



Watertown City Council
Monday, June 8, 2015
7:00 p.m.

WORK SESSION AGENDA

Discussion Items:

1. Thompson Park Plans
 - Kenneth A. Mix, Planning and Community Development Coordinator
2. Potential Developments of Thompson Park
 - Rev. Fred Garry, Friends of Thompson Park

June 4, 2015

To: The Honorable Mayor and City Council
From: Kenneth A. Mix, Planning & Community Development Coordinator
Subject: Thompson Park Plans

Introduction

With a number of projects recently being proposed for Thompson Park (i.e., 10th Mountain Division Monument, Slash Pad, Playground Renovations, and Restroom Improvements) there has been renewed interest in preserving and restoring John C. Thompson's legacy. The park's historical significance comes from the fact that was designed by Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects.

If the desire is to promote the park as being an Olmsted-designed park, then individual projects should not be contrary to that design. Projects should be evaluated not only on whether they are a positive addition to the community, but also on how they impact the park as a whole. Preferably projects should restore the original design or perhaps even implement parts of the design that were not constructed. Only a small portion of the design was actually constructed. Unfortunately, some of the projects completed since 1920 have interfered with the design.

The Olmsteds had a very specific design philosophy and it does take some study to understand it. I've attached a copy of their 1903 General Plan for the park.

The Master Plan for the park is a work in progress and time does not allow the completion of the plan before decisions have to be made for what is currently proposed. The purpose of this memo is to describe the status of current projects, how they fit into an overall plan for the park and to introduce a mechanism for encouraging further improvements. The locations of the projects described below are shown on an attached map.

10th Mountain Division Monument

A committee of citizens decided that they wish to erect a monument to the 10th Mountain Division. Their preferred location was in Thompson Park. After an evaluation of several locations, the City Council agreed that it could be in the park on Tower Square. The City Council also gave its blessing to the preliminary design. GYMO is currently working on the design details.

Tower Square was the location of the City's original water tower. It was torn down in 1979 after a new one was built 825 feet northeast where the wading pool was.

Tower Square is currently an open, mounded lawn area. The first Olmsted plan for the square included an elaborate stone tower with a staircase spiraling around the interior steel water tower and an observation deck on top. After it became apparent that that would not be built, a plan was drawn up for a formal, terraced, ornamental garden. We do not know whether the garden was built or planted. A newspaper photograph of the tower in 1979 shows a perimeter walk and shrubs. Aerial photos show grass discoloration in the shape of the planned terrace.

The proposed monument will bring back the geometric walk system and return a vertical element to the center, though it will not be anywhere near as tall as the water tower (See attached illustration.)

Site work is expected to be done this summer and the monument will be erected next year in time for a Fourth of July unveiling.

Staff is working with a lighting supplier on options for drive and walk LED lighting in this area that can become the standard for the rest of the park. At this time we don't expect that this lighting will be paid for by the monument sponsors.

Splash Pad

The Rotary Club has proposed raising funds for a splash pad in Thompson Park. Photos of a couple of examples are attached. They have suggested that they can raise \$50,000 or more, possibly up to \$100,000. The City Council has agreed to the concept, but has not selected a location.

From a functional standpoint, two locations stand out. The site of the former wading pool next to the playground is already a center for kids' activities and the swimming pool was the center for water-based activities. The swimming pool site has both water and sewer facilities. The former wading pool site has water, but the nearest sewer may be at the restrooms.

The wading pool was part of the Olmsted design, but unfortunately it was filled in and the water tower constructed on top of it in 1978. A splash pad within its original foot print would return the area to its original function. The area of the wading pool was 31,400 square feet. The splash pad may take up a smaller area.

Staff is recommending the wading pool site for the splash pad and suggests that it be designed to work with the playground and new restrooms.

After site selection, and engineer/architect will have to design the project so that it can be put out to bid.

Playground Replacement

The wooden playground structure was built in 1987 with volunteer labor and fund raising. This type of playground from that era is expected to last approximately 20 years. This one has been up for 28 years. Other communities are dealing with replacement of their playgrounds because of deterioration. The original construction organizers have approached the City with a request that it be re-built by the City.

