

GRIP

Presentation to

Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Recreation Department

Development Committee

July 24, 2003

Gillham Road Improvement Project (GRIP) is an undertaking by five neighborhoods and the parks and recreations department to prepare and implement a master plan for Gillham Road from Armour to Cleaver Boulevards.

The neighborhoods are:

- Broadway-Gillham
- Hyde Park Neighborhood Association
- Old Hyde Park Historic District
- Rockhill Homes Association
- Southmoreland Neighborhood Association

Last November Hyde Park neighborhood residents with concerns about the playground south of 41<sup>st</sup> met with parks representatives. Even though PIAC money had been approved for a new playground the group soon concluded that before a new playground could be designed many residents needed to be involved in developing a master plan for Gillham. The Hyde Park Neighborhood Association residents formed GRIP and decided that the first step would be to host a Charrette. The process has evolved with two objects: improving the parkway and being inclusive. There is no formal structure; Dona Boley facilitates the meetings and keeps notes; and decisions are made by consensus. The core group communications are through emails.

An invitation to all interested Hyde Park residents was placed in the *Hyde Parker*, the Hyde Park Neighborhood Association newsletter, and special invitations were extended to the four neighborhood presidents that border the west side of Gillham Road as well as the parks department. Twenty-six individuals participated in the Charrette on April 26. Jennifer Wilding from Kansas City Consensus facilitated. Participants were provided with an overview of the historic significance of the parkway, copies of George Kessler's original plans for Gillham Road, and the Gillham Road and Hyde Park sections from the "Landscape Architectural/Historic Survey of Parks and Boulevards, 1893-1940, Kansas City, Missouri." While preparing the documentations we discovered that this section of Gillham Road was acquired in 1903 and finished in 1907. The parkway will be 100 years old in 4 years. This became the GRIP target for completion of the project. Attached are the Introduction, Gillham Road History and Hyde Park History provided to the participants.

First the importance of Gillham Road was confirmed.

- Gillham Road and particularly Hyde Park are historically significant and as part of the Kessler designed parks and boulevard system are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
- Four historic residential districts with one more on the way surround the parkway.
- The parkway will be 100 years old in 1907.
- The parkway is a major roadway in the Kansas City Heritage Corridor Plan.
- The parkway is THE major recreational facility in Westport.

The participants divided into five groups and brainstormed the following:

- What works now?
- What doesn't work now?
- What would you NOT like to see in the park in the future?
- What would you want to see in the park in the future?

**Charrette Results** (Results summary and individual groups attached)

**What works now?**

- Beauty, Trees, Green Space, Oasis, Open, Views, Uncluttered, Pastoral, Special (Unanimous)

- Diverse Activities, Multi-functional, Positive Uses, High Usage—Playing Fields, Tennis Courts, Playgrounds, Walking Trails, Dog Walks
- Identifies Area

**What doesn't work now?**

- Pedestrian Accessibility North to South and East to West
- Traffic Speed
- Maintenance — Litter, Dead Trees, the Parks Building, Trails
- Safety — Overly Dense Landscaping, Illegal Activity, Homeless, Crumbling Stairs, Lighting
- Pool/Playground

**What would you NOT like to see in the park in the future?**

- Wading Pool—Empty, In Current Format
- Status quo
- Concentrated use near residences
- Abandoned or Demolished Parks Building
- Original Landscape Plan Compromised
- Topography of the Playground as it is Now

**What would you want to see in the park in the future?**

- Spray Feature for Kids Replacing Wading Pool
- Restored Landscaping
- Reuse of the Park's Building
- Youth Programs, Organized Activities

GRIP decided that a good next step would be a walk through the parkway on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. By that Saturday, GRIP had obtained copies of the parks department archive pictures of Gillham Road. (Some copies are attached.) These were taken on the walk so that current pictures could be taken from approximately the same location as the historic pictures. Extensive notes and pictures were taken. The walk results were divided into six categories:

- Infrastructure
- Landscaping
- Recreational Facilities
- Access/Connections
- Park Land Taken for Private Use
- Miscellaneous

**Walk Results** (Detailed Walk result report and summary of the capital needs identified attached)

**Infrastructure**

- Curbing and roadway throughout in excellent condition.
- Maintenance building needs new roof, gutters and soffit repair.
- Stairs:
  - All stone stairs need major repair. (Pictures attached.)
  - Concrete stairs need routine maintenance.
- Upper trail needs major repair

**Landscaping** (Pictures attached)

- HONEYSUCKLE, HONEYSUCKLE, HONEYSUCKLE  
  
“Plants That Won’t Stay Put” Exotic plants are invading many of Missouri’s native ecosystems. Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri
- Extensive tree lost without replacements.

