



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Department Source: Convention and Visitors Bureau and Parks and Recreation

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: May 6, 2019

Re: Public Hearing: Approve Flat Branch Park Expansion Master Plan

Executive Summary

The Parks & Recreation and Convention and Visitors Bureau Departments request Council approval of a revised Flat Branch Park Expansion Master Plan. The revision is needed due to the recent acquisition of approximately .4 acres and the proposed downtown district's Gateway Plaza. City staff worked with the park committee of the Mayor's Task Force for Bicentennial Planning (CoMo200) and members of the Downtown District on proposed plans for the park. Following an interested parties meeting and subsequent online survey regarding plans for the park, two options were being considered. The CoMo200 Task Force endorsed their plan, Option 1, which included the original Gateway Plaza design based on an existing Memorandum of Understanding with the Downtown District and the City of Columbia. The owners of the adjacent building proposed Option 2, which retained their original parking spaces and added several more, thus reducing the amount of space for the Gateway Plaza. In order to develop a possible compromise option, staff developed a third option that retained some parking.

Since the April 15, 2019 introduction, the owners presented a fourth option for Council consideration. Council may choose one of the four options or consider an alternate plan. If Council selects Option 1, all of the work is on City property and the Council may approve it following the public hearing. If Council selects either Option 2, 3 or 4, then staff will have to negotiate easements with the owner and will return to Council at a later date for final approval.

Council action only approves the master plan, as there currently is no funding for the development of the park. However, there are funds dedicated for the Gateway Plaza by the Downtown District. Council approval of the master plan is required so that the CoMo200 task force may begin fundraising for the park and bicentennial celebration. Once funds are raised staff will return to council to appropriate the funds and authorize construction.

Discussion

On October 17, 2017, City Council approved the acquisition of approximately .4 acres of land for the expansion of Flat Branch Park, including related Providence Road improvements. With the City of Columbia's bicentennial celebration scheduled in 2021, the Mayor established a Task Force on Bicentennial Celebration Planning. The Director of the Convention and Visitors Bureau is the designated staff liaison to the task force.

One goal of the task force is to create a plan for the site near Columbia's origin, Flat Branch Park. The Mayor's Task Force, known as CoMo200, had two members of the Downtown



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Community Improvement District of Columbia (CID) on the committee who understood that there were already existing plans for the Gateway Plaza on City property located at the southeast intersection of Providence Road and Broadway. An agreement between the City and the CID was approved for this project on December 18, 2017.

There has been some confusion on the parking lot situation. In 1986, Council authorized the construction of a right turn lane and a parking lot at the corner of Providence and Broadway. As part of this project, the City entered into an agreement with Mark M. Stevenson and Clydia J. Stevenson (owners of the adjacent building) allowing a portion of the parking lot to be built on their property in exchange for use of the parking lot for a 10 year period. As noted in paragraph 10 of the agreement, the initial agreement would terminate on August 31, 1997 and automatically renew for subsequent one-year terms unless written notice is given. On June 29, 2017, the City provided the required one notice of termination effective August 21, 2018.

After months of site survey work and initial park planning, a draft park master plan was prepared. Park planning efforts concentrated on the park portion with the understanding that the design would be phased toward the Gateway Plaza. An interested parties meeting was held on January 31, 2019 to solicit comments and an online survey was made available from January 28-February 19, 2019. Six pages of comments are available at this link: <https://www.como.gov/parksandrec/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2019/03/IP-Meeting-Comments-Flat-Branch-Expansion.pdf>

There was a wide range of comments from complete support to abandoning the entire project. The owners of the adjacent property utilized Simon Oswald and Associates (SOA) to design an alternate plan, which in most part was similar to the CoMo200 plan; but the primary difference was that their proposed plan retained the parking lot on the west side of the building and added several more spaces, thus eliminating a large portion of the Gateway Plaza. This plan was submitted as part of the interested party meeting and is presented as an option for council consideration.

Recognizing that there were two completely different plans on how to use the Gateway Plaza portion and related parking spaces, City staff developed a third option that retained some parking. Since the April 15 Council meeting, the Stevensons presented a fourth option for Council consideration. This involves an exchange of easements and allows for an entry drive to their parking spaces.

