

Ben Avon Borough Avon Park Enhancement Project

Preliminary Resident Recommendations

June 8, 2006

Background

Because community leaders and residents recognize the current value and future potential of Avon Park, a formal planning effort was initiated. As part of this effort, a dozen residents met to identify park improvement opportunities on June 7, 2006.

The overall theme from this meeting is that Avon Park is a tremendous community asset that is currently being underutilized and can be dramatically improved.

Current Challenges

Residents identified a number of problems and challenges facing the park and generally followed these key themes:

1. Walking access is limited and dangerous: The main entrance/access from Perrysville to the park facilities is dangerous to walkers. There are no sidewalks and there is heavy traffic with blind spots.
2. Entrances are not visible: There is a lack of signage to the park and at the entrance(s). There is limited "defined entrance spaces." Therefore, the park is not naturally welcoming.
3. An "access road" divides the park and wastes space: The main access road to the parking lot cuts through the center of the property. This roadway was originally installed to repair a mud slide on Cambridge Road. Parents see the road much like any other street and must closely watch their children while playing, especially when crossing the roadway. This safety hazard makes it difficult for their children to roam more freely as they do in other parks.
4. Maintenance is needed: Many areas of the park are unsafe or not properly functioning. The hillside is unstable for pedestrian use, there is loose fencing and uneven pavement on the trail and tennis courts, no nets on basketball hoops and some playground equipment is old and unsafe for children. The pavilion is poorly located at the base of a slope and needs improvement. Some residents thought the grounds near there were typically soggy.
5. Limited facilities hinder park usage: There are no restrooms or electricity, hindering the activities that could be held in the park. There is limited lighting in the park at night and it is perceived as too dark and unsafe. While dogs are currently not allowed in the park, there is a lack of signage throughout the park.

Potential Solutions

Residents brainstormed a number of potential solutions and improvements for the park and then prioritized their recommendations. These themes emerged:

1. Walking Access

- Build a sidewalk all the way up Perrysville. Meet with PennDot again through Tom Petrone.
- To the left of the leaf pile, install a walking trail that connects with the existing trail.

2. Entrances

- Post park directional signs on Perrysville and Church Avenues (pointing up Walnut Road).
- Establish four primary entrances to the park, one for vehicle traffic (Perrysville) and three for walking access (Perrysville leaf pile, Walnut Road, Spruce Run Road).
- Install plantings, signage and entrance structures.

3. Park Layout and Design

- Transform the park from an access road into a self-contained, purposeful structure.
- Eliminate the road dividing the park.
- Eliminate the tennis courts. Based on the anticipated expenditure to improve them, removing them entirely could dramatically increase the available space in the park.
- Restrict parking to the Perrysville end of the park. It is estimated that there are currently room for 10 or more parking spaces.
- Place a new pavilion near the center of the park and playground. This could be a central location for parents to watch children, hold gatherings and easily view the entire park area.
- Build a paved walking and/or bike path around the park. This path would encompass the majority of the park and serve to define the space.
- Install a sand play area. This could include turning the current pavilion into a large sandbox (similar to Blueberry Hill Park) and/or building a sand volleyball court.
- Install a water spray fountain. This structure could be similar to one at Emsworth Park.
- Install additional new playground equipment.
- Install multiple benches, two-person swings and picnic tables throughout the park.
- Install bird houses around the park to increase bird watching opportunities.
- Plant additional trees for shading.

4. Maintenance

- Include low maintenance plantings, foliage signage and communications station (bulletin board) areas.
- Remove vines, dead trees and stumps, and debris from the hillside to enhance the beauty of the facility.

5. Facilities

- Place a portable restroom near the parking lot.

Next Steps

1. Residents agreed to meet again in the near future to consider more detailed planning and placement of structures (e.g., using a map of the park to think through the specific location of parking, playground equipment and other items).
2. Request information and assistance from other communities who have made similar park improvements to quickly determine potential costs and other specifications.
3. Communicate with property owners near the park to determine the feasibility of current terrain for installing sidewalks, trails and other entrances.
4. Devise a more formal plan for the park, including exact specifications, engineering considerations, budgets, grant and fundraising efforts, volunteer clean-up and installation opportunities, etc.