

## **Penny Park Public Meeting**

**March 27, 2014**

### **Welcome – 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward Alderman Peter Braithwaite**

- Planning for the Penny Park playground is in the preliminary stage.
- There is an initial budget of \$150,000 for the park this year. Community fundraising can help make up the difference.
- Leathers & Associates designed the current Penny Park playground, which was constructed in 1991. The City would like to work with Leathers & Associates again to redesign the playground, utilizing community input, volunteers and fundraising to keep the park “magical.”

### **Suzette Robinson – Public Works Director**

- Penny Park was constructed in 1991.
- Penny Park’s wooden playground posts are currently driven directly into the soil, rather than into cement. A new playground is necessary because of the age and the deterioration of the current structure.
- Penny Park also has many hidden spaces that need to be addressed, which has led to unsavory activity in the past.
- The City recognizes and wants to preserve the uniqueness of the park.
- The hybrid model of design and construction, using both City funds and community fundraising, will help keep costs down.

### **Jane Holman and Steven Meyer – Leathers & Associates**

- Penny Park playground’s current material, wood, has a short shelf life.
- Leathers & Associates now uses plastic lumber made out of recycled materials, such as milk jugs, and wood composite.
  - o The life span of this material is up to 50 years.
  - o The material is easier to maintain, more visible, and more age-appropriate.
  - o The color of the material is “playground mink,” and is similar to the color of wood.
- Penny Park’s playground is about 11,000 square feet.
- Leathers & Associates has a process for designing and constructing playgrounds:
  - o Design phase
    - Gather ideas from children and the community
    - Create a draft schematic for the playground
    - Present the design to the community and gather feedback
  - o Management
    - Leathers & Associates assigns a project manager to the playground, who then guides a volunteer community steering committee through the process

- Construction
  - Leathers & Associates helps manage the construction schedule and supervises the project. Teams of community volunteers build the park.
  - On the day the park is scheduled to be finished, the community gathers to officially open the park, celebrate, and see their vision for the playground come to life.
- Penny Park Design Plans
  - Leathers & Associates met with teachers, parents and children at Dewey Elementary School and Cherry Preschool to gather ideas and create a new design for the park.
  - Leathers & Associates likes to incorporate local themes and history into playground designs.
  - Visibility is a key issue for the playground, as is accessibility and inclusive play (ADA).
  - Leathers & Associates visualizes two play areas in the new playground:
    - Older children ages 5 to 12
    - A tot lot for children ages 2-5
  - A schematic for the new playground includes the following features:
    - Swings located in the same location as the current park
    - A new castle with a climbing net
    - A wobbly bridge
    - Chin-up bars and balance beams
    - Monkey bars
    - “The Climbinator,” a moving rock-climbing wall
    - A lighthouse with two slides
    - A maze
    - A truck
    - An omni-spinner
    - A tire swing
    - A tee-pee and a tree fort
    - A sand lot with a digger
    - An historic playhouse, designed to represent a famous Evanston home or building

### **Questions/Comments from community members**

- A resident requested seeing the playground schematic placed on a larger map of the park, to help people get a better visual of the design.
- A resident asked if all of the park’s trees would remain. Public Works Director Suzette Robinson said “yes,” the playground will be designed around the trees to help preserve the feel of the current playground.
- A cochlear non-static slide was requested for children with cochlear implants.

- A request was made to consider the possibility of a single playground for all ages, rather than a space for older children and a separate space for toddlers. Leathers & Associates responded that although this would be possible, its safety standards recommend two separate play spaces.
- A resident commented that it's important to make the park and playground an inviting place for seniors and other community members, not just for children.
- A resident requested that a washroom be installed in the park. Alderman Braithwaite responded that a washroom would be a welcome addition to the park, but that the expense would likely be too great under the current park budget.
- A 3D rendering of the park was requested to assist in visualization and fundraising efforts.

## **Conclusion**

- Ald. Braithwaite outlined the next steps of the project:
  - o Develop a volunteer steering committee
  - o Establish a budget for the park based on the design schematic
  - o Establish a project timeline
  - o Residents can get updates on Penny Park by signing up for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward eNewsletter. A Penny Park email list will also be established as the process moves forward.

**Note:** The City of Evanston has created a web page devoted to news about the Penny Park redevelopment project. Visit <http://www.cityofevanston.org/parks-recreation/parks/penny-park/>

Residents can also receive email updates regarding Penny Park by signing up for the email list at [www.cityofevanston.org/newsletter](http://www.cityofevanston.org/newsletter)