Leathers Associates inspected the play structure on August 5, 2014. They found the poles and framing to be in good condition, but everything else needs to be replaced. They recommended a complete renovation, including removal of a section for an area to build a tot playground and increased handicapped accessibility. This should extend the life of the playground by 15 years at a cost of \$185,000 for professional services and materials with volunteer labor. Leathers estimates that it would cost \$350,000 for a complete replacement with one of a similar size, which will last 30 years. On an annualized basis the cost are about the same.

The Olmsteds identified the playground area as the “Children’s Lawn,” as shown on the attached plan. The plan also shows a shelter with restrooms. It was flanked with two sand courts. A pergola covered part of the walk adjacent to the shelter. Before the current apparatus was built, the lawn contained some old swings, teeter-totters, and spring animals.

Staff is recommending that the playground structure be completely replaced. It should be designed with a tot playground, to be handicapped accessible, and to work in conjunction with the splash pad. It may be smaller and made of different materials. A perimeter fence to assist with better over-sight of children has also been suggested.

Construction of the shelter planned by the Olmsteds should be considered. It would provide cover for parents watching their children, handicapped accessible restrooms in close proximity to the children’s activities, and a changing area for the splash pad.

Restroom Renovation/Construction

The existing restrooms were probably built in the 1940’s when the roof was put on the Pavilion. The original “toilet houses” were in the “horse sheds”, which is now the Pavilion. The interiors of the current restrooms were renovated in the late 1980’s with vandal proof fixtures. New shingles were put on in 2013.

The City Engineer has inspected the restrooms and has determined they really only need relatively minor refurbishment. There is no reason to close them. They should however be augmented with additional restrooms in other locations, such as in the shelter suggested for the Children’s Lawn and/or at the bathhouse.

Swimming Pool/ Bathhouse

The swimming pool was not open in 2014 nor will it be in 2015. The City Council has not yet determined the fate of the pool. It needs to be renovated, re-built or permanently closed. If it is closed, then it will have to be determined whether the bathhouse is of any use.

The pool was built in the 1920's. It was not on the Olmsted Plan. The bathhouse sits on what would have been a flower garden and fountain basin.

The splash pad may be a more cost-effective method of providing a water-based activity, though the experience is different.

The bathhouse can provide another set of restrooms, whether or not the pool remains. The restrooms do need work to become functional. The plumbing was damaged by freezing. An option would be to move the restrooms into the original building and remove the additions.

Future Projects

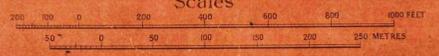
After these projects are completed there is still much that could be done in the park. Appropriate improvements would make the park more promotable as an Olmsted park and increase its recreational value. Access to under-utilized areas could be improved through trails, drives and parking. The stonework, trees and lighting could all use work. Interpretive signs and other promotional materials would help increase visitations.

All of the successful Olmsted park restorations that I am aware of were championed and funded by a private group that worked in partnership with the municipal owner. Rev. Fred Garry has been discussing such a group with interested individuals over the last few months. A memo from him is attached. He will also be present at the work session.

GENERAL PLAN OF WATERTOWN PARK WATERTOWN, N. Y.

