

MEMORANDUM

To: Ken Hampian
From: John Ashbaugh
Date: November 23, 2008

Re: Mitchell Park / Senior Center Parking Lot

On Saturday, November 22 I met with a number of leaders of the Senior Center as well as several community members (see attached list) at Mitchell Park. I had invited several community members who had contacted me in the weeks since the election to express opinions or to seek information about the parking lot proposal. I asked these individuals to meet with me on the site, so that I could listen to their concerns, and I also invited the Senior Center leaders to hear directly from them, so as to gain some context before the December 2 Council hearing on this matter. Six attendees had been active in the Senior Center and supported the parking lot proposal; seven community members had been strongly opposed to the parking lot, and two persons were undecided. They ranged in age from 14 to... well, advanced "maturity." In many respects, this group was representative of the competing interests that have generated so much controversy over the proposed parking lot to serve the Senior Center.

Before I begin to summarize the results of the meeting, I'd like to commend the Public Works Department for responding to my request to stake out the boundaries of the parking lot prior to this meeting. Jay Walters was very helpful in this matter, and the staking helped all of us to visualize the proposal. We also had a set of the plans and specs provided to me by Jay's staff for the meeting.

I'm forwarding this summary of the meeting in the hope that it will advance the dialogue among the Council and the public on December 2. Please feel free to forward all or part of it to other Council members or staff. The attendees are each receiving a "cc" of this e-mail, and I invite them to share with us their own perspectives of the Saturday meeting.

My recollection of the meeting reveals the following points:

1. Attendees heard, and (in my opinion) most of us agreed, that the Senior Center is likely to stay in that location for the foreseeable future. Agatha Reardon reported on the extensive services that the Senior Center volunteers provide there, and she and the other Senior Center leaders related some of the history of their efforts to provide improved on-site parking for their members.
2. There is also substantial agreement that the Center needs on-site wheelchair parking separate from the curb parking now available, especially due to the fact that the ADA no longer permits wheelchair spaces to be designated at street curbs.
3. There is also some agreement, although not as much, that the Senior Center needs additional standard parking stalls on-site. Curb parking on adjacent streets does not appear to be suitable for seniors who are mobility-impaired. I also made the point that every time we set aside curb parking for the exclusive use of seniors using the Center, it diminishes the availability of those spaces to the general public.

4. The proposed lot represents a professional design response to the problem, but it might be improved in order to gain a wider acceptance in the community if certain key features are incorporated into the design.

Specific concerns that were raised during the meeting, and which might be addressed by a revised design, include the following:

1. Continued risk to the Heritage Tree, even though the tree protection measures recommended by the City Arborist have been incorporated into the project.
2. Location of the new BBQ and picnic area within the historic turfed area of the park.
3. Unmet need for a loading area for the Center that is separate from either the curb or the lot parking.

In order to address these concerns, the meeting progressed to a set of possible design changes to the parking lot design. These changes generally focused on configurations that might reduce the disturbance to the Heritage Tree, relocate the proposed replacement BBQ and picnic area, and improve overall aesthetics of the park while still providing a significant increment of new parking for the Center. Here are two options that were discussed – Please note that both options would involve re-aligning the proposed lot so that ingress and egress are both obtained from Buchon Street, thus eliminating the exit driveway onto Santa Rosa.

Option 1: This option would involve a looped driveway around a small lot, making use of the existing curb cut (slightly enlarged) that is used for access to the maintenance shed. This shed would need to be re-located; if located nearer to the playground, it could be accessed by a northerly extension from the new parking lot's access aisle, which would also provide access to relocated trash receptacles. My preliminary investigation shows that such a design could possibly include a total of 9 spaces (five standard and four HC), assuming that the north leg of the loop driveway would maintain a 20' buffer from the Heritage Tree (about twice the distance in the current design). This option would also potentially save one of the Buchon Street curb spaces that would be eliminated with the current design. Additionally, since it eliminates the exit driveway to Santa Rosa Street, there would be no need to red-paint the existing HC space to the right of the proposed exit drive as in the current design. Finally, the existing driveway from Santa Rosa Street that now serves the maintenance staff parking could be maintained for that purpose, and since it would no longer be needed for access to the trash receptacles, this driveway could also serve double-duty as a loading space for the Center. It should be noted, however, that this option could entail risks to the 18" magnolia near the building's southwest corner, depending on the location of the exit driveway on Buchon.

Option 2: This option would resemble the current lot in its basic alignment and configuration, except that the driveway and access aisle would be widened for two-way traffic and 90-degree parking. The connection to an exit driveway on Santa Rosa would be deleted, and additionally one standard stall on the west side would be eliminated in order to reduce the disturbance to the Heritage tree. This proposal would also maintain the existing driveway from Santa Rosa for maintenance and loading purposes, and it would thus preserve the

wheelchair space now proposed for elimination to the right of the proposed exit driveway. In this proposal, relocation of the maintenance shed to the north end of the parking lot could also enable us to eliminate the curb cut for the access driveway from Buchon Street to this shed, thus freeing up a curbside space that is lost to that existing driveway. The disadvantages of this option are: 1) Angled parking is always more convenient than 90-degree spaces; and 2) The wider access aisle and 90-degree spaces would mean more encroachment of the lot into the park area to the west.

It is also suggested that another design change be considered, whether or not either of the above parking lot design options are carried forward: Relocate the proposed replacement picnic area/BBQ from the site west of the Heritage Tree instead to a location to the north of the restrooms. This would protect the integrity of the turf area that surrounds the bandstand.

In my view, Option 2 is a more realistic design alternative, since it would provide 13 spaces within the on-site lot rather than 9. Furthermore, it could be accomplished without endangering the magnolia tree. Either option would, however, reduce disturbance to the Heritage Tree. I will acknowledge, however, the distinct possibility that both of these options have been previously considered, and rejected, by your staff.

The individuals who attended this meeting are listed below; as noted above, I'm also sending them a cc of this memo.

Thanks for considering these suggestions; I would be willing to meet with you and other staff members to go over these options in more detail, and to get a more complete briefing on the rationale for the current design, at a mutually convenient time. Please feel free to contact me as warranted to follow up on this communication.

Attendees*

Boz Schrage	Rosemary Wilvert	Chuck Oldham
Pat Cormick	Bette Kulp	Rose Marie Shabley
Dick Rall	Mila Vujavich-LaBarre	Agatha Reardon
Jacquie Rall	Jan Marx	Stephan Lamb
Cal Wilvert	Emily McBride	Pat Harris

** Note: Attendance at the meeting does not imply concurrence with any of the observations written here; individuals are free to contribute their own comments as to the content of the discussion or the design options that were discussed.*