City of Evanston - Fountain Square Visioning

Meeting Summary – Focus Group Meetings
August 19 2014 | Evanston Civic Center, 9am – 10.30am, 1pm – 2.30pm

The following summarizes comments gathered during the Fountain Square Focus Group Meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to introduce stakeholders to the Visioning Process and to solicit their feedback about event planning for the upcoming community engagement activities. Two focus group meetings took place August 19, 2014 at the Evanston Civic Center, 9am and 1pm. Focus group meetings were conducted by Teska Associates and their subconsultant, Ripple Public Relations. A list of attendees follows below and are included in the attached sign in sheets:

FOCUS GROUP MEETING #1, 9am:
James Brusek, Evanston American Legion Post #42, commanderpost42@yahoo.com
Greg Lisinski, Evanston American Legion Post #42, g.lisinski@sbcglobal.net
Karen Danczak Lyons, Evanston Public Library, kdanczaklyons@cityofevanston.org
Bob Dorneker, City of Evanston Parks, Recreation and Community Services, bdorneker@cityofevanston.org
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Stefanie Levine, City of Evanston, slevine@cityofevanston.org
Ilyse Bombicino, Ripple Public Relations, ilyse@ripplepublicrelations.com
Jodi Mariano, Teska Associates, JMariano@TeskaAssociates.com

FOCUS GROUP MEETING #2, 1pm:
Michael Corr, First Bank and Trust, mcorr@firstbt.com
Annie Coakley, Downtown Evanston, ACoakley@downtownevanston.org
Charles Spivey, VFW Post #7186, ck_spivey@comcast.net
Paul Zalmezak, City of Evanston, Economic Development, pzalmezak@cityofevanston.org
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Ilyse Bombicino, Ripple Public Relations, ilyse@ripplepublicrelations.com
Jodi Mariano, Teska Associates, JMariano@TeskaAssociates.com
INTRODUCTION
Each meeting began with introductions and a description of the project scope. City staff provided project background, including the following key points:

1. The City recognizes a need to improve Fountain Square infrastructure and has earmarked some funding, including TIF funding which expires in 2017, to address Fountain Square Plaza.
2. Fountain Square Plaza is identified as a downtown park with Veterans Memorial and Fountain functions. At a minimum, these functions will remain.
3. The City is interested in engaging the Evanston community to hear their input regarding the future design and programming of Fountain Square Plaza.
4. The Fountain Square Visioning Project will be presented to City Council on September 8th 2014 for final review and approval of the Visioning Project.

GROUP EXERCISES
Each meeting included the following exercises:

EXERCISE #1: Focus groups discussed functions of Fountain Square. The groups were asked to address each of the two following questions:
   a) What functions exist today that should be retained?
   b) What functions do not exist today that could be considered?

EXERCISE #2: Focus groups discussed opportunities for event planning for the upcoming community engagement activities.

The following responses include input by both focus groups and are organized by group exercises below:

EXERCISE #1a: What functions exist today that should be retained?

1. VETERANS FUNCTIONS
   a. Main activities include marches, speeches and assemblies on Veterans Day and Memorial Day:
   b. Honor Guard march
      i. Access from Sherman Ave to the north, improved access is desired
   c. Public assembly
      i. +/-60 chairs are organized amphitheater-style facing the north, additional seating is desired
      ii. Remaining attendees stand around the plaza perimeter and across the street at nearby corner plaza spaces.
      iii. ADA access is lacking and should be addressed.
      iv. Assembly needs a more ‘ceremonial’ backdrop (currently faces the World of Beer storefront)
   d. Wreath laying at the flagpole base
   e. Rifle Teams shoot blank rifles east of Orrington Ave
      i. Prefer to maintain distance between rifle activities and assembly area
   f. Five masonry pillars with bronze plaques
      i. Plaques and pillars should remain in some location within the plaza area
ii. There is not a current need to expand or increase the names identified on the plaques, however future design of the Square should consider potential for expansion.

g. A broadcasting system is desired

h. Seven (7) flagpoles are desired: (1) USA flag; (5) service flags; (1) POW MIA flag

i. Some permanent seating is desired

j. The square should be respectful of the memorial area and should consider accommodating both lively events and somber activities.