**Recreation Facilities** (Pictures attached)

- Tennis Courts Generally in Good Repair.
- Baseball Diamonds in Good Condition.
- Playground Between 41st and 42<sup>nd</sup>
  - Berms are unnatural and would never have been done by Kessler
  - Too spread out.
  - Equipment not placed well for monitoring children
  - Seating should be by side of equipment
  - Sand surface hard to maintain
  - Drainage problem with surface sand washing down
  - Children like old airplane, truck, etc. and horses
  - Newest equipment
    - Functional
    - Geared for “pre-school”
    - Coating wearing off
    - Faded
    - Don’t like color
    - Good surface where children land but weeds grounding underneath
- Wading pool (notes throughout)

**Access/Connections** (Pictures attached)

- Only access to Hyde Park is at the ends—36th and 38th Streets. South end only has walk from west side not east side.
- The walk on the west side from 38th to 39th is part none existing, part black top that is almost gone and concrete where buses park.
- No connections to Eagle Scout Memorial.

- Locust black top connect off of Gillham Road almost gone.
- The Plaza plan recommended making 43rd street a major walk connection from Broadway to Gillham Road. Would be great to connect Mill Creek walk to Gillham Road trail.
- Stairs from Rockhill Terrace and West Gillham Road end on upper grass terrace. Terrace needs walk and we need stairs from terrace down to walking trail.
- Can south access be improved to Conservation facility?

**Park Land Taken for Private Use—All on West Side** (Pictures attached)

- What are the park boundaries around Westport Middle School? Who owns the stairs?
- On west side, north off 41st street—land taken for drive going back to apartment building. Trash everywhere. Drive being used by house, which also has drive off of Locust.
- On west side, south of 42nd street—land taken for drive back to apartment building. Major trash problem.
- On west side Rockhill Manor parking next to 43rd street. People using this area believe they are walking on private property instead of park's property.

**Miscellaneous** (Pictures attached)

- Crosswalk markings are faint.
- Better markings at school bus parking by Westport Middle School. Road looks like it is three lanes rather than two.
- Picnic facilities? Grills in strange places.
- Trash barrels Unsightly.
- Not Many Benches
- Lighting Poor—park lighting only in Hyde Park. Nothing in south along trail especially upper trail.
- Couple of low spots with water problems.
- Deep sink hole south of 38th about where Harris Creek would be passing underground. May be problem with creek drain—100 years old.

An email survey was prepared from the Charrette and Walk observations and distributed to the GRIP participants. (Survey attached) Participants rated 42 items as:

- A. Top priority, do ASAP
- B. Definitely want done but can wait for second phase.
- C. Want be not as much as A. and B., put in third phase.
- D. Would like included in Master Plan as part of overall objectives (include here changes to existing facilities when they need replacement/major repair/up-dating.
- E. Don't know. Need more research on demand/need for facility.
- F. Don't want/like, don't include in master plan.

## Survey Results (Chart attached)

### **Highest Priority**

- Remove Bush Honeysuckle
- Fix Low Spots/Water Problems

### **Priority**

- Clean-up Land Around Park's Building
- Replace Playground Equipment at 41<sup>st</sup>
- Add Lighting
- Stone Step Repair
- Stone Water Fountain Repair

### **Needs to be Done**

- Repair Park's Maintenance Building
- Remove wading pool and replace with spray pool by the 39<sup>th</sup> street building
- More and Different Trash Cans
- Repair Upper Trail
- Plant New Trees
- Repair & Complete Pedestrian Connections
- Traffic Calming
- Either move parks maintenance or all of parks out of the 39<sup>th</sup> street building and find another use.
- More & Different Benches
- Better Picnic facilities
- More Drinking Fountains

