

Maitland Garden Village Perseverance Park Redevelopment



An Interactive Qualifying Project submitted to the faculty of Worcester Polytechnic Institute in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor Science.

ABSTRACT

We were invited by Maitland Garden Village through the Residents Association and the Green Light Project to assist in the redevelopment of a community play park. The redevelopment process included creating a design model and implementation plan for Perseverance Park. To accomplish these goals, we worked with the City of Cape Town City Parks Department and formed a partnership with a group of dedicated community members. Together, we visited local parks throughout Cape Town to identify layout and equipment options, gathered community insight on the park through an informal survey, and hosted a community meeting to draw out and share design ideas. After addressing safety concerns of the community through a park clean-up, the WPI and community partnership hosted a fun day and planting activity to launch the redevelopment process. The hard work of the partnership and City Parks Department resulted in a park design CAD model, implementation plan, a catalogue of park design elements, and the formation of a steering committee within the community who has taken the responsibility of seeing the park redevelopment through to completion.

This project summary is part of an ongoing research programme by students and faculty of the WPI Cape Town Project Centre to explore and develop with local partners options for sustainable community development in South Africa.

For our full project report: <http://wp.wpi.edu/capetown/projects/p2013/park-redevelopment/>

For more about the Cape Town Project Centre: <http://wp.wpi.edu/capetown/>

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SPONSOR

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Parks Department

PROBLEM STATEMENT: PERSEVERANCE PARK, “NOT A PLACE FOR CHILDREN”

Many people think of parks as a fun way to pass the time on a nice afternoon. However, what often goes unnoticed is the role of community parks in the learning and social development of children. Despite the importance of parks to the young and old, many low-income communities in Cape Town either lack such spaces or contain parks in serious disrepair. Our project addresses the need for a redeveloped park in Maitland Garden Village. MGV is a small formal settlement located on the outskirts of Pinelands, a suburb of Cape Town. MGV was established in 1922, celebrating its 91st anniversary in November, 2013. The village is a close-knit community, with many families residing there for as many as five gener-

ations. This low-income community struggles with obstacles such as unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, and teen pregnancy. Last year in 2012, a project team from WPI worked in Maitland Garden Village to assist in the capacity building of a community-based organization, The Green Light Project. The team succeeded in further strengthening the sense of community through their work.

In addition to its deep sense of community, Maitland Garden Village is a community that is fortunate to have an open and natural park space. Perseverance Park is a green area with plenty of open space for free play and several pieces of park equipment. When our team first arrived in Maitland Garden Village, we noticed that something was missing from the park. The sense of community that we knew was in the heart of the village was absent from the park located on its border. There were no children



climbing up the ladder of the rusted slide or running through the glass strewn grass area. Thus, to investigate, we went straight to the people of the community and quickly discovered that they felt Perseverance Park was “not a place for children”.

To address the problem at hand, it was necessary to establish a connection with the community and complete our project objectives. Our goals throughout the project were to assess the initial state of Perseverance Park, to gather design ideas from other parks in Cape Town, to create a catalogue of park design elements, to combine background research and community input to create a final design for Perseverance Park, to develop a phasing plan, and to then begin implementation.

OPPORTUNITY STRIKES: STAKEHOLDERS STEP UP TO THE PLATE

This project came to be when community-based organizations of Maitland Garden Village decided to take advantage of an opportunity that would benefit every member of the community: the chance to redevelop Perseverance Park. As this opportunity surfaced, many stakeholders stepped up to the plate. The City of Cape Town City Parks Department recognized the community’s drive to take action and have assisted in making the project possible. Funding from Ward Councilor Alderman Watkyns and City Parks has been put in place for maintenance,



landscaping, barriers to address safety concerns, and updated park equipment in the future. David Curran, Cape Town City Parks Area Manager, Joseph Strydom, Area Manager of City Parks North, and Jude Carolissen, Project Manager, worked with us and our community partnership team.

Throughout the project, many community members have taken an active role in the park redevelopment. Various community organizations (the Residents Association and Green Light Project) and dedicated community members worked with us in partnership to seize the opportunity to create a redeveloped design for Perseverance Park to benefit the community.

