

**Public Leadership Group Meeting Summary**  
**Meeting #10 on October 8, 2013**  
**Top Greene Community Center**

Materials from the meeting are available for download here:  
<http://chavisconversation.skeo.com/public-leadership-group/>. A project binder with hardcopies of all documents is located at the John Chavis Community Center; please check with the front desk.

**Major Outcomes & Decisions**

1. The Public Leadership Group supported the following recommendation for the South Park Heritage Walk Report,  
*"The Public Leadership Group of the Chavis Park Community Conversation has reviewed the recommendations in the South Park Heritage Walk that relate to John Chavis Memorial Park and finds them consistent in concept with the current vision of the Revised Master Plan for John Chavis Memorial Park. (October 8, 2013)"*
2. The Public Leadership Group decided to hold Public Forum #2 to review the draft concept plan and master plan report on December 10, 2013 in place of PLG Meeting #12.
3. The Public Leadership Group voted to have City of Raleigh staff explore rescinding the conservation easement with the State of North Carolina.  
**9 PLG Members** voted **In Favor** to explore rescinding the conservation easement  
**3 PLG Members** voted **Against** to explore rescinding the conservation easement  
**1 PLG Member** was **Undecided**

**Overview**

The goals of Meeting #10 were to share and discuss the PLG's process suggestions, review revised scenarios and prepare for the public forum.

Vernice Miller-Travis began the meeting by acknowledging that the agenda had been amended to provide time to hear the suggestions to clarify and improve the planning process brought forward by PLG members since the September meeting. Vernice then asked PLG members and staff who attended the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of John Chavis Memorial Park to share one experience or observation about the event. Presentations were then given by two PLG members on their ideas for the planning process followed by discussion of these ideas by the PLG. Emily Ander gave a brief presentation on the South Park Heritage Walk Plan. Vernice walked the PLG through their varied accomplishments over the past year, which was highlighted by six posters around the room. David Shouse presented a PowerPoint presentation on the difference between Concept Plans and Schematic Design to explain the PLG's role in the Master Planning process. Alisa Hefner followed this presentation with an overview of two hybrid scenarios that have emerged from PLG meetings and discussions for the park thus far. Her presentation was followed by a brief discussion by the PLG and a round robin discussion to hear from each PLG member,



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which of the two scenario options they preferred and why. Due to the meeting running well over the agreed timeframe, the PLG did not have time to prepare for the public forum though a date to hold the forum was agreed upon, December 10.

The meeting adjourned without discussing Meeting Summary #9. It will be reviewed along with Meeting Summary #10 at the November 12 PLG Meeting.

### **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration – PLG Attendee Feedback**

- We should have more special events at the park.
- One PLG member talked to an individual who didn't know the park existed until this event.
- The park needs more public accommodations to support events including restrooms, lighting, electrical power outlets, and seating.
- Have students who have learned about John Chavis share this information with a larger audience.
- I had difficulty parking.
- More special events are needed. Great planning went into this one.
- More awareness of the park is needed.
- More activities are needed and more regularly.
- Do it more!
- Excited, attracted natives who have not been back in the area in years.
- Excitement, happiness, emotion
- Great stress reliever
- Intergenerational and diverse

### **Public Leadership Group Process**

- Vernice apologized to the PLG for two misunderstandings that came out of Meeting #9.
  - The PLG is planning and designing the revised Master Plan for John Chavis Memorial Park for ALL of Raleigh's citizens, including future citizens, NOT just for children.
  - Vernice brought forward the idea of a John Chavis themed park as an idea discussed by Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources staff. PRCR staff actually discussed the idea of a train-themed playground since there are no themed playgrounds in the City's park system. The thought was such a unique feature could be a potential 'wow' factor.
- PLG needs meeting materials in a more timely manner, especially when the PLG needs to vote. They need enough time to take the information to the community, and at least one (1) week prior to the meeting, as specified in the Charter, would be best.
- Don't expect the PLG to review documents over the weekend.
- There is never enough time to discuss everything and to have robust discussion. The PLG needs to have a comfort level at the end of each meeting.
- Need more discussion within the PLG because people may not understand the process.
- Don't push the PLG to make decisions on a preconceived timeframe. Allow time for reflection, discussion, etc.



