

Barker Park Community Meeting  
Thursday, August 23, 6-7:30 PM

**MEETING SUMMARY**

Approximately 40 people (in addition to the board of the Friends of Barker Park) were in attendance at this meeting to introduce park improvements to the community. Thanks to Father Mario of Saint Anthony's Church (next to the park) for hosting the meeting.

**INTRODUCTION**

Melissa Barry (facilitator) introduced the Friends of Barker Park (FOBP) board and discussed their role and other key points:

- ♣ FOBP is a not-for-profit organization with the mission of rehabilitating Barker Park, making it a safe and enjoyable place for all.
- ♣ The park is owned by the City of Troy. The city makes physical improvements and maintains the park.
- ♣ FOBP advises the city on improvements; conducts fund-raising for park improvements; and coordinates park clean-up events and other public events in the park.
- ♣ There are no plans by the FOBP or the City of Troy to make Barker Park a private Park. Barker Park is a public park.
- ♣ There are no plans to develop a dog park in Barker Park. The FOBP will support the neighborhood's desires with respect to the playground. When the meeting participants were polled, about half (approximately 20 out of 40) said they would like to see a new playground. Jeff Buell said that the city would look into this option. It was also mentioned that other suitable areas in downtown could be explored for a playground.

**REVIEW OF PLANS**

Marc Coudert reviewed the proposed improvements to Barker Park. Prints of the plans were handed out. Some of the changes Marc mentioned:

- ♣ 6 new flowering trees (Bradford Pear) will be planted along the wall of St. Anthony's Church to add shade and spring color.
- ♣ 10-20 new benches (comfortable) will be added as well as matching garbage receptacles.
- ♣ Concrete will be replaced with brick pavers.
- ♣ A 4' steel fence around perimeter will be installed to enclose the park. This fence will be transparent. The park will not be closed or gated. There will be several openings and points of entry/exit so people will not get "stuck" inside the fence.
- ♣ Existing lighting will be replaced with 14 (+/-) foot old-fashioned style lights similar to those seen in other areas of downtown.

These improvements will ultimately result in the following noticeable changes:

- ♣ There will be more green space than the existing park – less "hardscape" (concrete).
- ♣ There will be more definition of the park edges (fencing, curbing).
- ♣ The park will feel more like a sequence of smaller gathering spaces (rather than one large open space).
- ♣ There will be more shade and more seating.
- ♣ There will be more color (flowering trees, sod, etc.) in the park.

## QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

After the plans were reviewed the floor was opened up to the participants. Questions and comments are bolded below and responses follow.

**Consider adding chess tables to the park.** (Several people noted that they would be in favor of this). The friends will look into this option.

**What is the plan for maintenance?** Jeff Buell noted that the city will take a more active role in the maintenance of Barker Park. Marc Coudert mentioned that FOBP also coordinate clean-up events. The plans have also been developed with maintenance in mind (irrigation, low-maintenance plants, etc.).

**How will we eliminate illegal behavior from the park?** We are working with the community police to ensure that illegal activities are addressed. It was also suggested that “rules of conduct” should be posted in the park and that people should “lead by example” and spend time in the park.

**What is the park’s policy on dogs?** We can state (on the rules of conduct sign) that dogs must be leashed, accompanied by their owners, and cleaned up after - as in other city parks.

**Will the fence make the park seem private or exclusive?** The intent of the fence was to define the park, especially at the corner of Third and State Streets. The fence will be low (4’) and we can also include a sign that announces Barker Park as a public park if there is concern.

**Can we look into the use of surrounding buildings to light the park?** This is a good idea that we might be able to explore in the future. A grant program was mentioned that might support this effort.

**How will we stop certain groups from monopolizing the park, such as for farmers markets, lectures or other events?** Barker Park is a public park – open to everyone. The city has a formal process for vendors to monitor this type of use.

**There could be more green space (a few people noted this).** We have tried to find a good balance between green space and “hardscape” (such as bricks and concrete). More green space means more maintenance and also less space available for walking, seating, etc. The current plan provides more green space than currently exists. It was also noted that it is difficult to get a feeling for the space by looking only at the plans, in which the “hardscape” is dominant.

**What is the timing and phasing of the improvements?** A portion of the fencing at the corner of State and Third Streets will be installed in the coming weeks, as will the pear trees. We are currently raising funds to conduct the remaining improvements. We hope to have funds in place to begin work next spring.

**Can we look at having benches face each other for conversational purposes?** We will consider this.

**Can we look at the possibility of movable furniture?** We are aware of some parks with movable chairs (such as Paley Park in NYC). We will look at other case studies to see if this is a possibility. We understand that movable furniture can give people a sense of ownership of their parks.

**Does the FOBP allow members?** The organization's bylaws (same as the original bylaws) are not currently set up to allow membership. The group currently does not have the capacity to coordinate and maintain a membership base.

**Will kids be able to ride their bikes in the park?** Yes. The park is designed to be accessible to people in wheelchairs, kids on bikes, etc. The gaps in the sidewalk are temporary and will be filled by the city.

**Can we walk on the grass?** Yes. The barriers around the grass are temporary. We were hoping to reduce wear and tear on the grass while it was establishing roots.

### NEXT STEPS

Marc Coudert noted that the FOBP is working to raise funds for the remaining improvements. This includes grant applications and fund-raising events.

Bryan Kahrs discussed the Barker Park website and asked people to sign-in so that we can develop a contact list. He noted that we are developing a donation function for the website where people will be able to donate over the internet.

- ♣ Web address: [www.barkerpark.org](http://www.barkerpark.org)

Matt Toback announced upcoming events:

- ♣ Clean-up: October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1pm, in the park
- ♣ Fundraiser: October 14<sup>th</sup> brunch at the Conservatory (overlooking the park), with Tosca and guest chefs

The group does not have another public meeting scheduled as of now but will inform interested people of future meetings and events. Participants were urged to sign in if they have not already done so.

Contact us: Friends of Barker Park, Inc., PO Box 202, Troy, NY 12181 or [friends@barkerpark.org](mailto:friends@barkerpark.org)