



# City of Highland Park

## Place of Remembrance/Memorial Planning Meeting

### MEETING NOTES

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

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Wednesday, 3 April 2024, 7:00 PM

#### Committee Members Present:

- Nancy Rotering, Mayor, City of Highland Park
- Anthony Blumberg, Councilmember, 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

#### Other Officials:

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

#### Others:

- 15 individuals in attendance

#### **Welcome**

Mayor Rotering welcomed attendees and asked attendees to introduce themselves. Mayor Rotering then reviewed the history of the working group, the purpose of the group, and the primary goals, which include:

- create an accessible public place;
- honor communities resiliency;
- pay tribute to the memories of those lost.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

It was noted that the minutes of the February 27, 2024 meeting would be reviewed and placed on the agenda for approval at the next meeting as they contained information that as of the date of the posting of the meeting had not been reviewed with a party noted in the minutes.

#### **Community Values**

Mayor Rotering reviewed the City of Highland Park Community Values as the City prepares for a place of remembrance. The working group's approach will be trauma-informed, and meetings and discussion should serve as a safe space for ongoing discussions. The Community Values are:

- Inclusion
- Transparency
- Respect and value all opinions
- The outcome will last for decades into the future

Mayor Rotering noted the process is emotional and complex and that the everyone must retain compassion to move forward as one Highland Park.

The Mayor reviewed the contact for the City's resiliency division and remembrance email addresses for individuals to reach out with questions and ideas. Resources, case management, support, short-term counseling and more are available by contacting the City.

## **Site Considerations**

City Manager Neukirch reviewed the site considerations developed at the last meeting as noted below.

### **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 sightline 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

##### **Concerns/considerations**

- Too small
- Potential retraumatization regardless of the remembrance
- Virtually unavoidable

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

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

Concerns/considerations

- Shooting location
- Privately owned
- 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

Each site was reviewed along with the notes for each location. The group discussed whether there were any additions or changes to the list. The group then transitioned to a discussion of narrowing the list of six sites.

Discussion between the group and attendees regarded stakeholder groups noting the importance of children as stakeholders. The Mayor noted the possibility of an accessible playground near the site. The group then discussed where the focus of the memorial should be and how the site considerations related to the focus as well as the need for positivity related to the place of remembrance. The group also discussed how the business community will be an important part of the process and how the place of remembrances should focus on the strength of how the community came together.

Further discussion ensued that the current temporary memorial has many things to recommend it and that possibly something understated at Port Clinton that could be tied into the larger memorial. The group reached consensus that the Rose Garden has many benefits including proximity of City Hall.

The group reached general consensus that Sunset Park should be taken off the list with there being more concerns than positive attributes. After further discussion, the working group determined that the South West corner of St Johns and Central was not a good fit as it was not a corner for reflection and respite due to train traffic and associated noise.

### **Review Public Engagement Strategy**

Communications Manager Amanda Bennett presented an overview of the City's communications plan for the place of remembrance planning process. She discussed the objectives and strategies of the plan and reviewed the City's communications modalities that will be used to provide consistent updates to the public throughout the process, in keeping with the City's trauma-informed approach. The plan will be evaluated on an ongoing basis, and further details will be posted at [hpremembrance.org](http://hpremembrance.org).

### **Request for Proposal**

Resiliency Manager Maddie Kati reviewed the recently issued request for proposals for survey design, data analysis and focus group facilitation in order to gather community feedback as to location of permanent place of remembrance.

Resiliency Manager Kati reviewed the project purpose, schedule, requirements, project plan deliverables and the selection criteria. The group discussed how the City and residents get comfortable with the value of the firm and get up to speed, understanding the nuance and the community. Resiliency Manager Kati also confirmed that the City is seeking bilingual services from the selected firm.

### **Next Steps**

The group discussed that fundraising may be a part of the next steps.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending.

### **Next Meeting(s)**

The next meeting was confirmed for the following date/time:

- Wednesday, May 1, 7:00 PM

**Prepared by:**

Emily Taub  
Assistant City Manager

**Reviewed by:**

Ghida S. Neukirch  
City Manager