### **Possible New Features**

- Playground north of 46<sup>th</sup> Street
- Skateboard Feature
- Off-Lease Dog Park
- Basketball Courts
- Frisbee Course
- Tennis Courts North of 46<sup>th</sup>
- Playground north of 38<sup>th</sup>
- Remove Two Outside Tennis Courts at 39<sup>th</sup>
- Remove Hill in Hyde Park
- Move Tennis Courts in Hyde Park to Original Location and Create New Feature

GRIP then decided to host a Gillham Road Revitalization Forum on June 28<sup>th</sup> at the Discovery Center. Nineteen hundred flyers were distributed throughout all five neighborhoods. The flyer included an invitation to the Forum, historic background on Gillham Road, why there is a Forum, GRIP's highest priorities, possible new features, and short survey. Residents could attend the Forum, mail the survey back, or respond through email. All forms of communication were used. GRIP included the following Highest Priorities in the Forum flyer:

- Remove bush honeysuckle
- Fix low spots/water problems
- Clean up around parks' building
- Replace playground equipment between 41<sup>st</sup> & 43<sup>rd</sup> streets (funding in place for this)
- Add lighting
- Repair stone steps

- Repair stone water fountains

**Forum Survey Results** (charts and summary of comments attached)

**Need Now**

- Spray feature replacing wading pool 56%
- Complete sidewalk connections 49%
- Plant new trees 46%
- Traffic calming 46%

**Don't Want**

- Basketball courts 51%
- Frisbee course 32%

**Skateboard Park**

- Need Now 26.8%
- Need Sometime 14.6%
- No Opinion 14.6%
- Not Important 14.6%
- Don't Want 29.3%

**Need Now or Sometime**

- Repair upper trail 80%
- Plant new trees 78%
- Benches 76%
- Repair parks' maintenance building 76%
- Complete sidewalk connections 73%
- Spray feature replacing wading pool 71%
- More water fountains 71%
- Traffic calming 66%
- Playground equipment south end of Hyde Park 66%

**CONCLUSION**

Based on all the input, GRIP (all five neighborhoods) decided to:

- Apply for 4<sup>th</sup> district PIAC funds for the permanent removal of the exotic plants (especially the bush honeysuckle) and general clean up of the landscape.
- Apply for citywide PIAC funds for a new spray feature south of the 39<sup>th</sup> street building and removal of the junior pool at 41st. The baseball diamond would be moved slightly south or removed. At one time there had been 4 ball diamonds here and this move will still leave plenty of room for the other field events. So far this year this diamond has seen little if any usage.
- Request that the parks department use funds from the Park Building Repair citywide PIAC funds to repair the roof on the 39<sup>th</sup> Street building. Funding had been identified in the 2002-3 citywide projects for this but the project has not been started. GRIP is unanimous that this building be kept for some kind of use and that it is maintained.

- Request that excess PIAC funds that have been approved to-date for playground and Gillham Road improvements be spent on stone step repair in Hyde Park. (The new playground will not require all of the approved funds.)

Once these projects are funded we will start with the next phase, which includes the planting of new trees, completion of the stone step repair, and completion of the connections to include some new sidewalk and step construction. The first step has to be the cleanup and preparation for long-term maintenance of the landscape.

The highest priority items in the forum flyer and the forum survey results with 60% plus “Need Now or Sometime” are what should be considered for the draft master plan. All other items do not at this time have enough support for inclusion. Some particularly the skateboard feature don’t have consensus and would require extensive discussion and debate.

A few GRIP subcommittees will probably be formed. Recently the playground subcommittee toured several parks and have meet with Scott Overbay to give him their desires for the new playground south of 41<sup>st</sup>. He is currently working on a design, which we hope to review in September.

Almost all of the responses to the project have been positive and some very supportive. Over 60 individuals have participated in some way. There have been a couple of negatives. One individual didn’t want any thing and basically wants to sell his house and move. Another thought the bush honeysuckle was native and doesn’t like the idea of using Round-up to get rid of it.

Dona Boley