2. PARKS AND EVENTS FUNCTIONS

a. Square is a public forum, includes multiple message types

b. Fountain Square Art Festival - occurs within closed downtown streets

c. Thursday Night Dance – occurs east of the Square, but includes overflow on the Square

d. Small music performances include 1-3 people

e. Electrical access exists north of the memorial pillars

f. Square is the meeting place for bike races, 5K runs

g. Theater performances – First Night, Music Institute, Churches

h. Winter Holiday events – Kwanzaa Ceremony, Tree Lighting Ceremony, Menorah Lighting Ceremony

   i. Tree is placed in large southern fountain, attendees stand at these ceremonies

3. COMMENTS REGARDING THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT WITHIN AND SURROUNDING THE SQUARE

a. The square is a downtown open space; should be made more open.

b. Flat open space is preferred to multiple levels

c. Maintain water / fountain element

d. Square should be expandable to accommodate large events

e. Square has a lot of potential

f. The memorial should be more respectful of memorial activities

g. The square is in a good location and should remain

h. Pedestrian flow crossing the streets is a challenge

i. Fountain should express one main identity

j. The memorial space is awkward

k. The square has ‘nooks and crannies’ which provide intimate seating, but the square lacks larger group seating

l. The presence of vehicular traffic dominates the atmosphere of the square. The Lincoln Square streetscape in Chicago was noted as an example of a pedestrian friendly plaza space that is buffered from adjacent vehicular traffic.
EXERCISE #1b: What functions do not exist today that could be considered?

1. LIBRARY FUNCTIONS
   a. Zombie Walk
   b. Story Telling Festival

2. PARK DISTRICT FUNCTIONS
   a. Starlight Concert Series – currently exists at Centennial Park and may consider relocating/ expanding to Fountain Square, 200-300 attendees at Centennial Park, 4-5 musicians
   b. Outdoor movies in the park – currently exists at other City parks and may consider relocating/expanding to Fountain Square

3. PUBLIC ART FUNCTIONS
   a. Chalk drawing

4. OTHER GROUP FUNCTIONS
   a. Boy Scouts functions
   b. Northwestern University ROTC functions

EXERCISE #2: Event planning for community engagement activities – note that one month lead time was recommended by Downtown Evanston for outreach to businesses prior to planned events

Teska identified recommended outreach activities included in the visioning scope. These activities are designed to solicit community input. Focus groups discussed additional events that could take place to generate community participation.

1. Target audiences for outreach:
   a. Families
   b. Seniors
   c. Teens
   d. Religious institutions, churches, temples
   e. Office workers
   f. Downtown businesses
   g. Hotels and tourists
   h. Unknowns?

2. Planned events to be coordinated with / might incorporate the Visioning Efforts:
   a. SEPT 16 – Evanston Mash Up - Northwestern University Beach Area
   b. SEPT 19 - Northwestern University Pep Rally
   c. SEPT 18 – Cats and Kids Block Party
   d. SEPT 26-28 - Evanston Art and Bigfork Fest
   e. OCT 2 - Big Bite Night (NW students only)
   f. OCT 25 - Farmers Market Harvest Fest
   g. WINTER 2014 - Paint Evanston Plows Contest (PEP)
3. Library suggested activities:
   a. Story Telling in the Square
   b. The Library attracts 40-50K visitors per month. Announce input activities at the main library entrance, such as:
      i. ‘Coffee Talk’ activity at the front Library Discussion Table
      ii. Post flyers and brochures on the bulletin board
      iii. Place childrens coloring pages at the front desk

4. Veterans suggested activities:
   a. Veterans Day – host a discussion / input after the ceremony
   b. Fleetwood Jourdain kids connection – kids events and activities
   c. 2nd Baptist Church drill team street performance

5. Public art suggested activities:
   a. Temporary art / chalk drawing
   b. Community sourced art
   c. Performance art
      i. Local theater groups may be interested to walk the downtown and promote upcoming performances (Northwestern Univ)

6. Other groups activities and outreach
   a. Community Fashion Show – engage Mather Seniors, High School, Womens Club
   b. Northwestern Radio Station, WNUR
   c. Kids activities – juggling, face painting, crafts, balloons
   d. Potbelly’s – outdoor music in Chandlers Plaza, Fri-Sat
   e. LA Fitness – outdoor fitness classes
   f. Teen oriented activities - ETHS

OUTSTANDING ITEMS / QUESTIONS:
1. Is Fountain Square designated as a war memorial?

NEXT STEPS:
The consultant’s next steps include attendance at the September 8 City Council meeting where Council will review the Fountain Square Visioning Project. If the project is approved, the consultant will continue working with the City on the Visioning Project activities and deliverables as identified in the project scope.

