.

We could have the alliance engage as well.

How would we want that feedback? Survey? Interview?

Surveys if done well can be helpful. But people are feeling over-surveyed. Besides, the loudest people take the survey

How do we show we care about the people in this community? Our report can say that we made a concentrated effort to get feedback from bigger buildings.

We met people from the Rossmor, from The Pointe.

We know there are people with very strong opinions—we need to hear from people who are everyday users and people who aren’t always engaged. How do we prove we’ve engaged those people?

The group decided to replace the next scheduled meeting on October 14th with a community listening session in Pedro Park.

This will be an informal, low-key, drop-in event, with no presentation. We will have on hand our refined list of options as well as the community interview questions specifically around the PSA. We can help them understand some of the complexities of the situation and why we are stuck. Goals are to inform, listen to feedback, help them feel better about moving through this process.

Katie: we know what people want from the park. The issue is making sure the RFP is accepted by the community.

For us, understanding the history has helped us. The person who drops in doesn’t need the full history but letting people know we’re stuck and here are our options: what do you think? Retail? Residential?

Katie will take a look at the interview questions and see if there’s anything we could use or alter from those?

Julie will try to simplify the options to get them down to the ones we want people to react to.

As long as promotion can happen fast so that people can make it and show up then it will work.

Jon will write up something for these Pedro Park Workgroup Community Listening Sessions. He will be responsible for doing similar outreach and promotion as he did for the workgroup formation.