

WABASH COLLEGE

Wabash Democracy & Public Discourse Initiative

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Report on the Community Input Session for the Pike Street Pocket Park

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On February 22, 2016, the Mayor's Office of Crawfordsville hosted a Community Input Session for citizens to come together and discuss amenities for a pocket park located at the intersection of 231 and Pike Street. The event was held in the Hays Center in downtown Crawfordsville. The conversation focused on three areas: first, *the overall vision of the pocket park*; second, *what amenities would help bring this vision into reality*; and third, *which amenities should be prioritized with the size and fiscal constraints for park planning*. More than 80 community members attended this event, as well as representatives from local government and the local media.

This public deliberation was coordinated by Mayor Todd Barton's office in Crawfordsville and designed by the Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse Initiative (WDPD) of Wabash College. To prepare for the event, the WDPD researched various small-sized pocket parks in the state of Indiana, as well as possible park amenities. This information was used to frame and stimulate the conversation about the potential pocket park.



Community Input Session, February 22, 2015

This report is available at the WDPD blog: <http://blog.wabash.edu/wabashdpd/category/reports/>

I. BACKGROUND

On the day of the community input session, community members arrived and were invited to sit at a table of their choosing. There were eight deliberative groups at the event. Each table had copies of a guide for conversation that laid out the major topics, as well as post-event surveys. Due to the high rate of attendance, not all individuals had a copy of the post-survey to fill out, but all deliberative groups had a WDPD member take notes.

Each participant received a four-page issue guide, designed the guide to create open-ended conversations of the park vision, brainstorm amenities, and then prioritize which amenities were preferred. The guide stressed that the different examples provided in the participation guide as well within the facilitator’s questions were not an exclusive list, but rather a general list to encourage the consideration of various perspectives.

(Note: Due to the large number of participants, one group had to go through the first section of the deliberation without a guide before copies were made for these participants. This group relied on the facilitator’s leading them, and then had guides later in the deliberation).

Between each section of the deliberation, the notetakers of each deliberative group gave a summary of the major points of the conversation to the entire group gathered. This process spread ideas from one group to another, as well as enabled seeing similarities and differences between groups.

The demographics of community members at the conversation reflects the 41 individuals who chose to complete a survey after the deliberation:

Age	Count
18-30	4
31-40	3
41-50	4
51-60	10
61-70	7
70+	14
<i>Average Age</i>	<i>57.61</i>

Degree Type	Count
High School Diploma/Equivalent	2
Some College	9
Associates Degree	1
Bachelors Degree	12
Masters Degree	15
Doctoral Degree	5

Gender	Count
Male	14
Female	31

WDPD student Wesley Virt and Director Dr. Sara Drury opened the event with the ground rules of the discussion. Staff from the Mayor of Crawfordsville’s office also welcomed the participants. After the opening remarks, trained student facilitators from WDPD, along with their trained notetakers, led the deliberative groups through the various sections and the prioritization. Six tables had a facilitator and notetaker pair; two tables had a facilitator who led the conversation and took notes.

The event proceeded as follows:

4:30	Welcome and Introductions
4:45	Our Vision
5:00	Large Group Report
5:10	Features and Constraints
5:30	Prioritize
5:45	Large Group Report



This report analyzes data from the table notes, participant surveys, and facilitator post-event worksheets gathered on the day of the event. This report is not meant to be a complete portrayal of public opinion in Crawfordsville, because the data is limited to only those who participated in the event. As such, this report summarizes the conversation and notes the preferred actions identified by participants from this specific event. This report focuses on accurately analyzing and conveying the most frequent themes that came from the discussion, and proceeds in four:

- Stakeholder Information and Interests
- Establishing a Vision for the Park
- Amenities
- Prioritization

II. STAKEHOLDER INFORMATION

A variety of interests brought community members to the Community Conversation on the Pocket Park. Many were members who have lived in Crawfordsville for years; others were students at local high schools and colleges. Community members also represented businesses, school administrators, board members for local parks, downtown business owners, and residents of the neighborhood around the proposed park site.

Community members **expressed their desire to see improvements in the downtown area as a result of the Stellar Communities designation.** Many were excited about the Pocket Park project along with other coming changes from the designation. A few citizens represented the Farmer’s Market, which is currently held Saturdays April-October on Pike Street near the proposed park site. A few expressed that they came to the conversation because they wanted to see the community prosper and have their voice heard.

Based on table notes, **all eight tables expressed the following themes:** excitement about the new park space, interest in improving downtown Crawfordsville, and interest in how the park could impact downtown businesses and events.

III. ESTABLISHING A VISION FOR THE PARK

After participants explained what had brought them to the community input session, the discussion moved to answer the question *What is our vision for the Pike Street Pocket Park?* This section focused on the preferred scope for the space. The authors of this report have gathered the data and summarized dominant themes (below) to reflect the different themes of conversations.

