

**JULIAN ABELE (FORMERLY MONTROSE) PARK, POCKET PARK PROJECT**

BACKGROUND

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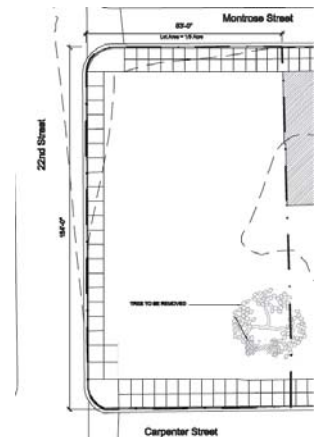
This fact sheet was originally prepared<sup>1</sup> to inform the community around 22<sup>nd</sup> and Montrose Streets about a proposed park for the (3) lots on that corner. The Community Design Collaborative (CDC) of AIA (American Institute of Architects) Philadelphia, which provides preliminary architectural, engineering, and planning services to nonprofit organizations, were contacted by the Philadelphia Economic Revitalization Corporation in 2006 to help the community communicate their goals for improving the physical and social fabric of their neighborhoods through the design of a pocket park. The property was officially obtained by Councilwoman Anna Verna for that purpose during the winter of 2006/2007.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

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Located at 22<sup>nd</sup> Street between Montrose Street and Carpenter Street, the 1/3-acre future site of ‘Montrose Park’ is in the southwest corner neighborhood of Center City known as Graduate Hospital or South of South. The area is bounded to the north by South Street, to the south by Washington Avenue, to the west by the Schuylkill River and the east by Broad Street.

The area is predominantly residential with a few corner stores, bars and restaurants. As more development occurs and population grows, it becomes increasingly apparent that this neighborhood lacks green space. The nearest public open space is Marion Anderson Recreation Center at 17th Street and Fitzwater. However, that space is designed for active recreation and does not afford residents a place for passive uses such as sitting, reading, people watching, and enjoying a landscaped public open space. The closest passive recreation area is Filtler Square, located at 23rd and Pine, which is located too far to be considered a neighborhood park for the area south of 22nd and Christian Street.



CDC DESIGN SUMMARY

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The proposed park at Montrose Street and 22nd Street lies within a neighborhood of Philadelphia that, for generations, has been marked by diversity and transformation. Shifts in population, ethnic groups and industries have shaped the community, giving it a distinct identity.

The CDC designed proposal was for a park that is an extension of the street and reinterprets its iconic

<sup>1</sup> Ref. 11 May 2007 email

elements in a context that is planted, safe and beautiful. The 1/3 acre rectangular site is structured around a central north-south axial path that connects to the 4 corners of the site through wide openings that welcome and provide visibility into and out of the park. This zone represents the ‘street’ of the park and it’s materials are concrete pavers along the center and brick pavers on either sides to recall sidewalks. The path is lined with 2 rows of trees and lights hanging from poles and criss-crossing above the path on catenaries: a play on phone wires that line neighboring street. On both sides of this path are reclaimed marble stoops, rhythmically laid out at 16’ foot intervals, which is their typical spacing on surrounding streets.



It was estimated in 2006 that the proposed park would cost approximately \$250,000 to install plus another approximately \$30,000 worth of additional design services to finalize the design and prepare final plans and specifications. The \$250k cost included all costs for site preparation, removal and hauling of existing materials, construction and installation of proposed site features and plants and other miscellaneous items. Beyond costs to construct the park, additional funds are necessary to maintain the park. It is vital that funds are raised to be utilized to keep the park in excellent condition. Once a park starts to show signs of decay or misuse, it can often become a target of vandalism. It is estimated that a maintenance endowment of approximately \$100,000 should be raised in conjunction with the formation of a “Friends of the Park” group. The “Friends of the Park” group should expect to use approximately \$10,000 to \$15,000 of this endowment each year. Therefore, continuous fundraising should be a priority of the group.

## CONSTRUCTION UPDATE & SUMMARY

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As part of early efforts to establish a better organization framework, it was decided at the 11 December 2006 meeting that initial committees would include: a Development Committee, an Events Committee, and a Physical Plant Committee (later changed to the Physical Improvement Committee (P.I.C) as the new name was more indicative of the actual role of the committee). In May 2007, a Yahoo Group was established as an aid to store documents for easy access by all members as well as a more consistent distribution system for group contact as previous efforts relied to heavily on having access to an existing email containing all the member email addresses. And at the Tuesday, 8 May 2007 meeting a formal open invitation was made to all attendees<sup>2</sup> for any interested in participating on the PIC. Although not the Chair, I (Sterling Johnson) volunteered to act as the Lead for the committee. My background includes over 17 years as a Civil Engineer with the last (5) years as a Project Manager for various construction projects. In addition, I’ve volunteered on several project with AIA over the last few years serving as a Cost Estimator on several CDC projects.