METHODOLOGY: COMMUNITY-BASED DESIGN



HEARING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

The first thing we did in Maitland Garden Village was speak with community members to gain a better understanding of why the

park was not being used to its greatest potential. Conducting an informal survey of people covering an age span of 10 to 81, we learned that many residents did not enjoy sitting in the park because of the activity that goes on there, specifically drug and alcohol abuse. After speaking to only a few people, we began to see reoccurring themes in their responses: safety, shade, and keeping the children entertained. We learned that toddlers, youth, and adults of all ages have their own specific desires for the park. We needed to look further into pathway, equipment, barrier, seating, and shading options to address the ideas of everyone in the community.

TOURING FOR DESIGN IDEAS

The next step was taking a tour of parks throughout Cape Town to gather a variety of park element options, keeping in mind the themes and desires of the community members. The City of Cape Town City Parks Department and the partnership team visited a total of nine parks: Manyanani, Lusaka, NY 10, Khetsha, VPUU, Emms Drive, Queens, Nantes, and Green Point Park. We utilized the Park Observation Sheet that we created during our prep term to guide the park assessments. At the end of the day we had a collection of different pathway, barrier, landscape, play equipment, seating, and shading options that had the potential to be incorporated into the new design of Perseverance Park.



BIG IDEAS FROM THE MGV COMMUNITY

School Activity—To gain insight on what children would like to see in the park, we worked with the staff Maitland Garden Village Primary School and Village Tods Creche. We facilitated an activity in which we asked each child in the schools to draw their fantasy playground. The main focus of the children was play equipment to be incorporated into Perseverance Park. The reoccurring equipment shown in the drawings was a slide, swings, and jungle gym.

Community Meeting—We now needed to present gathered options to the community

to collect further input. The partnership team held an interactive community meeting to share and draw out design ideas. The attendees were split up into three groups: toddlers and parents, youth, and adults and elderly. Each group was given a poster that contained a map of the current park to scale and different design elements that we knew were of interest to them. Toddlers and parents focused their discussion on equipment for small children, seating, and shading. The youth discussed equipment and seating options. The adults and elderly sifted through seating, shade, barrier, and pathway options. Ultimately, each

group shared with us their ideal park design, bringing ideas that we had not considered into play.

MAKING A PHYSICAL IMPACT

The partnership team then wanted to begin making a physical difference in the park. We took part in a park clean-up, removing trash and scattered glass prior to cutting the grass to make the area a safer environment. After taking a step forward in addressing the community's safety concerns, we hosted a Fun Day for the children with our community partners. One focus throughout the day was painting newly installed trash bins, the existing benches and barrier. Our other focus was showing the children that the park is evolving into a safe place for them to play.



That day the park played a large role in bringing the community together. We saw both children and adults utilize it as a place to interact and further strengthen their sense of community. We developed rela-

tionships with many of the youth in the village, showing them that Perseverance Park is their park and is a safe place to play. Since that day, there has been a noticeable increase in the activity in Perseverance Park. Holding small, visible projects has proven to be an excellent way to excite a community about an on-going process, such as park redevelopment.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH COMPLEMENTS COMMUNITY INPUT

Throughout the preparation term our team conducted research on community outreach, the importance of natural park design, and the impact parks have on early childhood development. Throughout our time in Maitland Garden Village it was encouraging to see that the community's input complemented our extensive research to produce an innovative design for Perseverance Park. The first aspect in creating the park design was engaging the community in the project as a Shared Action Learning process. Our research stated that individuals learn best through engaging in real life experiences, focusing on the skills that they already have. It is necessary to work with a community as a primary source of information and resources, encouraging leadership development and participation. Ensuring open communication and embracing



diversity amongst individuals provides input that comes from multiple points of view. Working together to develop a system to ensure implementation, analyze progress, and track and share information allows the community to build upon their experiences throughout the project, in our case, creating a final design for the park ("Involving communities in strategic planning").

There were a number of considerations while incorporating community input and integrating research into the final park design. For example, our research emphasized that a more natural, landscape based ap-

proach is the ideal design tactic. This is in favor over the more traditional based playgrounds which can be described as "consisting of a kit of fixed play equipment, with a fence surrounding it and a carpet of rubber surface—a Kit, Fence, Carpet (KFC) playground" (Woolley, 2007, 2008). This notion complimented the community's desire for plants to provide shade, a low barrier to ensure safety without producing a closed-off environment, and their request for non-traditional play equipment.