- **Community/Town Centerpiece**

In general, the tables envisioned the park being utilized as a key centerpiece for the town of Crawfordsville because of its prominent location in downtown. With this, some participants felt that the park could bring more people together. Participants in a majority of the groups also mentioned the park meshing with current community events, such as the Saturday farmers' market and seasonal festivals.

- **Relaxation**

Another point that all the groups saw as part of the vision was a space with places for sitting and relaxing. A few of the groups discussed the space being a good area for families to come and sit while walking the downtown area. Other groups discussed the use of the space being a spot for downtown employees, possibly as a lunch break spot.

- **Green Space**

The final aspect of a vision agreed on by all table was the park being a welcome green space in downtown. Participants discussed placing trees and shrubbery in the park in combination with seating. Participants also added that green space could add to the visual appeal of downtown. With this appeal, the park could invite more people downtown, thus bringing the community together and encouraging local businesses.

- **Entertainment**

A majority of the groups discussed their vision including some options for the pocket park being an entertainment space. Participants discussed that if the park contained the infrastructure to host a broad range of entertainment options, it would contribute to the use of the park and its place in the community. Others noted that the space could open up opportunities for hosting different types of events in a centralized location downtown.

- **Safety and Sound Barrier**

Some of the groups noted that there needed to be a barrier to create a space park space, considering the park's location next to the major highway U.S. 231. Some of the groups discussed that such a barrier could act as a noise buffer of the nearby passing traffic. Additionally, others noted the importance of a barrier to create a safe park space, especially for families and children.



Sample artist rendering of Pike Street Pocket Park, used in the deliberation issue guide

In addition to identifying their vision for the park, a few groups noted what they **would not prefer** to have as part of the Pike Street Pocket Park. These themes are reflected below:

- **Playground**
Several groups expressed their views that a playground was not something they envisioned for this particular park. Participants noted there are other playgrounds throughout the downtown area and in neighborhoods. Participants also suggested that a playground does not fit with the “centerpiece” aspect for this particular space. Finally, some expressed concern that a playground would not be used, even if installed, because of the proximity to U.S. 231.
- **Murals**
A few community members suggested the park should include artwork or murals on the wall; however, other groups suggested their concern about this due to factors such as preservation and care or aesthetics.
- **Marie Canine Plaza**
Two groups were quite vocal about this park needing to be a different “feel” than the Marie Canine Plaza park located at the intersections of S Green Street and E Main Street. These groups felt strongly that the Pike Street Park should not have a fountain.

Following the small group discussion, the groups came back together to report out on their preferred vision for the Pike Street Pocket Park. After all the groups had reported out their groups information, the conversation moved to discussing the possible features and constraints for the park.

III. AMENITIES

The focus for this section of the discussion was to brainstorm particular features and amenities that would enact the community’s vision. The facilitators reminded participants that the park has a limited space and budget, and so choices would need to be made about particular features.

- **Seating**
All eight groups discussed a strong desire for high quality seating within the park. Some groups justified this by explaining that seating would mean that people would walk to and gather in the park space. Others saw seating as desirable for downtown employees. Some expressed that it would be a nice place to pause when walking a dog or going for a recreational walk around town. The groups were not, however, unified in their preference on the style of seating. Some felt natural style seating would be nice (decorative rocks that would place of benches); others thought tables would be preferred; and still others saw wooden benches and seating as fitting the space
- **Landscaping / Foliage**
All of the groups mentioned that keeping the park green with landscaping and tree foliage would be a necessity. Several groups expressed that this would draw attention to the park because the area surrounding it is more urban. Others noted that greenery would add to the relaxing sense of the park and invite people to the space.

- **Stage or Performance Area**

Participants saw a stage as an important feature because it would be an asset that could bring the community together for different events, as well as become a site for annual events and festivals. A stage could add to the shade in the park if it had a canopy. Some participants discussed how the stage could be economically beneficial to the community as a whole if it could be utilized for a range of situations and rented.
- **Public Facilities**

A few groups highlighted the desire for the park to be an environmentally friendly space and provide space for public facilities and restrooms. Some participants felt the downtown area lacks these spaces, and thought that this park could provide public restrooms, particularly if the park had entertainment events. Quality drinking fountains were also seen as important, particularly for those out walking; one group mentioned installing fountains that had spigots for humans and pets. Many groups expressed a desire for trashcans to keep the park clean, as well as recycling bins.
- **Safety**

Several groups suggested that lights would be important to keep the space bright and aesthetically pleasing at night.
- **Signage**

