



# omaha by design

Place Game Workshop  
inCOMMON Community Development  
Oct. 22, 2013

## Introduction

inCOMMON Community Development partnered with Omaha by Design to host a Place Game workshop Oct. 20. Participants met at inCOMMON's new facility on Park Avenue, and 17 people attended. Participants evaluated the four corners of the Park Avenue and Woolworth intersection.

## Evaluation Tools

Workshop participants were asked to evaluate the intersection according to the four criteria outlined below, which rank responses on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree").

### *Comfort and image*

- Attractive
- Feels safe
- Clean/well maintained
- Comfortable places to sit

### *Access and linkage*

- Identifiable from a distance
- Walkable
- Bikeable
- Accessible by transit
- Clean information/signage

### *Uses and activities*

- Good mix of activities
- Frequent community events
- Area is busy
- Encourages physical activity
- Area is vital economically

### *Sociability*

- People in groups
- Evidence of volunteerism
- Sense of pride and ownership
- Children and seniors present

Workshop participants also were instructed to ask persons who were in the place being evaluated what they liked about it and what they would do to improve it.

## General Observations

The intersection at Park Avenue and Woolworth is full of potential, bolstered in part by the recent relocation of inCOMMON Community Development to 1340 Park Avenue.

Workshop participants value the site's location, the character of its buildings, the cultural diversity, the mix of business and residential, the proximity to the park, the variety of services and the foot traffic.

Concerns fell into three main categories – physical appearance/lack of maintenance, safe access into historic Hanscom Park and behavioral issues (prostitution, drug and alcohol use/abuse).

In terms of the four criteria outlined above, workshop participants ranked the intersection's access and linkage as its biggest asset with an average score of 2.8, followed by uses and activities with an average score of 2.6 and sociability with an average score of 2.5. Comfort and image was ranked the lowest with an average score of 2.2.

Suggestions for short-term improvements ranged from adding benches and planters along the sidewalks to programming the corners with positive activities to repairing the crosswalks. Suggestions for long-term improvements ranged from improving lighting to adding a trail into Hanscom Park at the corner to adding awnings to the buildings on the west side of the street.

There was some disagreement amongst the participants as to what constitutes a short-term "fix" versus a long-term one. For example, **the idea of adding a mural to the north wall of Park Avenue Towers surfaced in both categories.** The planning group should spend some time determining what it considers a short-term versus a long-term project before prioritizing any of the suggestions for action. (Regarding the mural idea, the planning group should investigate the options that exist for mural development as well as any city guidelines that apply.)

There also seems to be a great deal of energy and excitement behind the idea of improving access into Hanscom Park from the intersection. The planning group might benefit from a short- and long-term strategy for tackling this issue. Visible progress on this green corner could lead to increased interest from neighborhood property owners in making improvements to their facilities, such as the awning idea outlined above.

## **Analysis**

### *Four corners of the Park Avenue and Woolworth intersection*

#### **What do you like best about this place?**

- Proximity to the park
- Easy access to other parts of the city, other neighborhoods, the interstate
- Variety of services (gas station, pastry shop)
- Cultural diversity
- Trees in the park
- Streetlights
- Older (historic) buildings
- Active people (Park Avenue Towers)
- Mix of business and residential
- Wide spaces
- Scale/size of intersection is nice
- The park
- Foot traffic
- Density of activity

- Lots of potential
- Open minded

What is the biggest problem with this place?

- External appearance of gas station and bakery
- Too much concrete, not enough greenery
- Can't access Hanscom Park from the northeast corner (fence, slope)
- Bus stop needs repair
- Giant blank wall of Park Avenue Towers (needs color)
- Cockroaches in Park Avenue Towers
- Streetlights don't adequately light the park
- Better lighting needed all around
- Lack of police presence
- Park fence in need of repair
- Speed of traffic
- Overgrown plants
- Side parking causes narrow roads
- Lack of art and general use of the space
- Ugly buildings/grey faded paint
- Run down/uninviting
- Prostitution
- Drugs/alcohol abuse

List things that you would do to improve this place that could be done right away and that wouldn't cost a lot. (participant vote tally in red)

- Add a mural on the blank Park Avenue Towers wall 11
- Add benches/planters/landscaping along the sidewalk 11
- Cut back the overgrown foliage on the park corner 7
- Program the corners (street fair, block parties, Christmas caroling) 6
- Add shrubs and benches (maybe a Trug) at Park Avenue Towers 4
- Repair fence on park corner 3
- Add a Hanscom Park sign on the park's northeast corner 3
- Add cool-looking trash/recycling cans on each corner 3
- Repair sidewalks and curbs
- Make a path from the northeast corner of Hanscom Park to the dog park
- Add planters at the gas station, on the Park Avenue Towers property and near the buildings
- Add a bike rack on the west side of Park Avenue Towers
- Repaint the crosswalks
- Paint the bakery
- Fix tiles on gas station roof
- More speed limit signage

What changes would you make in the long term that would have the biggest impact? (participant vote tally in red)

- Better lighting 8
- Add a trail into the park at park corner 7
- Add landscaping 6
- Add castle playground, potential spraypark at park corner 6
- Add bridge and trail from the NE park corner to dog park 5
- Add a sculpture at the Park Avenue Towers corner 4

- Add a bike lane 3
- Build an amphitheater on the park's northeast corner 3
- Redesign sidewalk, crosswalk to incorporate trees, artwork, etc. 2
- Add fitness stations on park side or on Park Avenue Towers side 2
- Add awnings to buildings on the west side of the street 1
- Add street lamps below the streetlights 1
- Built deck into the park from park corner, add steps to ground level 1
- Organize community events
- Fix exterior of business buildings
- Add a second community garden at the southeast corner
- Add traffic calming devices
- Make pedestrian crosswalks into the park
- Add neighborhood marker at park corner (historic Hanscom Park)
- Paint a mural on the north side of the Park Avenue Towers
- Repair the trail
- Remove gas station
- More urban development/fix up abandoned properties
- Bigger park
- Basketball and football fields

#### Comments from users of the place.

- Good people
- Stores are close and walkable
- Location
- Historic buildings

#### What local partnerships or local talent can you identify that could help implement some of your proposed activities? Please be as specific as possible.

- City of Omaha (Parks, Public Works, Mayor's Office)
- Peter Kiewit Foundation (other local foundations)
- Nebraska Statewide Arboretum
- Local artists
- inCOMMON Community Development
- Omaha Housing Authority
- Local garden centers
- Douglas County Extension Office
- Neighborhood associations – Ford Birthsite NA, Hanscom Park NA
- Midtown Neighborhood Alliance
- National Park Service
- Watie White (Omaha mural artist)
- OPPD
- Metropolitan Community College
- Jack Phillips (local arborist)
- Local developers (John Foley, Urban Village Development, Christian Christensen at Bluestone Development Company)

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