



City of Highland Park

Place of Remembrance/Memorial Planning Meeting

MEETING NOTES

City Hall, 1707 St. Johns Avenue, Highland Park, IL
Pre-Session Conf Room

Tuesday, 27 February 2024, 3:00 PM

Committee Members Present:

- Nancy Rotering, Mayor, City of Highland Park
- Brian Romes, Executive Director Park District of Highland Park
- Ghida Neukirch, City Manager, City of Highland Park
- Gaby Valverde Strobehn, Community Engagement Manager, Josselyn
- Madeline Kati, LCSW, Resiliency Manager, City of Highland Park

Committee Members Not Present:

- Anthony Blumberg, Councilmember, City of Highland Park

Other Officials:

- Emily Taub, Assistant City Manager, City of Highland Park
- Amanda Bennett, Communications Manager, City of Highland Park

Others:

- 6 individuals in attendance

Welcome

Mayor Rotering welcomed attendees and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Rotering asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2024 meeting. Director Romes made the motion and Resiliency Manager Kati seconded the motion. On a voice vote, the working group approved the motion.

Place of Remembrance Web Site

Communications Manager Bennett provided an overview of the newly launched Place of Remembrance website hpremembrance.org. This overview included the manner to access the website in English and Spanish, and a review of how to navigate the website. Communications Manager Bennett noted that if any questions are received the answers and information will be added to the resource information on the website.

Mayor Rotering asked that individuals reach out to us via the links and means available on the website if there are components or additional information they would like to see on the website. Mayor Rotering also asked Communications Manager Bennet to review how individuals will be made aware of the website.

Resiliency Manager Kati reviewed how individuals who do not live within the City of Highland Park can be reached to find out more about this process as well as information from the Resiliency Manager. Community Engagement Manager Stroben and the group discussed how individuals who speak Spanish can receive information about the working group as well as services provided. City Manager Neukirch reviewed several resources available to individuals. Resiliency Manager Kati reviewed the plans to increase reach individuals who speak Spanish. Communications Manager Bennett reviewed the status of the Request for Proposals for translation services and how the City will be increasing its reach to those that speak other languages.

The group discussed whether there is a need for any additional languages other than Spanish and determined that as they are identified they will be addressed.

Brainstorm Possible Site Locations

Mayor Rotering shared that the Department of Justice Office of Victims of Crime indicates that the best practice is to have individuals be able to opt-into a place of remembrance rather than happen upon the site.

Manager Neukirch asked attendees brainstorm site locations and then the group would discuss advantages and concerns or considerations of each location.

Site Considerations

- Accessible
- Opt-in
- Trauma informed
- Parking
- Last for decades
- We don't want this site to define HP
- Consider two memorials
 - Consider small markers such as stepping stones or unique artwork
- Honor, remember, reflect
- Reflect a new beginning
- Reinforce HP united, resilience and strength

Site Options

1. Rose Garden; east/north of Rose Garden

Positive

- Opt-in
- Owned by city/PDHP
- Close to transportation
- Already established
- Positive feedback, particularly by victims
- Private
- Close to city hall/appearance of security
- Proximity to shade, restrooms
- Electricity/water/infrastructure established
- Meets DOJ trauma informed site

Concerns/considerations

- Limited on-site parking
- Consider options for temp memorial during construction
- Rose garden landmarked

2. Port Clinton Plaza

Positive

- Owned by City
- Close to transportation
- Proximity to shade, restrooms
- Electricity/water/infrastructure established
- Open gathering area
- Accessible
- Family friendly/restaurants

Concerns/considerations

- Potential retraumatization regardless of the remembrance
- Virtually unavoidable
- Will define City's business district
- Very impactful to adjacent businesses
- Coordination with Port Clinton Associates
- Direct eye site to shooting location
- Impactful to children
- Contrary to downtown vibrancy and goal of silence, reflection, solace

3. SWC St. Johns & Central

Positive

- Owned by City
- Close to transportation
- Proximity to shade, restrooms
- Electricity/water/infrastructure established
- Accessible
- Family friendly/restaurants

Concerns/considerations

- Too small
- Potential retraumatization regardless of the remembrance
- Virtually unavoidable
- Will define City by the tragedy, including commuters
- Very impactful to adjacent businesses
- Impactful to children; on school bus route by running and cycling route
- Contrary to downtown vibrancy and goal of silence, reflection, solace
- Too close to train
- Busy street corner

4. Sunset Park (north side), ~1 acre

Positive

- Owned by PDHP
- Proximity to shade, restrooms
- Accessible
- Well known to the community

Concerns/considerations

- Site being considered for alternate use, PDHP in partnership with HP Hospital
- Limited access to electricity/water/infrastructure
- Limited access to transit
- Currently limited access for people with disabilities
- Insufficient parking
- Proximity to hospital/sirens
- Impactful to children

5. Ross property

Positive

- Close to transportation
- Proximity to shade, restrooms

Concerns/considerations

- Shooting location
- Privately owned

- Electricity/water/infrastructure established
- Accessible
- Family friendly/restaurants

- Cost consideration
- Potential retraumatization regardless of the remembrance
- Virtually unavoidable
- Will define City's business district
- Very impactful to adjacent businesses
- Impactful to children
- Contrary to downtown vibrancy and goal of silence, reflection, solace

6. Central between First and Second

Positive

- Owned by City
- Close to transportation
- Electricity/water/infrastructure established
- Accessible
- Family friendly/restaurants

Concerns/considerations

- Too impactful to downtown businesses and residents
- Traffic management from a safety perspective
- Potential retraumatization regardless of the remembrance
- Virtually unavoidable
- Will define City by the tragedy, including commuters
- Very impactful to adjacent businesses
- Impactful to children; on school bus route by running and cycling route
- Contrary to downtown vibrancy and goal of silence, reflection, solace
- Too close to train

Another site was discussed entailing the design of murals on walls/bridges throughout the community. This option was removed from consideration following discussion of the group. Other sites discussed but removed from consideration include other parks such as Brown Park and Olson Park.

Next Steps

The next meeting will include discussion of fundraising.

Staff will compile an outreach and communications plan to gather public feedback on site locations. The group discussed how to balance feedback from the next of kin and present and injured with feedback from the general public. The group discussed the need to be sensitive to different places of healing and that staff would factor the differing needs of individuals and those in different places of their healing journey.

The group discussed that despite all efforts there will be a wide variety of opinions that will need to be considered.

Next Meeting(s)

The next meetings were set for the following dates/times

- Wednesday, April 3, 7:00 PM
- Wednesday, May 1, 7:00 PM

Prepared by:

Emily Taub

Assistant City Manager

Reviewed by:

Ghida S. Neukirch

City Manager