Some of the groups mentioned the desire for signage throughout the park. Most community members seemed to prioritize historical signage, though one group was strongly in favor of signage that would allow different businesses to advertise and direct visitors to downtown establishments. Those interested in including historical signage mentioned the possibility for signs that highlighted the history of the land the park will reside on, or on the history of significant women in Crawfordsville's history. There were several ways suggested of how this could be done, either by incorporating modern technology or to remain more traditional markers and signage.
- **Blank Wall/Decorative Wall**

The groups were split between some groups preferring blank building wall and others preferring a decorative wall. A few groups discussed that a blank wall could be used for community movie showings in the park. Others discussed the possibility of the wall being more decorative, with suggestions of a chalkboard "prompt" wall as seen in some other communities, or community notices / bulletin boards.
- **Space for Families**

Most groups dismissed the idea of the park being primarily a play space for children. However, a few participants offered suggestions to merge a decorative artistic style park that could also act as a play area for children.
- **Vendors**

Tables split about whether to incorporate vendors into the park through food or other opportunities. While some participants were enthusiastic, others worried that vendors would take away from the current downtown establishments or the Farmer's Market.

- **Wall/Barrier**

The final feature discussed was the desire for a wall or barrier between the park and U.S. 231. Participants voiced that this was necessary, being that traffic tends to be moving rather quick. They also discussed that the barrier would serve a dual purpose as it would also act as a noise buffer. However, other participants brought up how the barrier would take away from the visual aspect desired for the park. These participants wondered if traffic could be compelled to move more slowly through town, thus addressing that concern while not needing an expensive wall or barrier.

Following this stage of the discussion, the groups came back together to report out to the large group what was discussed. Afterwards, the groups moved into prioritizing the most important features for the park's design.

IV. PRIORITIZATION

After discussion of feasible amenities the park should include, the facilitators led participants through a reflection of suggested amenities and encouraged a prioritization based on feasibility and consistency with visions for the park. Before concluding the event, each group decided on a list of 3-4 amenities they wanted the future park to include. The authors of this report have summarized the discussion and decisions made on choices of amenities in this section.

- **Greenery/Shade** was of most popularity for participants at the conversation.
- **Restrooms/Sanitation** was prioritized by multiple groups as well.
- **Signage** was prioritized by some groups, with the hopes that it would connect to historical themes. Groups that had focused on community signboards tended *not* to prioritize the amenity, suggesting that if there is a desire for signage, the historical signs are more desired.
- **Seating** was prioritized, especially seating that could be flexible (tables) and leaves open space. During the conversation of seating many groups mentioned they desired a multipurpose park, capable of hosting a variety of activities and events rather than a single purpose park.
- **Stage for entertainment** was seen as an exciting possibility, but groups noted that if this would be prioritized, then the stage should have maximum flexibility with technology (lights, electrical outputs, etc.). Some participants did express that they prefer the stage to be unobtrusive.

Following this prioritization stage, a facilitator from each group reported on their group's top 3-4 amenities so that the large group was aware of the preferences across the community meeting. After the large report out, participants were asked to complete a post-survey which included additional data collection about participant experiences during the conversation, and also asked for suggestions for the park's name. The results are in the appendix of this report.

The event closed with short speeches of gratitude for participants expressed by Sara Drury, Director of Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse, and Dale Petrie from the Office of the Mayor of Crawfordsville.

APPENDIX

Suggested Names for the Park

- Susan Wallace Park
- Gail Pebworth Park
- The Strand Park
- Barton Park
- Pike Street Pocket Park
- "New York Minute" for the old shoe shop
- Athens of Indiana
- Caleb Mills Park
- Athens Park
- Citizens Park

Other General Suggestions for Naming the Park

- The Experience of Downtown Crawfordsville
- Determine a leading woman or women from our community
- Review the history of the space before selecting a name
- Original owner of the land
- Let the richest donor decide
- Have a contest
- Something historical in nature; maybe Civil War Generals that are from Montgomery County

Post-Session Survey Data (n=41)

	Average Response (1 Strongly Disagree to 5 Strongly Agree)
I often do my part to make my community a better place to live.	4.14
I believe it is important for people with diverse opinions to be a part of community decision-making.	4.39
I take part in public discussions about issues that affect our community.	4.05
I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics and community affairs.	4.14
I seek information about issues and concerns that affect my community.	4.37
Today I learned something new about designing the Pocket Park space.	4.21
Today I heard a lot of different viewpoints	4.41
My viewpoint was heard at today's event.	4.55
The discussion at my table was productive.	4.58
Everyone that is impacted was present in our conversations.	4.22
A variety of groups and actors are necessary to ensure the best possible design for the Pocket Park.	4.45
I seek information about issues that affect my community.	4.61
The facilitator at my table was helpful for the conversation today	4.76

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