Aretha Franklin Park

Site Assessment and Landscape Review For Plans Submitted By

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Part One: Site Assessment

1. We toured the grounds to identify diseased and dying plant material.
   a. On the West side of the theater, nearly all of the Austrian Pine tree were displaying signs of medium to advanced infestations of diplodia blight. A fungus that is deadly and very communicable. There were also sign of Austrian pines that were growing in relatively small planting areas (bounded by concrete wall near the river) that the crowns have reached a size that is unsustainable. One had fallen over in a recent windstorm. We recommend removals and replacement for these pines as well.
   b. Moving north towards Atwater, on the west side of the path there are approximately 12 colorado blue spruce infested with needle cast disease. A fungus that is also deadly. The dead branches have been trimmed up which ruined the purpose of these trees for screening and the disease, also a deadly communicable fungus, is moving up to the tops of these spruce trees. We recommend demolition and replacements, and the new plans call for Norway Spruce (abies) which is much more resistant to needle cast.
   c. Concerning replacements, we recommend that the irrigation system operate during daylight hours to keep these diseases at bay for future plantings. The problem with these diseases is relatable to too much water on the branches that which is very accommodating to fungal spores. It should also be noted that this problem exists all over southeast Michigan.
   d. Moving east parallel to Atwater a very large cottonwood tree was identified and due to its proximity to heavily used pedestrian areas and

the fact that it drops large branches during wind events, it is slated for removal. We recommend a more suitable shade tree for this location.

e. Looking up the steep hill at this location, a large stand of Austrian Pine (approx.. 10) were originally slated for removal. There is very little sign of disease on these trees and as the more severely diseased trees are slated for removal. We recommend preserving these trees.
f. Moving further east, near the stairs that start at the ground level at the location of the former ice skate rental facility there is a large stand of viburnum and mulberries. The viburnum are 50% dead and we recommend removal and replacement with ornamental shrubs which is called out in the current plan.
g. There is a remnant tree trunk of a very large willow in this area and we recommend its removal and a new tree (preferably not a willow) be planted in its place.
h. Moving south toward the Detroit River, there are numerous weed trees such as mulberries and shrubs which have reached the end of their life expectancy. The current plan calls for removal and replacement of these shrubs and we recommend approval as the new material is in keeping with the original design intent.
i. Across the site there are large stands of burning bush and mulberries, the burning bush is considered invasive and the mulberries are nuisance trees. We recommend complete removal of these plants throughout the site.
j. Along the east side of the amphitheater near the Detroit river there is one large bradford pear, also identified as an invasive tree in this region. It is covering some mature crabapples and we recommend its removal and a class one prune for the crabapples, (we also recommend a class one pruning for all crabapples and applicable trees on site). The increase in sunlight for the crabapples should result in a satisfactory rejuvenation.
k. Within the amphitheater, there are several trees not surviving well as they are growing under the canopy. We discussed installing new plant material which will thrive in these conditions including American dogwood “Appalachian spring”, a disease resistant dogwood. In one location a dying tree is slated for removal and the replacement material

will look very nice as it included smoke tree with chartreuse and yellow hosta.

Conclusion on Site Assessment

a. The most extensive area for demolition of trees is on the west side of the amphitheater. It is recommended to complete these removals in order to stop diseases and pests from spreading any further. We also recommend beefing up the evergreen replacement plan and diversifying the species selection which, in addition to changes in the landscape management (irrigation) should prevent this kind of problem from happening again.
b. On the north and east side of the amphitheater, the removals are mainly dead and dying shrubs with a few trees slated for demolition and the transformation with new plants will be very attractive, especially as the design is in keeping with the original design and actually has some improvements due to newer available cultivars of plants.