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- Process concerns began during Meeting #7 with the meeting summary.
- Doodle poll to schedule Public Forum. Should have been discussed during a PLG meeting.
- Neighborwoods – a hindrance to the Master Planning Process. There is no money for lighting, bathrooms, power, etc. for JCMP until completion of the Master Plan so why is there money for trees?
- **Public Input Process**
  - How is public comment shared with the Public Leadership Group?
  - Discuss public input in meeting not just in the meeting summaries.
  - No community input opens the process to criticism.
  - How is citizen input on specific elements incorporated into decision making? The PLG must represent citizens input.
  - Project team takes information from meetings and processes it and then brings it back to the PLG's next meeting for review.
  - Time for community input should be considered in delivery of information and the number of options presented
  - I've been representing the community from a big picture perspective, how the community would use the park. The public is unsure of all the possibilities so the PLG has to serve as experts.
  - PLG as experts, "What could be...", to larger community. Focus on vision and not details.
  - We should invite the public or those with concerns to attend PLG meetings in order to listen and learn. The public doesn't always have the facts to be able to make educated decisions.
  - We elected ourselves to represent various groups, from young to old. We need to choose activities and amenities that fit all age groups. The PLG, as a collective, needs to see ourselves as representing all groups. Consider our sphere of influence. It is an imperfect process. Want robust discussion. I look at the park as a whole. At some point we have to make a decision and put the Master Plan together.
  - Need public advocacy and support to implement the Master Plan
  - Inconsistency in which members of the public (non-PLG) cannot speak in PLG meetings. Hearing from elected officials should not be more important than hearing from tax paying citizens.
  - Utilize every opportunity to obtain public input particularly at park events. There was no PLG table during the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.
  - At what point is the public involved in the process and how is it publicized so they know to come?
    - Two opportunities for the public to review the PLG's work and get involved
      - Public Forum #2: December 10, 2013
      - Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board Meeting

### Train Discussion

- There is concern about public art being used to represent the train.
- Choose 'wow' factor/amusement not public art because public art should be throughout the park.
- Consider public art after 'big' decisions are made
- Need to make space allowances for public art
- Advocate both: public art + wheeled train NOT either/or



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- Can the miniature train still be considered as an option for amusements for children?
- Many people want a miniature train in the park but I only have one vote.
- Since there cannot be a track train let's think about the train with the words 'Moving Ahead' or 'Moving into the Future'.
- Consider the wheeled train + miniature train.
- Let's consider using public art to represent the miniature train and having a wheeled train especially to increase accessibility and make more of the park accessible.
- Honoring the miniature train was discussed at Meeting #9. The group had varying understandings regarding the decisions they were making about the train. A straw poll vote revealed the following:
  - **5 PLG members** thought that they were narrowing four (4) choices for the train into two (2) choices for the Project Team to explore further and bring back to the PLG. This is what the Project Team intended with the discussion during Meeting #9.
  - **2 PLG members** were not in attendance at Meeting #9
  - **2 PLG members** did not comment/passed
  - **2 PLG members** thought the miniature train could be pursued outside of the result of the vote.
- Some members feel the issue of the miniature train needs to be addressed at a future meeting.

### Creek

- Visibility, safety and security for the western portion of the park is the goal for the creek.
- Put together a proposal in the Master Plan and then send to NCDENR
- No trees in the photos provided by Joseph. Trees and vegetation filter rain and storm water and are needed along creek banks. Rocks and stones (rip rap) are for erosion control. We don't need to remove vegetation beyond the brush and invasives. We would need to add rip rap to banks after removing the brush and invasives.
- Will rip rap banks allow for forest succession?
- Will the State allow this? The State will not allow these ideas under the existing conservation easement. The City will have to rescind the conservation easement with the State in order to pursue these ideas. This may include paying the State back from the money they put into the stream restoration.
- Managing vegetation to increase visibility in order to prevent the homeless from living in the creek.
- Better management of the vegetation – removal of invasives, replace invasives with native species, create visual windows, provide physical access to the stream.
- Let's work with what we have rather than going back to the State. This discussion is setting us back.
- Consider the current political environment. Do you want to take this forward right now? May have to overturn NC State Law and the conservation easement.
- We just want to investigate the opportunity.
- The PLG voted on the City of Raleigh exploring the opportunity to rescind the conservation easement with the State.
  - **9 PLG Members** voted **In Favor** to explore rescinding the conservation easement



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- **3 PLG Members** voted **Against** to explore rescinding the conservation easement
- **1 PLG Member** was **Undecided**
- Staff to discuss and bring their conversations back to the PLG at a later meeting. This investigation could take 15 days to 6 months or longer. Therefore the Chavis Park Community Conversation process should continue to move forward even as decisions around the possible pursuit of rescinding the Little Rock Creek Conservation Easement are decided upon.

### Public Forum

- Public Forum allows opportunity for public feedback and then for the PLG to take this feedback and incorporate it and make any changes they feel are appropriate.
- The concept taken to the public doesn't have to be the final scenario.
- Public Forum needs to leave people with a deeper understanding of what the PLG has been doing.
- What if public feedback pushes us back to the option we didn't choose as the PLG?
  - City of Raleigh prefers the PLG choose one option for the public to react to
  - It is human nature and easier to get people to respond to making a choice among a few proposed options, rather than a more open ended process such as, 'what do you think?'
- The Public Leadership Group decided to hold the Public Forum to review the draft concept plan and master plan report on December 10, 2013 in place of their regularly scheduled Meeting #12.