Safety is another important factor to incorporate in park design. Our research focused

on general hazards and equipment deterioration, ensuring that equipment footings are not exposed, cracked, or loose, that steel is not rusted, cracked, bended, warped or broken, and that the equipment paint is not damaged, peeled, or cracked. Specific equipment hazards include ensuring that all slide supports are intact and that there is no potential risk for clothing entanglement on protruding bolts. Safe surrounding area and protective surfacing around equipment include bordering fences that are in good condition, do not come loose, and do not have holes. Protective surfacing material must also be adequately deep ("Public playground safety handbook", 2008). The community raised specific concerns to Perseverance Park that had not come up in our research. For example, drug and alcohol abuse was not uncommon to see taking place in the park. In addition, the existing barrier did not prevent children from running into the street.

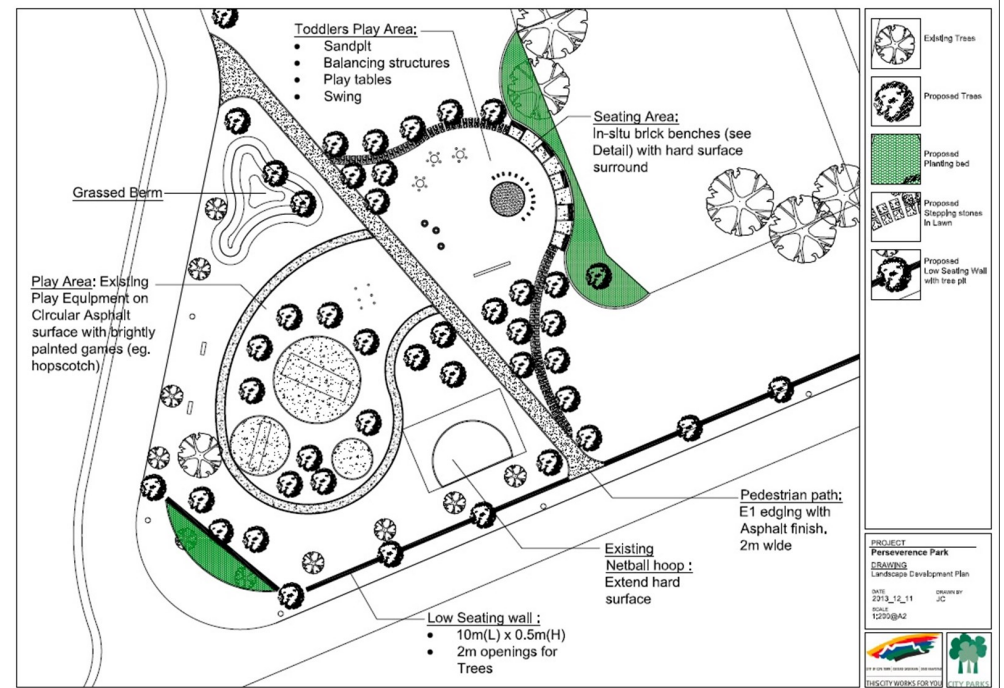
Our preparation research also focused on the role parks play in early childhood development. Past research has stressed that it is crucial to create a flexible environment in a park space. This encourages experimentation and exploration that leads to the development of flexibility and creativity in problem solving amongst children. A variety of play activity results in children building confidence in risk taking, varies their day-to-day reactions to conflicts, and enhances self-awareness and self-acceptance (Brown & Ebrary Academic Complete, 2002). A flexible, open area encourages children to explore and experiment in different activities, providing opportunities for communication, negotiation, and friendship formation (Tovey, 2007). The community expressed interest in including a sandbox, open space, and unstructured play equipment into the final park design. These flexible environments will be essential in promoting early childhood development in Perseverance Park.



PROJECT OUTCOMES

A DESIGN EMERGES

Creating a design based on community input was one of the major outcomes of this project. The toddlers and parent group expressed their desire for a kiddie area away from the larger play equipment. They wanted to include seating around the area and a