Encl:
Meeting Agendas; Existing Conditions Base Plan; Sign In Sheets; Notes
AGENDA

1. Project introduction and purpose

2. Discuss functions of Fountain Square relative to the Veterans memorial

3. Discuss passive events and invite input
   a. Chalkboards
   b. Fountain Square post
   c. Tip Jars
   d. Flyers
   e. Children’s coloring contest
   f. Instagram contest

4. Discuss active events and invite input
   a. Big Maps exercise
   b. Video/audio recording stage
   c. Paint the pavement
City of Evanston - Fountain Square Visioning

Focus Group #2 Meeting - Event Planning
Downtown Evanston, Chamber
August 19 2014 | Evanston Civic Center, 1pm – 2.30 pm

AGENDA

1. Project introduction and purpose

2. Discuss functions of Fountain Square relative to business support

3. Discuss passive events and invite input
   a. Chalkboards
   b. Fountain Square post
   c. Tip Jars
   d. Flyers
   e. Children’s coloring contest
   f. Instagram contest

4. Discuss active events and invite input
   a. Big Maps exercise
   b. Video/audio recording stage
   c. Paint the pavement
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Focus Group #1

EXISTING FUNCTIONS

MEMORIAL DAY

VETS DAY

- WREATH LAYING - NEAR FLAGPOLE
- SPEECHES
- INTERNAL TO SQUARE
- HONOR GUARD
- GO EAGLES - SENIORS

VIRGINIA BERTHY - TRANGLE GARDEN CLUB
ART KARNEY - RESEARCH DATA BASE - VETS KILLED IN CONFLICT
- HOME OF HEROES

- TREE LIGHTING

NEW FUNCTIONS

- 4-H SCOUTS FUNCTIONS
- NAV. ROTC

LIBRARY

- Zombie Walk
- Story Telling Festival - 100's of people.
- VETS MEMORIAL - INPUT AFTER CEREMONY
- LIBRARY TABLE - COFFEE TALK
  - 40-50K per month.
PARKS

PUBLIC FORUM
GOOD VS. CONFRONTATIONAL

MUSIC PERFORMANCE — 1-3 PM

SOUND SYSTEM

EXIST ELECT. ACCESS N. OF PILLAGER

BIKE RACE / 5K RUNS

EV ART + BIG FORK FEST — LAST WK OF SEPT.

STAND-UP CONCERT SERIES
200-300 PPL.
CENTENNIAL
4-5 MUSIQUES
PORTABLE STAGE — LEVELS

THEATER PERFORMANCES — 1ST NIGHT
MUSIC INST / GROUNDRY

KWANZAA CEREMONY

THE LIGHTNING MENORAH

STANDING CEREMONY

MOVIES IN THE PARK.
1-3.
NW REP RALLY - SEPT 17.

REP - PAINT EV. FLOW
Focus Group #2

Open space: Make more open. Flat is preferred to levels. Keep water.
Too tight. Expandable to big events.

Potential:
Memorial should be more respectful: sacred vs. secular.
Good: location.
Ped flow. Crossing streets is a challenge.

Chalk @ ft sq
Intimate seating provided.
One main identity.
Awkward memorial space.
Nooks & crannies.
Pillars to remain in some way.
Brick piers/bronze plaques.
Can move to other plain space.
Memorial to be respectful.
Honor as the public gathering space/park.
Flexibility.
Vegetable traffic dominates.
Oct 4 Big Bite Night. NN Students only.

Is Ft Sq a War Memorial?

Lincoln Sq. - 33 closest calms traffic.
- Calm traffic @ Ft. Sq.

Active Events Ideas

Community Fashion Show.

Farm Mkt Harvest Fest - Pumpkin Carving.

Women's club costume

Oct 25

Art Fair Sept 26-27

1 Month lead time to reach out to biz.

Temp Art
Community Sourced Art
Juggling / Perf. Art

NN Theater Groups Walk DT St. - Promote Upcoming Performances
WNUR - NW RADIO STAFF
VEN - CONNECT w/ FLEETWOOD KIDS.
FACE PAINT/BALLOONS
POTBELLY'S - MUSIC THURS/FRI
ENGAGE TEENAGERS
H.S.
KIDS + CATS - AUG 19 (TH) - FOOD TRUCKS.

SEPT 14 - MASH UP
CDE - NN - CHAMBER BEACH

LA FITNESS/EXC.
OUTDOOR FITNESS CLASS.
2-4.

TARGET AUDIENCES:
- Families/Stroller Moms/Kids
- Seniors
- Churches
- Office Workers
- Businesses
- Teens
- Unknowns?
- Hotels—Tourists
- Drill Team—2nd Baptist Church