All master plan options include the following key elements of park design:

1. A pedestrian bridge connecting the .4 acre property to Flat Branch Park. This is a highlight amenity of the park and would consist of a functional pedestrian bridge adorned with attractive railings and lights in order to create a visual impact as you view and/or approach the park from Cherry Street.
2. Gateway Plaza, located at the corner of Providence and Broadway as presented by the Downtown CID and Arcturis Architectural Firm. The location and size may vary in Option 2 due to the parking lot design.



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3. A 30' X 20' concrete overlook that will serve as a scenic point to observe the park and Flat Branch Creek and also be used as a performance space during special events at that park. The space could be used by a small group of musicians or for special presentations.
4. The park design will include space for three art sculptures. The installation of the sculptures would be coordinated with the Office of Cultural Affairs.
5. Park staff would work with Public Works staff to lengthen the northbound right-turn lane along Providence Road.
6. A donor wall recognizing contributions to the expansion development would be constructed in the existing portion of Flat Branch Park.
7. Upgrade existing lights in Flat Branch Park to LED technology.

Listed below are the four options with a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of each one.

Option 1. This is the option that is endorsed by the CoMo200 committee, Downtown Leadership Committee (letter attached), and the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Gateway Planning project began in 2013 and after numerous public input meetings the Gateway master plan was completed in 2016. This includes the original Gateway Plaza design that was proposed to the City Council on 12/18/2017. The Gateway project reflected many of the recommendations made to the City of Columbia in the 2010 Charrette Report that was prepared by H3 Studio. H3 recommended The Gateways concept including expansion of green space around Flat Branch Creek and Park, and including daylighting the Flat Branch Creek in areas where appropriate. As mentioned earlier, as part of the existing agreement between the City and the CID for the development of the Gateway Plaza, the CID agreed to invest a substantial amount of money for the development of the plaza. This plan eliminates the public parking spaces on the west side of the lot and narrows the entry drive so that the private parking on the west side of the building is inaccessible. On August 21, 2018 the parking lot agreement with Mark Stevenson expired with the possible intent that the entry drive would have to be closed due to proximity to the Providence/Broadway intersection. The east side of Flat Branch Creek that is on the private property would not be restored. There are parking spaces on the south side of the building. It is anticipated that the Gateway Plaza would function similarly to the City's keyhole structure on the corner of Broadway and 8th Street.

Option 1 is all on City property and the revised master plan may be approved following the May 6 Public Hearing.

If Council selects either Option 2, 3 or Option 4 as noted below, staff will have to negotiate easements with the property owner and will have to return to Council for approval of the easements and accompanying master plan. This may likely occur in July or August pending legal review. If Options 2, 3, or 4 are chosen, staff recommends a restrictive covenant be placed on the conveyance which would prohibit the construction of any structures and would limit the use to open air parking or open space.



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Option 2. SOA developed plan. This plan retains all of the original parking next to the building and creates two standard parking spaces and an ADA van accessible space. This option requires that the "COLUMBIA" lettering of the Gateway Plaza be shifted further to south, reducing its visual appeal from the intersection. It may also reduce the size of the "COLUMBIA" lettering in order to fit it on the reduced space. There is concern that if this option is selected, the CID may abandon the Gateway project and use funds that have been raised for this corner of the property for other downtown improvements. In return for this option, staff suggests that an easement or land donation be initiated in order for the existing owner's east creek bank to become included for creek restoration. This option may also result in a complete redesign of the corner.

Option 3. Compromise plan would create four standard parking spaces and one ADA van-accessible space. This plan shifts the entry drive closer to the building eliminating all of the parking spaces against the building. This requires an agreement or easement with the owner and should include a land swap or easement for use of the land on the east side of the creek for restoration as discussed in Option 2. The "COLUMBIA" lettering may have to be shifted some, but it would primarily remain in the same vicinity. A street light pole would have to be removed and a storm water drain would either need to be relocated or replaced with a flat, drive-over grate. Depending on final layout of the Gateway plan, there remains a concern that if this option is selected, the CID may abandon the Gateway project and use funds that have been raised for this corner of the property for other downtown improvements.

Option 4. After the April 15 Council meeting, the Stevensons presented another option for the Gateway Plaza area only and the land that is located behind their existing parking lot. This plan creates a driving lane on City property taking approximately 1,740 square feet of property. This allows entry into the Stevensons' existing nine parking spaces. As noted in Option 2, it will cause the "COLUMBIA" lettering to be shifted and may result in the loss of the CID's donation of funds. In return, the Stevensons are willing to exchange with the City approximately 1,162 square feet at the back of their parking lot in order to allow the restoration of the stream bank. Since the Stevensons would likely gain approximately 578 sq. ft. of public land, council could require that the Stevensons purchase the difference from the City.