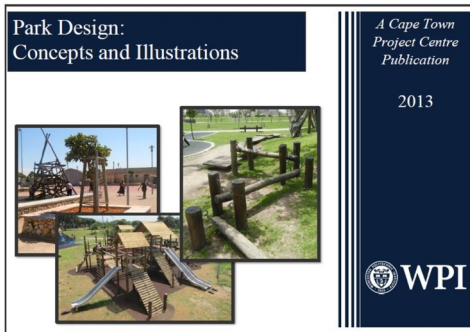
lot of shade for sun protection. The youth expressed a strong desire for a netball court. The adults and elderly commented on the necessity of benches and shading in addition to barrier options. They developed a theory that if the community takes initiative to show that Perseverance Park is to be treated with pride and respect, then that is the type of activity that will take place in the park by anyone who passes through. Therefore, the main purpose of the barrier should not be to keep people out, but to provide a safe environment for the people inside the park. It was strongly stated that a park is a place for children to engage in free play without being in a confined area like they may be at home or at school. It was

decided that a lower barrier made of a variety of planters, cement walls, benches, and the existing barrier should be incorporated into the park design. Combining these design elements with our background research resulted in a final design for Perseverance Park.

PARK DESIGN: CONCEPTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

An integral part of displaying design options to the community was the completion of a catalogue of park design elements. The process involved touring parks throughout Cape Town, capturing photos of different pathway, barrier, landscape, play equipment, seating, and shading options that

could possibly be incorporated into the new design of Perseverance Park. In order to both present design options and collect community input, we compiled park element options into a catalogue, *Park Design: Concepts and Illustrations*. It contains a variety of park elements with descriptions of their use and assets that can be applied to the design of Perseverance Park, other park redevelopment projects, and future Interactive Qualifying Projects.



Throughout our project, the catalogue was utilized to show the MGV community what Perseverance Park has the potential to look like with the help of their valuable insight. It opened their minds to creative options, steering away from the traditional equipment found in most play parks in the surrounding area. As a result of our background research and community input on a wide range of park elements, the final design of Perseverance Park has become a natural park design that promotes early childhood development.

DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Phase 1: December 2013 - June 2014			
Funding Allocated: R100 000 / Funding Requested:			
Implementation Element	Group Involved	Deadline	Notes
1. Barrier	Steering Committee & Parks Department	13-Dec	Community requested that barrier not be made up of palisade fencing. CAD drawings with information on the park elements selected.
2. Finalize Design Plan	Steering Committee		
3. Test Barrier Options on Existing Fence	Steering Committee & Parks Department		Build small sections of the wall along fence to get an idea for the ideal layout in the future. Sketch up a design for the ideal barrier options for around the park to be installed in the future.
4. Create a Final Wall Design Plan	Steering Committee & Parks Department		
5. Perseverance Rd Side	Steering Committee & Parks Department		Start on the road side with the most car traffic.
6. Beauty Ave Side	Steering Committee & Parks Department		

After assisting in creating a CAD model of the park, the City of Cape Town City Parks Department worked with us and members of the steering committee to develop a phasing plan for implementation. The phasing plan consists of various park elements, such as barrier, seating, landscape, and equipment for both youth and kiddie areas of Perseverance Park. The plan spans over a period of three financial years, 2013-2016. The elements implemented in each phase depend on the allocation of funds and resources for that year. The City of Cape Town City Parks Department takes the role of providing funding and resources. As the phasing plan unfolds over the next few years, it will be important to regularly perform safety checks in an effort to address the community's recurring concern of safety. To assist with this, our team has produced a safety checklist to pass along to a community steering committee that will ensure that resources are used to address the community's concerns.

THE COMMUNITY PLANTS THE SEED IN PERSEVERANCE PARK

Moving forward, enthused community members of Maitland Garden Village have stepped up for a three year commitment in seeing the implementation plan to completion. The steering committee consists of community members from young adults to elderly. The committee consists of our project partners who have been working with us throughout the entire process. The first initiative that they took was beginning with the first phase of the landscape design. Sharing their talents and passion for the park, the steering committee spent a morning installing plants provided by the City of

Cape Town City Parks Department. As we planted, children noticed activity in the park. They engaged in free play, running through the sprinklers and assisting in watering the new landscape elements. We are excited by the inspiring plans this group of committed individuals is putting together for the future of the park.



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Jude Carolissen, Project Manager: City of Cape Town City Parks Dept.

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Naiela Baajies, Executive Board of the Green Light Project: MGV

Cecelia Fouchee, Chairperson of the Residents Association: MGV



Community Steering Committee: Ronell Trout, Naiela Baajies, Martin Julius, Janine Morris, Dawn Floris, Maria Franz, Astrio Walker, Carol Carelse, Aisha Minting, Mariska Mentoor, Carmy Andrews, John Julius, Michael Smith, Katy Morkel

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