



[11A]

MEMO

DATE: June 8, 2011
TO: Doug Menke, General Manager
FROM: Hal Bergsma, Director of Planning

RE: Vista Brook Park Master Plan

Introduction

THPRD hired MIG Inc. (MIG) to provide design services for the Vista Brook Park renovation bond project. MIG has worked with District staff and the community to develop a master plan for the park. MIG has also completed a master plan level cost estimate. Staff is seeking Board of Directors approval of the Vista Brook Park Master Plan.

Background

The approved bond measure scope for the site was to renovate the neighborhood park. Potential improvements identified in the bond literature included paths, play area, picnicking, basketball court improvements, a community garden, parking improvements and native plantings. This scope and various plan options were refined through two neighborhood meetings and several internal meetings to develop the preferred master plan.

The preferred master plan includes a new play area, two basketball half courts, a new loop path, parking improvements, a pond viewing platform, interpretive signage, and a small community garden. As mentioned previously, two neighborhood meetings have been held and they were well attended. Much of the preferred master plan being submitted for Board approval has been well received by the community. However, there was an expressed desire by the community to retain the existing level of basketball facilities currently in the park. There were also significant community concerns about the potential impacts of a community garden on the neighboring community. Those concerns related to the limited park access and parking, along with the proposed location (potential removal of existing trees), and the assumed increased level of vehicular trips through the neighborhood to get to the park and the community garden. The plan was revised to relocate the community gardens to the south side of the tennis courts to eliminate the concern about removal of existing trees. The size of the community garden was also limited to ten plots initially, with room for the addition of ten more plots in the future, based on the results of a survey of residents of the surrounding area.

Staff recently completed another survey, contacting 154 users of District community garden plots to ask how many times they visit their plot, at what time of day do they visit, and how do they get there. There were 75 responses received as of June 7 which was the return end date. The results from that survey indicate that for those that do drive to their garden plots (59%), do so on an average of 2.5 times per week. For the proposed Vista Brook Park community garden (10 plots are proposed), this equates to 25 vehicle trips per week or 3-4 vehicles per day (3.5). It should also be noted that others responded that they walk (31%) or ride bikes (9%) to their garden plot, and some users do carpool.

Although staff is confident that the most recent proposed version of a community garden would have minimal impact on the park and the neighborhood, opposition to placing a garden anywhere in the park remains strong, as evidenced by a recently submitted petition. Therefore, after further discussion of the issue by the management team, we now recommend that the garden be removed from the proposed master plan.

The total project budget for the Vista Brook Park renovation project is \$519,071 based on the March 31, 2011 Bond Capital Projects Report. The revised construction budget after hiring a consultant and estimating overall project soft costs was \$263,460. The current construction cost estimate is \$339,885 which means the project is currently over budget by \$76,425. This amount does not include the \$15,000 estimated cost for the viewing platform at the pond, which is desired by the community and is currently listed as a project alternate. The estimated construction cost overage could be reduced to some degree by a good (lower than estimated) construction bid. However, additional funding from another project in the category of renovation and redevelopment of neighborhood parks, or another bond category will probably be needed to complete this project as proposed.

The project will incorporate art through elements such as creative play settings and benches and is also a good candidate for interpretive signage as part of another bond-funded District initiative. Themes could include the history of the railroad, the natural resources of the site, and the previous equestrian activities in the area. The final theme of art elements for the project will be evaluated and determined in the future design phases by the project team. Once the theme is determined, it will be incorporated into the projects construction documents.

Proposal Request

Staff along with Dave Walters, project manager with MIG, will attend the June 20, 2011 Board of Directors meeting to make a presentation on the preferred master plan for the park. Staff is seeking Board of Directors approval of the Vista Brook Park Master Plan, with the understanding that the community garden will be removed, so the consultants can proceed with the detailed design, construction documents and permitting requirements for the project.

Benefits of Proposal

MIG has worked closely with staff and the community to design a master plan for Vista Brook Park that meets the needs of the community and the District.

Potential Downside of Proposal

The project is currently over the construction budget by \$76,425 (\$91,425 if the viewing platform at the pond is included in the project). Some additional funding from other bond projects/categories may be needed to complete this project as proposed. However, elimination of the community garden may reduce project costs slightly.

Maintenance Impact

The project is anticipated to increase maintenance costs by expanding the play area improving the parking lot and adding additional pathways including the pond viewing platform.

Action Requested

Board of Directors approval of the Vista Brook Park Master Plan with the community garden deleted.