### South Park Heritage Walk Plan

- The PLG supported the following recommendation for the South Park Heritage Walk Report,  
*"The Public Leadership Group of the Chavis Park Community Conversation has reviewed the recommendations in the South Park Heritage Walk that relate to John Chavis Memorial Park and finds them consistent in concept with the current vision of the Revised Master Plan for John Chavis Memorial Park. (October 8, 2013)"*
- A straw poll was taken and **16 PLG members** of the 16 present voted in favor of supporting the above recommendation. The recommendation will go back to South Park-East Raleigh Neighborhood Association (SPERNA), who will share it with the Department of City Planning and it will be incorporated into the report that moves forward to City Council.

### Revised Scenarios

- There is no formal baseball field in MP options. Where are the baseball field and the tennis courts in these two scenarios?
  - Incorporate the baseball field within the multiuse field within the track.
  - There is the potential for user conflict. It may not be a good idea. This will be explored in schematic design.
  - Court areas are large enough to accommodate tennis, basketball and other sports and fenced areas for camp uses.
  - Close proximity to Community Center for supervision
- Four tennis courts are desired by the representative of the Ebony Racquet Club.



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- Incorporate picnic tables along Chavis Way. Utilize **all** park land.
- Original carousel reuse ideas – how is previous input being incorporated?
- Utilize original carousel house as a museum
- What about conveying reuse of carousel building as a restaurant? Where is that suggestion reflected?
  - This information would be reflected within the Master Plan Report document.
- Can the area on the eastern border of the park accommodate uses?
  - Potentially, needs to be explored further
- Both scenarios address PLG concerns about MLK Jr. Blvd. entrance
- Celebrate corner with art, signage, etc.
- Chavis Way/MLK intersection is dangerous. Safety of ingress and egress off Chavis Way is a concern.
  - NCDOT/COR Public Works will have to be involved in this investigation
- Elevation change between Cape Avenue and creek seems difficult making accessibility and the crossing the creek difficult.
  - Will have to be worked out in schematic design
- Are our concerns great enough to push our process back a month?
- No, PLG members said they are ready to move forward.

### **Option #1**

- Looks better for views of downtown
- Like courts next to field
- Like courts next to track and center of park
- Like courts near track – closer to activity
- **5 PLG members** are excited to move forward with this option.

### **Option #2**

- Uses topography at baseball fields
- Courts would be a “wow” factor from MLK
- Rather have structures not parking on MLK
- Utilizes unused portions of the park
- Views from carousel
- Ease of access to the indoor pool
- More flexibility as far as what you can see from MLK
- More utilization of the carousel house to lift up history of John Chavis
- Amphitheater style seating around courts on corner are isolated from other activities and may be under-utilized
- **8 PLG members** are excited to move forward with this option.

### **Straw Poll Vote on Scenario Options**

- **1 PLG member** was not ready to vote
- **0 PLG members** prefer Scenario 1 (1 PLG member preferred this option because the courts are next to the fields but chose to vote for another option to support the group.)
- **8 PLG members** prefer Scenario 2 (1 PLG member preferred this option because he didn't like parking being located on the corner of MLK and Chavis Way)
- **4 PLG members** are comfortable moving forward with either Option #1 or Option #2



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## **Meeting Evaluation Feedback**

- Since the group did not have time to discuss the format of Public Forum #2, most PLG members do not feel comfortable with the level of preparation for this event.
- Many PLG members recognized that the group did not adhere to the meeting agenda and timeframe and this was frustrating for some.
- Some PLG members appreciated the opportunity for group members to voice their concerns and proposals and then allow the other members to discuss and vote.
- A recommendation was made for a 'public trust' check-in at the beginning of each meeting moving forward. Begin by 'clearing the air' from the start to allow an opportunity for feelings and/or any misunderstandings that may have developed since the last meeting to be shared.
- Some PLG members felt there was redundancy in the issues that were discussed, some in-depth at previous meetings, while other issues were extraneous to the process.
- A request was made not to revisit issues decided in past meetings.
- There are a lot of times that I feel that my comments, concerns or input is not being heard or considered. What is the process for getting things included in the Master Plan?
- Not enough time was provided for discussion before voting on the scenarios.
- We should discuss how to commemorate John Chavis through public art during an upcoming meeting.
- Some PLG members are comfortable with how the process is moving forward and are frustrated by the time overruns and not being able to accomplish what is on the agenda.

## **Attendance**

**PLG Members Present:** Jacqueline Howell, Lorenzo Jackson, Vivian Lee, F. Lonnette Williams, Jonathun Muldrow, Joseph Ellerbee, Richard Bostic, Gretchel Carter-Hinton, Rhonda Muhammad, Cecilia Zuvic, Margo White, Rob Wylie, Eyvonne Dailey, James E. Williams, Angela Jackson-Mann

**PLG Members Absent:** Virginia Stanley Tally, Hallie Mittleman, Bennie A. Mack, Jr., Seddrick Hill

**Withdrawn PLG Members:** Bishop Victor Glover, Geraldine Williams, Jaquan Bennett

**Staff & Guests:** Vernice Miller-Travis, Alisa Hefner, Sarah Little, David Shouse, Denise Saunders, Ivan Dickey, Dick Bailey, Emily Ander, Jo Howell, Morgan Jackson-Mann, Matt Keough