

Beatrice Park and 2024 Master Park Plan

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To: Mayor Copenhaver and Director Kapales

From: Kitty Sloan

I was motivated to scroll through the many pages of the 2024 **Jonesboro Parks & Recreation Master Plan** after reading reports like this one from KASU: *"Inside the plan, the city parks were given a system score of 3.6. The lowest ranked park was specialty park Beatrice Park with a score of 1.9, the highest was Union Park with a 4.6 score."*

It seems **premature** to me for the plan's author to give Beatrice Park any score at all.

Of course, you are not responsible for what reporters report, but you will be responsible for what the city adopts. After reviewing the so-called plan, I am confused and concerned about what the city intends for **Beatrice Park**.

- In a page 327 footnote, the plan states that "Beatrice Park was **purchased** by the city..." An obvious clue that the planner did not understand the background of Beatrice Park. Perhaps the writer wanted to avoid repeating the word "acquired." I suggest that "donated" is a perfectly good word.
- I am confused that Beatrice Park is classified as a "**Special Use Park**," as if Disc Golf were the reason for the donation.
- Page 21 offers definitions of Park Classifications. "**Open Space Preserves**" seems to me to be closer to the original intent as well as to what was outlined by the city when demanding the restrictions tied to the donation. As the definition on page 21 states, *"These spaces provide access to preserved natural areas within the community. Open space preserves typically include minimal amenities to conserve natural resources and reduce impact on the space."* (Also see, "No Mow Zones," page 72.)
- It seems to me that the planner from Halff did not understand the **deed restrictions** that the city itself placed on Beatrice Park.
- It worries me that page 327 states: "Park improvements [at Beatrice Park] are planned to **follow the findings and recommendations of this Master Plan.**" Again, seems premature.
- Those recommendations for Beatrice Park include \$500,000 of "immediate investment needs." That's apparently even before "**the creation of a conceptual park plan,**" which, the Master Plan explains, would include "ways to develop unprogrammed land to

best meet the community's needs." Apparently, "unprogrammed" is how a recreational planner views natural greenspace.

- Page 134 states that "the City intends to prepare a development plan to **further program** the recently acquired space." I would appreciate meeting with both of you at your convenience to discuss your plans for the development and "programming" of Beatrice Park. I welcome an explanation of the "walkshed" project, page 135.
- I wanted to laugh when, also on page 134, the plan notes that Beatrice Park has "**little nearby residential ... development.**" For planners from densely-populated Little Rock that may have appeared factual. But not for anyone aware of the nearby "neighbors" who so stubbornly objected to the park donation and convinced the city to require the silly deed restrictions. I'm not sure those neighbors want the "connectivity" mentioned on page 328.

I suspect no one else is going to read the pages about Beatrice Park as closely as I did. With siblings and cousins, I agreed the donation could be a fitting memorial for our grandmother, Beatrice Lynch Sloan. But, as described in the Master Plan, I am confused as to the city's intent. And I do not want Beatrice Park to be portrayed as a 1.9 eyesore -- now or ever.

I realize that this "plan" is more of a "vision" than an actual step-by-step, strategic, prioritized, realistic plan. Rather, it is a very long to-do list that will likely be mostly ignored over the next 10 years. Ideas are easy, implementation is not. But once words are on paper and, especially, if approved by a city council, they may eventually mean something to someone. So it is important to say what you mean and mean what you say.

cc: John Sloan

P.S. My comments on other Master Plan topics:

* ADA parking for Centennial Plaza should be coordinated with The Forum, page 164.

* The surrounding community should decide whether relocating the African American Cultural Center would be an improvement or not, page 37.

Both The Forum and the African American Cultural Center could have been classified as Civic Spaces in the plan.