Part 2 Design Review for the Newly Created Landscape Plan

1. Overall Design
   a. The design is excellent. It's going to be transformational while respecting the original design.
2. Plant List: There are a few issues with the plant selections.
   A. Trees
      1. Would it be possible to diversify the evergreen tree selections? Pinus cembra, Pinus "vanderwolf" would add a little more variety. And they seem quite resistant to disease. Report from my favorite nursery in Ohio is that Norway Spruce are getting hit with needle cast disease but they are easy to work with just as long as the irrigation systems don't come on too early in the morning where the water just sits inviting the spores to infect Norway Spruce. Also consider chaemacyparis nootkatensis as part of the replacement plan.
   B. Tree quantities
      1. As quite a few trees, over a dozen are slated for removal on the east side of the theater, please consider more replacements, closer to one for one in the new plan.

2. Shrubs

1. Boxwood blight is just about to blow up in southeast Michigan. It's causing big problems already in southern Canada and it has shown up in Grosse Pointe (there goes half of my residential portfolio). A good sub would be Ilex crenata if you can find it grown as a hedge. We have found that deutzia works well too. Here is it at LaSalle Gardens. In the foreground you can see boxwood, but in the background, the capsule shaped beds are lined with Deutzia 'Yuki pink". We trim it once a year and it gives us the same effect as boxwood and if trimmed right after it's done blooming, we'll get flowers the following spring.

2. For the Annabelle hydrangea, the cultivar “incrediball” is far more sturdy than the straight species.
3. Could other varieties of hydrangea get mixed into the fold? I find that oakleaf hydrangea blooms very close to Annabelle in early summer. Perhaps adding Hyd. Paniculate “vanilla strawberry” will extend the bloom time and it has several color displays from white, to pink, to auburn. There are endless cultivars of hydrangea available these days which are very attractive including the giant “Limelight” its smaller version “little lime” and the entire “city lights” series.
4. Gro low sumac is also, like boxwood, suffering from blight. It’s really starting to show up in southeast Michigan now. We have a large stand of on Jefferson near Alter and we will need to remove it either this year or next as it’s fading. There is an excellent dwarf viburnum called “lil ditty” that performs better but doesn’t spread as vigorously. Another suggestion would be artemsia “silver mound” or weigela “wine and roses”. Deutzia (unpruned) might also work.
5. I applaud bringing in Lindera! Great butterfly plant
6. Would you consider using both red and yellow twig dogwood? If they are visible from the street during winter, I find that red twig looks great on a sunny day in winter and how many of those do we have? Yellow twig stands out in cloudy weather. I would not recommend a mix of one by one but in large clusters.
7. How about another viburnum mixed into the fold if possible. The tomentosum “shasta” looks like we’d like a dogwood tree (if it were a shrub) that we’d like to see but with all the other suggestions for a larger mix of a specie, if it works with the design, then it would be nice to see another variety.
8. There is a shrub that blooms so very early that people think it’s May when it’s early April. It’s not easy to find but if there is a place for it within the public view for early April, Rhododendron mucronulatum “Cornell Pink” is just that shrub. It’s native to the border between Mongolia and Siberia so it’s quite hardy. Why we don’t use more of it in ornamental gardens escapes me, but it is a little brittle to work with but once in the ground it’s a show stopper. Planted with a little protection from the walls or hills of this landscape would be a perfect

home for it. It's deciduous so it doesn't suffer from leaf desiccation like other rhododendrons.

3. Perennials

1. I have found that the public is not crazy about ornamental grasses as much as we designers are. I had to rip all of them out (approaching nearly a thousand) at Bristol Park and along Livernois due to negative public responses. I'd be happy to work with you directly on reductions of grasses in favor of some plants that get a good response. These include Hibiscus M. "berry awesome" "midnight marvel" and "ballet slippers are just as low maintenance and have huge flowers in the early second half of summer. While I'm not suggesting no ornamental grasses I'm suggesting some companion plantings which would include crocosmia "lucifer", berberis "sunjoy citrus" and Buddleia "miss molly" and "lo and behold pink micro chip". All of these have performed very well at Erma Henderson Park just a few miles away off Jefferson and Burns.
2. I can't wait to see 595 creeping phlox blooming in early May!

4. Ground Cover

1. What a great and creative use of groundcovers. I hope you won't mind if you see that combo popping up at a few other parks where we are developing gardens.

Thank you for the opportunity for me to provide some input.