1903

Scales



413

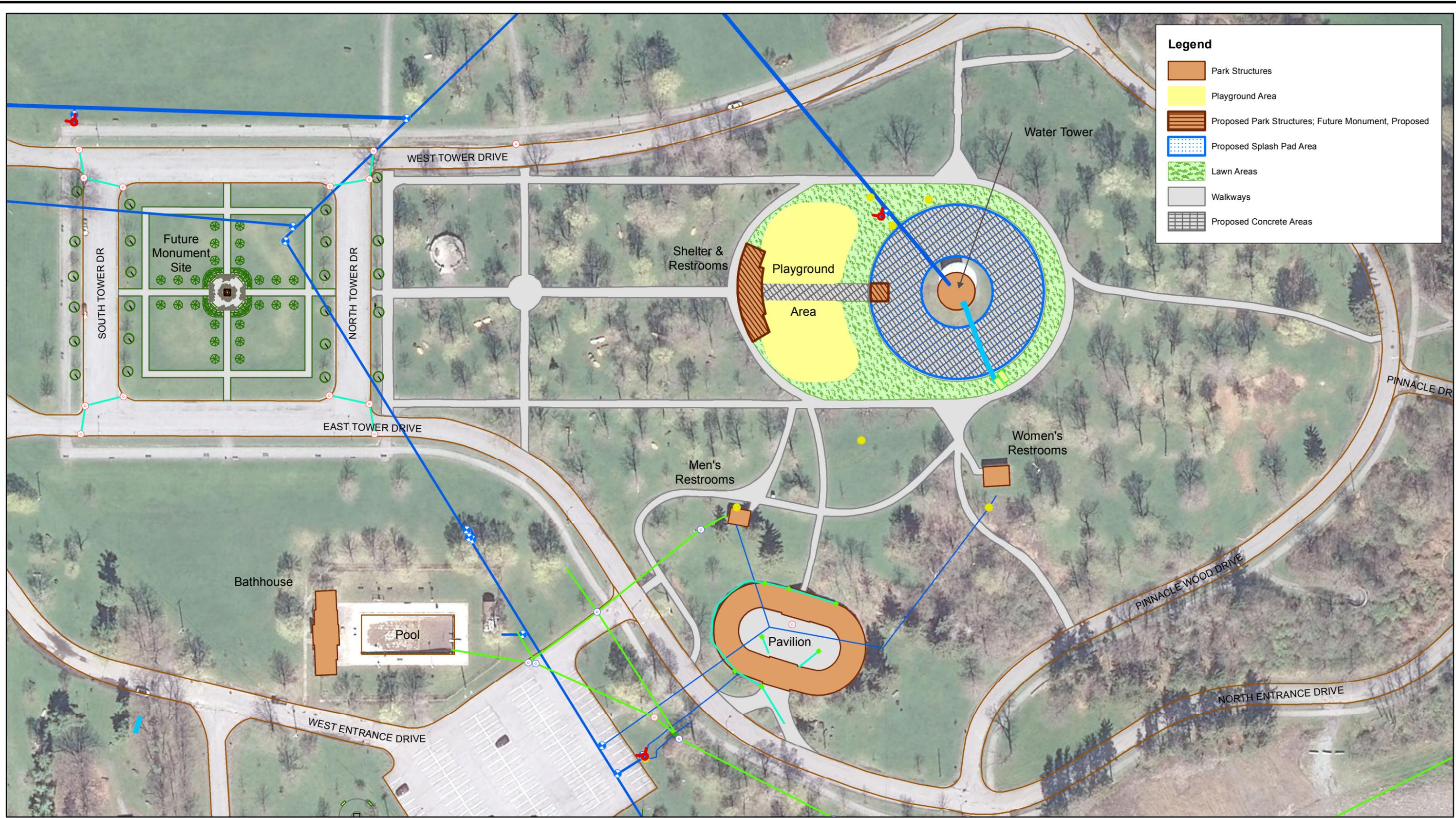
PARK COMMISSIONERS
HENRY D. GOODALE
FRANK A. HINDS
JUDGE A. H. SAWYER

OLMSTED BROTHERS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
BROOKLINE, MASS.

AREAS AND DISTANCES

AREA OF LAWNS & DOWNS	221 ACRES
PLANTATIONS	242 "
SWAN LAKE	9 "
DRIVES	15.5 "
WALKS	12.5 "
TOTAL AREA OF PARK	500 ACRES
LENGTH OF DRIVES	5.3 MILES
WALKS	10.2 "
DISTANCE FROM PUBLIC SQ. TO STATEST. ENTRANCE	1 MILE