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<sup>2</sup> Flyer distribution for the 8 May 2007 Meeting is estimated at 500/550 flyers delivered specifically to residents and does not include any who may have gotten the meeting information from flyers left at specific locations – i.e. retail establishments such as coffee shops, etc. . or via. email, Ref: Montrose Park Flyer Coverage (Map), 8 May Mtg v2 with estimation of residences based on an average of 50 houses per block for larger streets and 30 houses per block for small streets.)

A total of (10) individuals with various backgrounds volunteered to work on PIC and to whom a initial kick-off email was sent on 11 May 2007 stating that although our efforts would probably not kick-off until the fall, I suggested that one way the group could help would be to think of ways to boil the info (CDC Report) down into maybe a 1-page fact sheet of general info and associated graphics that would be suitable as either a hand-out or to included in a mailer. Each member was also forwarded a copy of the report (which to that point few had actually read or even seen) but because of size the reports drawings were not included in the mailing but access was provided on the website <http://www.montrosepark.org/> under the site link titled "Park Plan".

At the Tuesday, June 19<sup>th</sup> 2007 meeting<sup>3</sup>, I gave an update of our collaboration with the CDC to update the proposed site plan and again solicited volunteers for the PIC. At that June meeting, an additional (2) neighbors volunteered for PIC for a total of (12) members<sup>4</sup>. Following the 19 June meeting, on Wednesday, 20 June I canvassed members of PIC and asked if they were available to go over the CDC plans with Philadelphia Horticultural Society's (PHS) Philadelphia Green to begin discussing implementing the existing design. Preliminarily I got responses from (4) other people and I got back to PHS on 28 June asking for them to confirm the availability of 16 July. With space available for (2) additional PIC members, the invite was kept open until 11 July, when it was then closed so that PHS could finalize their preparation.



The meeting on Monday, July 16<sup>th</sup> 2007 was held with members of PHS including Deborah Kahill, a landscape architect and a total of (4) members from PIC with (1) cancellation. Notes from the 16 July meeting included:

At the suggestion of Deborah, an alternative to the park design was discussed (vs. the (2) proposed by the CDC report) that would be more inline with the report's alt. B as there would be less "hardscape" (i.e. concrete, pavement, etc.)<sup>5</sup> and more grass/plants/trees. Asked to boil down the essentials features of the design, the group decided it should include:

- A perimeter of trees
- A mural on the building side (NE portion of the park) that could/would be incorporated into the park design

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<sup>3</sup> Flyer distribution for the 19 June 2007 Meeting is estimated at 1200/1250 flyers delivered specifically to residents and does not include any who may have gotten the meeting information from flyers left at specific locations – i.e. retail establishments such as coffee shops, etc. or via email (Ref: Montrose Park Flyer Coverage (Map), proposed Jun07 Mtg v2. with estimation of residences based on an average of 50 houses per block for larger streets and 30 houses per block for small streets.)

<sup>4</sup> Which even included a member from AIA's CDC office

<sup>5</sup> This was suggested considering the current use of the park by neighborhood kids as well as a means to minimize construction costs.

- Outdoor living rooms (similar to the stoops of alt. A) for seating/small groups which would be quiet and peaceful, and a barrier from the noise of the city streets
- Designated area for parents and small children – to include signature item(s) similar to the Fidler Square bronze bear or the Rittenhouse Square bronze goat

(Note - it was mentioned that to accommodate dog owners, a separate lot for a small dog park be looked into (i.e. the empty lot on the NE & SW corners of 22nd and Montrose) since the pocket park is too small to accommodate this additional use

Additional features were also discussed:

- Logistics of various park entrance options
- Possible allowance for homeowner's (2100 block of Carpenter) deck sight lines
- Short-term lighting solution of requesting street lamp replacement (from 1 head to 2 heads) so as to shine both on the street and in the park
- Developing the park's theme

Timeframe for design and construction was to be determined (TBD) but the following action items were summarized:

- Paul Bonfanti (PHA) was going to work on the ownership issues (Ongoing)
- Friends of Montrose Park were going to work on the theme of the park (ASAP)
- Deborah Kahill(PHA) was going to work on a conceptual drawing for this 3rd alt. (TBD)

Suggestions were solicited for a park theme as the designer needed input in order to prepare the next set of drawings. So it was suggested that the theme and mural should revolve around Architect Julian F. Abele<sup>6</sup> who lived in this area and designed the Philadelphia Art Museum, Duke University, as well as several estates in suburban Philadelphia. Several advantages for naming the park after Julian Abele were cited, including but not limited to:

- He is one of Philadelphia's more noted architects yet there are few things in the city in general or this area specifically that commemorate him or his accomplishments versus Marion Anderson and her Center at 17th & Catharine
- Allows the designer to incorporate Julian Abele's Beaux Arts style into the park design, which would then blend nicely with existing neighborhood structures<sup>7</sup> - reflected in such items as the entrances, park items and potentially the rear wall with a mural.
- Born in South Philadelphia, he lived for various periods of his life not far from the Park<sup>8</sup>

