

Mifflin Square Park Draft Plan 11/19/17 Focus Group Discussion Summary



57 people, including speakers of Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Khmer, Nepali, Karen, gathered to discuss the four draft design directions for Mifflin Square Park. Nearly all participants were frequent park users, and agreed on the draft plan's main goals of a CLEAN, SAFE, and FUN park.

Group 1

We began with a list of topics & design features people wanted to discuss, and then addressed each with reference to the draft design directions.

Bathroom & vending

- Some like bathrooms on the side of the park because it doesn't take up space (as shown in design directions 3 and 4).
- Some advocated for a new bathroom to be in the middle of the park for convenience of all park users & avoiding turf issues of 5th Street people vs 6th Street people (as shown in design directions 1 and 2).
- Some like idea of combining a bathroom with a vending facility and charging the vendor with maintenance, though thought this should only be done if located at park edge for cleanliness reasons.

Plants, trees, gardens

- Everyone supported preserving as many existing trees as possible and adding more for shade
- Many spoke up for the addition of more plants to the park, while recognizing they would need additional maintenance and watering

Paths

- Group observed how existing paths (shown in design direction 1) split the park like a pizza and create problems
- General agreement on the importance of preserving the diagonal cross-paths as shown in design directions 1, 2, and 3.
- Several people were excited about the secondary walking paths in design directions 2 and 3 for exercise and contemplation, and suggested that maybe they didn't need to be paved with concrete but could softer with gravel or another material.
- Keep big paths paved

Fences & edge security

- One participant spoke in favor of having a perimeter security fence around the park, though others saw this as unnecessary and perhaps a waste of money.
- Other edge security design measures were discussed such as creating edge seating that would help channel park access and create a less wide open park edge.

Seating

- Everyone advocated many types of seating distributed throughout the park, most like design direction 3.
- Lots of enthusiasm for platform seating as illustrated in design direction 3.
- Agreement on need for more seating with shade at park edges
- Support for idea of seat backs on existing concrete curb
- Some spoke up for tables for chess and other games

Adult exercise equipment

- Strong support for this (shown in design direction 2), as it is healthy and good for young & old!

Sports

- As no real sports players in group, no strong opinions on location of sports facilities.
- Some support for importance of including soccer as it's very popular.

Overall comments on design directions

- Prefer design directions 2 & 3.
- Design direction 1 has too many paths and is too chopped up.
- Some discussion of how 5th Street is quieter than 6th Street, and how the design might best respond.



Group 2

There were long discussions on two major topics followed by shorter discussions of other details. The group first wanted to talk about the location of spray ground, which one person said was the most recognizably different element among the four design directions.

Sprayground location

- Many see this popular feature as the focal point of the park.
- Keep sprayground and playgrounds close together to make it easy to supervise kids, and have lots of seating for adults around it.
- A lively discussion focused on how to create the best relationship between the sprayground and nearby plaza-like shaded seating areas, discussing whether the sprayground should be in the center of larger seating area as it is now.
- Some like keeping the sprayground in the center of the park, saying it is the most recognizable and popular feature.
- Regarding the sprayground location shown in design direction 3, after considering examples at Dillworth and Sister Cities Park, the group discussed key conditions that would make this type of configuration work at Mifflin. Group felt strongly that while the sprayground can be closer to the edge of the park, keeping children safe from cars is

important. This concern might be addressed by barricades as well as ways to make the traffic around the park slower and safer.

- Regarding the sprayground location shown in design direction 2, while group like its distance from the edge of the park (slightly further away from the street than option 3), it would be important to create clear boundaries.
- A few people liked ideas for keeping food vending close to the sprayground because it gives parents something to do, while insisting it would really need to be kept clean.

Location of bathroom and longterm vs short term investment

- Considering potential locations for a bathroom, the conversation turned towards comparing design direction 1, keeping most elements in their current positions, and design directions 2 and 3, which call for moving things around more drastically
- Group discussed pros and cons of these options, recognizing that greater potential improvements to park layout would require greater investments.
- Opinions split fairly evenly regarding these two directions. Some saw benefits of design direction 2, which calls for some relocation but not as much as design direction 3. About half the table believed that “repacking the suitcase” as called for by design direction 3 was worth pursuing if budgets would allow.

Fences

- In response to questions about whether there would be new fences, group discussed design solutions to delineate and separate areas that may decrease needed fencing, such as seating and play wall as shown the photo illustration of playground. Group particularly liked the playground illustration with design direction 3.

Importance of designing for seniors

- A few people spoke up for for creating a variety of seating for seniors, game tables accomodating 5-10 people, and adult exercise equipment.

Preserve diagonal paths

- Group agreed that we should keep the diagonal cross-park paths. A few observed that people will travel through the central green of option 4 and it will get messy.