CoMo200 task force is ready to begin fundraising for the park development and having an approved master plan is critical to their efforts as it relates to the overall bicentennial event celebration.

The proposed timeline for future events is as follows:

- April – May 2019 Approve Park Master Plan
- June – December 2019
 - Public Fundraising Campaign (as part of overall CoMo200 campaign)
 - Once funds are raised, staff will return to Council for appropriation and approval of project.
 - Final design and construction documents prepared and bid



- January – March 2020
- Contractor(s) selected and contracts signed, permits issued
- April 2020 – March 2021
 - Park groundbreaking ceremony (April)
 - Construction
- March 2021 Dedication of Park
- May 2021 Bicentennial Finale Celebration

The selection of the master plan only confirms what would be constructed in the park and on the Gateway Plaza. Once funds are raised, staff will return to council to appropriate the funds and authorize construction of the project.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: This is approval of the master plan only. All development funds will be raised privately.

Long-Term Impact: This is approval of the master plan only. All development funds will be raised privately.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

[Strategic Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Social Equity, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

[Comprehensive Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Environmental Management, Tertiary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities

Legislative History

Date	Action
04/05/2019	R51-19: Setting a public hearing: consider proposed options for the Flat Branch Park Expansion Master Plan. https://gocolumbiamo.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3917860&GUID=DCEE10E7-4855-41DA-9B45-8C79C996E373&Options=&Search=
01/07/2019	B321-18: Approving funds for engineering services relating the Flat Branch Park Expansion project. https://gocolumbiamo.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3781235&GUID=B9C0C7C6-1376-4584-85D4-7D5309F22E87&Options=&Search=
12/18/2017	B376-17: Authorizing a memorandum of understanding with the Downtown Community Improvement District as it relates to the construction of a Gateway Plaza on the southeast corner of the Providence Road and Broadway intersection.



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12/04/2017	<p>https://gocolumbiamo.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3269481&GUID=5FF3C133-8E86-4D1B-A627-DFE914F960F4&Options=&Search=</p> <p>R171-17: Establishing a Mayor's Task Force on Bicentennial Celebration Planning.</p> <p>https://gocolumbiamo.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3269480&GUID=588F30EA-7D0F-47C4-B318-BAE377C02236&Options=&Search=</p>
06/16/2017	<p>B159-17: Agreement with Allstate Consultants LLC Engineering Services Relating to the Demolition of the McAdams building.</p> <p>https://gocolumbiamo.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3062166&GUID=334CA0C1-E407-4264-B472-B6634391C0A1&Options=&Search=</p>
10/17/2016	<p>B273-16: Acquisition of Property at 32 S. Providence Road from Roth Properties, LLP for Flat Branch Park Expansion, Public transportation and streetscape improvements.</p> <p>https://gocolumbiamo.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=2848812&GUID=F18A796E-B9A5-4231-A4B0-67EC603A5DEB&Options=&Search=</p>
02/07/2011	<p>REP26-11 Report from Downtown Leadership Council requesting work session to review recommendations from 2010 Charrette Report.</p> <p>Link to Council Minutes: http://www.como.gov/Council/Commissions/downloadfile.php?id=378&bcid=56</p> <p>Link to Council Memo: http://www.como.gov/Council/Commissions/downloadfile.php?id=591</p>
10/17/2010	<p>REP108-10 Report to City Council on 2010 Charrette Report.</p> <p>Link to Council Minutes: https://www.como.gov/Council/Minutes/documents/cm10_oct18_000.pdf</p> <p>Link to 2010 Charrette Report: https://www.como.gov/wp-content/uploads/COMO_FinalReport_Standard.pdf</p>
08/21/1986	<p>Council approves agreement between Mark M. Stevenson and Clydia J. Stevenson for the construction and use of a parking lot at the corner of Providence and Broadway. (Note: Notice to terminate issued June 29, 2017, effective August 21, 2018)</p>

Suggested Council Action

Approve the resolution adopting Flat Branch Park Expansion Master Plan Option 1 or direct staff to negotiate an alternative plan.