

FINAL Meeting Minutes
Oak Park Avenue Streetscape Steering Committee
Wednesday, May 24, 2023 – 9:00 AM
Public Works Center

1. Call to Order

Staff Liaison Eric Otto called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM

Roll Call

Present: Mike Fox, Anan Abu-Taleb, Kim Henry, Liz Holt, Emily Lloyd, Tracey Royal, Meg Svec

Absent: Laura Kitsos, Sandra Medina, Monika Robinson, Frank Russo, Jim Solnes

Staff: Village Engineer Bill McKenna, Staff Liaison/Civil Engineer Eric Otto, John Helfrich (Terra Engineering), Jamil Bou-Saab (Terra Engineering), Manisha Kaul (Design Workshop), Sara Egan (Design Workshop), Renee Ludlam (Design Workshop), Yuchen Wang (Design Workshop), John Harris (a5)

2. Agenda Approval

Member Royal made a motion to approve the agenda. It was seconded by Member Fox. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

3. Approval of the Draft April 26, 2023 Minutes

Member Fox made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of the April 26, 2023 Steering Committee Meeting Minutes. It was seconded by Member Abu-Taleb. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

4. Non-Agenda Public Comment

None

5. New Business

Manish Kaul used feedback from previous meetings and brought a revised layout and overall program ideas.

a. Discussion of Overall Program Ideas

Manish Kaul explained the 3 themes that she wanted to focus on: history, art, and future.

She suggested expanding history through the development of lighting and the signage. She also highlighted preserving aspects of Oak Park through different materials and architecture. Renee Ludlam provided information on how the color palette should be relevant to history and the surrounding areas.

A question was asked if whole village is being branded or if one area is being branded. Renee Ludlam responded that only the Oak Park Avenue area because different elements have different lifespans. She also believed that this area should have a distinction while still being in line to the rest of Oak Park.

Manish Kaul explained how art can be celebrated through sculptures, murals, light elements, and performing arts. She suggested including playful furnishings and interactive elements or games.

Manish Kaul described how the future can be a theme through visible sustainable designs and contrasting the architecture with contemporary elements. More specifically, she mentioned planting more native plants, branding more information about climate changes, designing architecture to utilize rain water, and including more contemporary elements that contrast with the architecture.

The committee discussed the following topics:

- It is not clear for whom and to whom we are designing this for.
- How does the group envision this design will fit in with the rest of the village; what elements from the Pleasant District and Downtown Oak Park should be brought through that might inform this design and make the village seem unified.
- What is the story of this district that the group wants to convey.
- What unique elements can be used to unify the district
- Should we integrate elements from the Climate Action Plan
- The addition of banners that represent the district and lights to signify where Oak Park Ave is.
- Highlight how Oak park is an extension of the city of Chicago.

b. Review of Refined Alignment

Sara Egan proposed the possibility of curb extensions and examples of bar-top seating or traditional café style seating in areas of the curb extensions, as well as iconic lighting elements. On the southeast corner of South Blvd and Oak Park Ave area she suggested adding a wayfinding sign, a green wall for advertising, a fireplace surrounded by lounge seating, and a branding vertical icon like a fireplace. Manish Kaul added how this could be an opportunity to showcase Oak Park from the train

station. Sara Egan mentioned how on the Northwest side of South Boulevard, there will be a bus stop and bike parking, while on the northeast wall there would be a green wall or mural.

The committee discussed the possibility to add sidewalk extensions for the other restaurants on the street and the challenge of taking away parking to accommodate the sidewalk extensions. They also discussed adding signage to the landing of the train station at South Boulevard and Oak Park as well as the position of a potential fire element on the corner.

On the corner of Oak Park and North boulevard, Sara Egan envisioned that the clock tower would be persevered, and festoon lighting would go across the midway. She suggested the addition of community seating and an overhead installation of a projection of an art in the west side of Hunter Court, and elements of interactive sculpture, a quartet platform and café seating on the parking garage side of Hunter Court.

The committee members discussed concerns about homelessness and public seating and finding a balance of providing seating for the community that makes sense for the district. Renee Ludlam suggested creating an opportunity to connect the parking garages and alleyways and encourage using the parking garage. Patrick Quigley offered a solution of using lights or sculptures as terminal vistas to generate interest and draw the public to these areas. Patrick Quigley additionally offered the idea of adding lights to churches to announce the entry and exit of commercial district.

c. Streetscape “kit-of-parts” Introduction

Manish Kaul explained how the current paving and edges in Downtown Oak Park, which include granite curbs, brick paving, and bluestone paving, represent where the district is. She suggested extending the curbs and paving to expand Oak Park downtown and changing the material to only bluestone.

The committee discussed the pros and cons of the materials to be used for the sidewalks and crosswalks including durability, maintenance, and cost of materials. Manish Kaul discussed about the different colors of the sidewalk and how the edges can affect the architecture of the nearby buildings.

The committee members then had a discussion on materials and design elements that resonated with them. Some considerations for the future are changing the design and color of the existing elements. Member suggest keeping the signage same across village for continuity.

Patrick Quigley emphasized the power of light sources and layers of lights as esthetically pleasing and economically responsive. Manish Kaul suggested simplifying the benches, bicycle racks, and garbage cans which could help to

maintain the historic intent of the streetscape and make them more contemporary elements.

6. Old Business

Staff Liaison Otto reminded the members of the Committee to complete their Open Meetings Act training and submit their completion certificates to him.

7. Adjourn

With no further business, Member Abu-Taleb made a motion to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Member Fox. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 AM.

Submitted by:

Jay Ahn

Administrative Intern