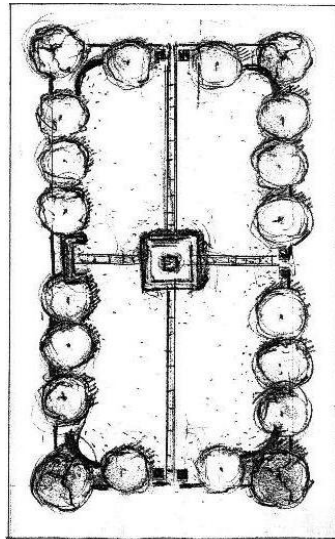
On Thursday, September 20<sup>th</sup> 2007, (4) members of PIC met with members of PHS (including Deborah) in the Park where she presented the concept design as discussed in July. Additional comments were made and incorporated into the (2) additional alternatives, which would then be presented at the next meeting for comments by the group as a whole.

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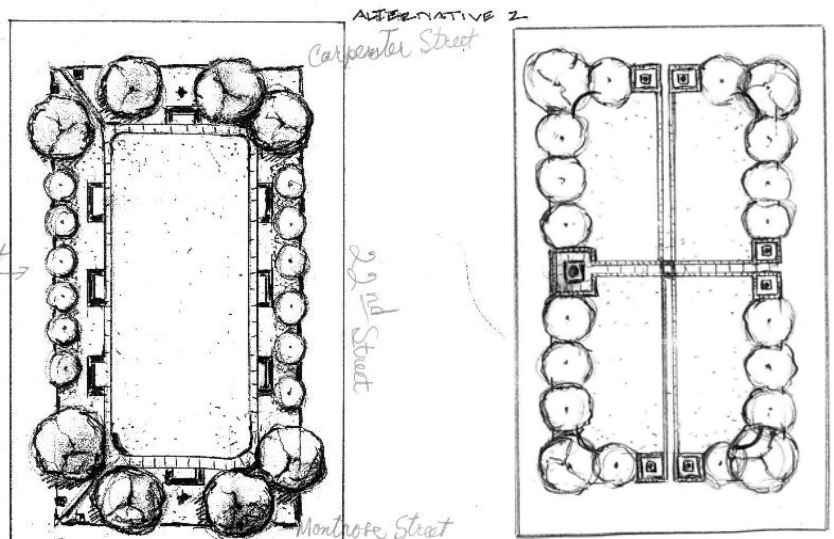
<sup>6</sup>Ref: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian\\_Abele](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_Abele) and [http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/21458](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/21458)

<sup>7</sup> Ref: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaux-Arts\\_architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaux-Arts_architecture)

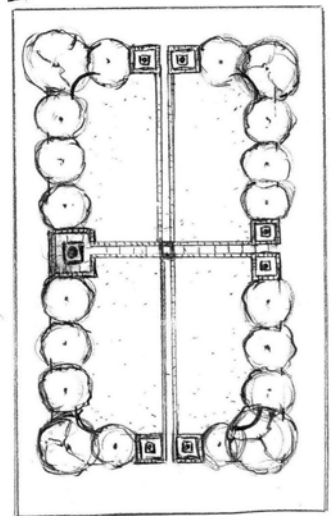
<sup>8</sup> Abele lived most of his life in the city and resided at 718 South 21<sup>st</sup> St and 1911 Fitzwater St before moving to 1515 Christian Street. Ref: <http://libwww.library.phila.gov/75th/abele.htm>



Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Alternative 3

A meeting was then scheduled for Wednesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2007, where the current alternatives were presented before the larger group of Friends of Montrose Park<sup>9</sup>. All comments about the design (including selection of the desired alternative) were requested by 12 October, at which point they would be forwarded to PHS for finalization of the selected plan. It was also mentioned at the October meeting that although the final design was still being developed, expected items in the first phase to be started sometime that spring (2008) will include some underground utilities, site lighting and regrading of the property.

Next Meeting was Wednesday, November 28<sup>th</sup> 2007. At this point there were no further updates in terms of the park design as the designer's time was spent finalizing the drawing and putting together bid packages (i.e. contract specifications and drawings for the projected Phase 1 items.)

<sup>9</sup> Flyer distribution for the 3 October June 2007 Meeting is estimated at 600/650 flyers delivered specifically to residents and does not include any who may have gotten the meeting information from flyers left at specific locations – i.e. retail establishments such as coffee shops, etc. or via email (Ref: Montrose Park Flyer Coverage (Map), proposed Oct07 Mtg v2. with estimation of residences based on an average of 50 houses per block for larger streets and 30 houses per block for small streets.)

Wednesday, April 9<sup>th</sup> 2008, presented by Paul (PHA) the first phase drawing was briefed in the kick-off meeting for the Friends of Julian Abele park in 2008.