Revision	Description of Revision	Date	By

Project:
City of Watertown, New York - Thompson Park

Title:
Playground & Splash Pad Concept

 **CITY OF WATERTOWN, NEW YORK**
GIS DEPARTMENT
 ROOM 305B, MUNICIPAL BUILDING
 245 WASHINGTON STREET
 WATERTOWN, NEW YORK 13601
 TEL: (315) 785-7793 EMAIL: gis@watertown-ny.gov



Project: City of Watertown, New York - Thompson Park	
Requested By: K.Mix	Approved By:
Drawn By: J.Carlsson	Date:
Date: 6/5/2015	Map Number: 15-17
Scale: 1 inch = 100 feet	
Title: Playground & Splash Pad Concept	







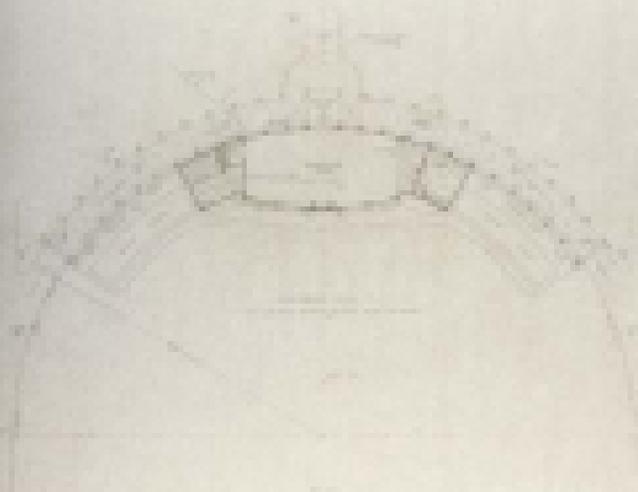


Diagram illustrating the structure of a dome, showing the dome and the supporting walls.

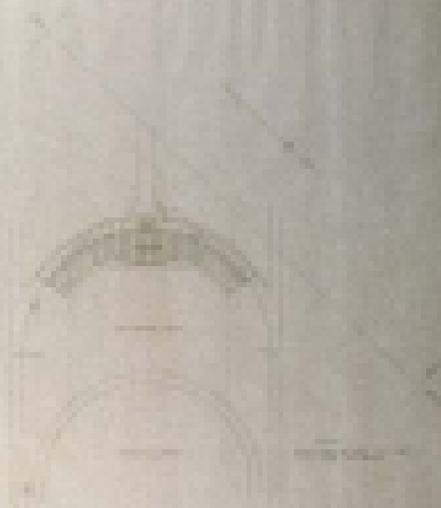


Diagram illustrating the structure of a dome, showing the dome and the supporting walls.

Diagram illustrating the structure of a dome, showing the dome and the supporting walls.

To City Council Members of the City of Watertown
From: Rev. Fred Garry
Re: Potential Developments of Thompson Park

For the past six months a group of local citizens, city planners and staff have met to discuss two potential projects up at Thompson Park- a splash pad for children and a monument for the 10th Mountain Division.

The initiative for the meetings began with the noon Rotary Club. The Rotary board proposed the development of a “Friends of the Park” to promote not only these two projects but future projects as well.

After a recent meeting with Mayor Graham, it seemed timely to offer an update to the City Council as well as propose the formation of a “Friends of the Park.” The intent of the group is detailed below:

The Friends of the Park will be a group of local individuals who seek to maintain and develop Thompson Park in accord with the original Olmsted design.

The Friends of the Park will seek to develop an endowment for Thompson Park. This fund will provide for development and maintenance. The fund will have many components so that particular projects can be established and preserved.

Additionally the Friends of the Park will insure the fidelity of donation for gifts and bequests directed toward the park.

The Friends of the Park will provide counsel and advice to the City Council and the Thompson Park Conservancy regarding initiatives to enhance Thompson Park.

The Friends of the Park will promote and encourage programs at Thompson Park that foster a connection to community and the region.

The Friends of the Park will only seek members from the community who represent an organization or business. The meetings and decisions of the Friends of the Park will abide by Robert’s Rules of Order.

The Friends of the Park will direct all funds raised to the Northern New York Community Foundation.

The Friends of Park will meet at least quarterly.