



omaha by design

Green in the City Place Game Workshop

Sept. 5, 2013

House of Loom

Introduction

Omaha by Design and the *Green in the City* Stakeholder Committee partnered to host a Place Game workshop Sept. 5 at the House of Loom. One segment was evaluated – the *Green in the City* project site at 11th and Pacific in downtown Omaha.

Evaluation Tools

Workshop participants were asked to evaluate the site according to the four criteria outlined below, which rank responses on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree”).

Comfort and image

- Attractive
- Feels safe
- Clean/well maintained
- Comfortable places to sit

Access and linkage

- Identifiable from a distance
- Walkable
- Bikeable
- Accessible by transit
- Clean information/signage

Uses and activities

- Good mix of activities
- Frequent community events
- Area is busy
- Encourages physical activity
- Area is vital economically

Sociability

- People in groups
- Evidence of volunteerism
- Sense of pride and ownership
- Children and seniors present

General Observations

Omaha's Little Italy/Near South Side was once home to a streetcar line, a young Fred Astaire and a burgeoning Italian immigrant population. Local residents shopped at the corner drug, worshipped in ornate cathedrals and stayed in touch with their neighbors via front-porch chats. The S. 10th Street corridor, bordered by the Old Market on the north and Henry Doorly Zoo on the south, is a key component of the neighborhood. It is designated as an Area of Civic Importance in the Urban Design Element of Omaha's master plan.

Workshops participants value the site's history, proximity to the Old Market and Missouri River, and views of the city skyline. Concerns focused on three areas – noise from truck traffic and proximity to the postal annex, exposure to sun and wind, and pedestrian obstacles.

In terms of the Place Game's four criteria, workshop participants ranked the site's access/linkage as its highest asset with an average score of 2.6, followed by uses/activities with an average score of 2.0 and comfort/image with an average score of 1.9. Sociability was ranked the lowest with an average score of 1.7.

Ideas for improving the site ranged from building an observation tower to creating a maze to transforming it into a sculpture park.

Analysis

What do you like best about this place?

- Topography (ability to create unique spaces)
- Accessibility
- Elevated
- Openness
- View of downtown/the city
- Beautiful sunset and skyline view
- Blank canvas
- Proximity to Old Market, Missouri River and historic Omaha
- Potential for high usage
- Location
- Historic context
- Corner lot
- Stable business presence
- Trees in the surrounding neighborhood
- Existing light poles (use in new design for historic reference)
- Spark/catalyze redevelopment

What is the biggest problem with this place?

- No programming
- Overhead power lines
- Exposure to sun and wind
- Too much concrete

- Loud traffic (Post Office trucks)
- Hard
- The slope
- Noise
- Not connected with anything
- Postal Annex and other surrounding buildings could have better uses
- Ugly and empty
- Topography
- No shade
- Location
- Adjacent industrial feel
- Underutilized
- Pedestrian obstacles
- Perception of being unsafe
- Potential loss of visibility

How would you transform the Green in the City site into a useful, creative neighborhood greenspace that relates to the block's development? (participant vote tally in red)

- Design an amphitheatre for the space that includes some type of seating (4)
- Noise abatement/buffer (3)
- Promote the area as a vibrant social space (3)
- Sculpture park (2)
- Take advantage of the topography – use a two-level approach with a covered platform (south) and a lower level (north) hard surface. Vendors and artists could work in the space periodically. (2)
- Make the area an event location to be changed annually (2)
- Make it a destination – welcoming, local art, changing art feature (2)
- Host public events (2)
- Lighting - like the lighting in River's Edge Park in Council Bluffs (2)
- Terrace the area for multifunctional use (2)
- Vertical pockets (1)
- Maze, meandering paths (1)
- Mural on the south wall of Joe Banana's (1)
- Make use of architectural salvage - like the adjacent Lanoha building (1)
- Preserve view of the sky, view of downtown (1)
- Walkway with waterfall – white noise feature (1)
- Seating, wi-fi, electrical (1)
- Net zero footprint (1)
- Landscape the area (trees, shrubs, flowers), xeriscaping (1)
- Promote the area as a place to eat your lunch to area workers/businesses (1)
- Incorporate art into all aspects of the space as it develops: seating, sculptures – focus on neighborhood sculptures, smokestacks (1)
- Performance/multi-use space
- Improve acoustics for activities
- Electrical
- Plantings or structures for shade and wind protection
- Green walls and solar panels
- Lighting (aesthetic)
- "Kit of Parts" Park

- Have water/ice available
- Make it pet friendly
- Movies – project on buildings
- AI fresco dining
- Shield from post office/truck traffic
- Planters with petunias
- 24-hour activities
- Green islands
- Tie it in with the history of the neighborhood
- Bury electrical lines
- Design a pavilion of some type
- Design a garden to be planted and maintained by area schools (All Saints, Bancroft, Liberty)
- Build a waterfall structure on a hill with climbing access to the hill for viewing the area
- Divide the plot (recreation area, walking, paths, seating)
- Add appropriate lighting – could represent railroad history, streetcar history or neighborhood history
- Build an observation tower to allow viewing of downtown, river, smokestacks
- Develop the space from the grassroots level – non corporate