

Meeting Minutes

City Council Work Session

May 9, 2024 | 4:00 p.m.

Council Chambers Conference Room
88 E. Chicago St., Chandler, AZ



Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Kevin Hartke at 4:02 p.m.

Roll Call

Council Attendance

Mayor Kevin Hartke
*Vice Mayor OD Harris
Councilmember Angel Encinas
Councilmember Christine Ellis
Councilmember Mark Stewart
Councilmember Matt Orlando
*Councilmember Jane Poston

Appointee Attendance

Joshua Wright, City Manager
Dana DeLong, City Clerk
Tawn Kao, Assistant City Attorney

*Vice Mayor Harris and Councilmember Poston attended telephonically.

**Councilmember Encinas joined the meeting at 4:19 p.m.

Staff in Attendance

Tadd Wille, Assistant City Manager
Dawn Lang, Deputy City Manager / Chief Financial Officer
John Sefton, Community Services Director
Kim Moyers, Cultural Development Director
Matt Burdick, Communications & Public Affairs Director
Alexis Apodaca, Mayor & Council Public Affairs Senior Manager
Lauren Knoll, Downtown Redevelopment Program Manager
Corey Povar, Community Services Assistant Director

Discussion

1. Presentation and Discussion of Dr. AJ Chandler Park Master Plan

MAYOR HARTKE called for a staff presentation.

JOSHUA WRIGHT, City Manager, introduced the item and discussed the A.J. Park Master Plan. The city is in the design and study phase, with additional design dollars budgeted for next year and construction budgeted for the year after that. Staff is looking for feedback and comments to refine the design. No imminent decisions need to be made.

KIM MOYERS, Cultural Development Director, presented the following presentation.

- Dr. A.J. Chandler Park Master Plan
- Dr. A.J. Chandler Park through the years
 - 1913 – Notice the small trees planted throughout the park
 - 1913 – The canal running through the featured a small island with a tree. This was known as the beauty spot
 - 1913 – Another view of the canal and the island.
- Dr. A.J. Chandler Park through the
 - 1920s – Aerial view of the park looking southwest.
 - 1929 – A view of the park as the trees matured looking north
- Dr. A.J. Chandler Park through the years
 - 1941 – State route 87 was slated to run directly though the park and all the trees were removed. Dr. Chandler felt this was a tragedy and ruined the park.
 - 1960 – The park has been redesigned several times in its history. Aerial view looking east.
- Dr. A.J. Chandler Park through the years
 - 1980s – A covered walkway crossed over Arizona Avenue. Note the former shade structure (now removed) over a former veteran’s tribute plaza.
- Dr. A.J. Chandler Park
 - 1912 – Dr. A.J. Chandler envisioned a “city beautiful”
 - Central plaza/open space in downtown chandler for residents to gather as well as create an economic driver for development.
 - 3.52 acres (Tree in the middle of the island – “The Beauty Spot”)
 - 1947 – State Highway 87 bifurcated the park – removal of mature trees (Dr. A.J. Chandler not in Favor of project)
 - 1970s – Addition of parking on the south side of the park
 - 1985 – Park development included restrooms, fountains, towers, landscaping, and plaza area. A grant competition was held for the design. Up until then, trees and sidewalks dominated the park.
 - 2001 – Landscape Renovation Study
 - 2006 – Shade structures added
 - 2010 – Arizona Avenue improvements widened the sidewalks and added trees, landscaping and placemaking elements.
- 2016 Project Need

- Outdated aesthetics and features prompted concerns from businesses and residents
- Desire to enhance special event area
- East/West connectivity and functionality
- Failing Infrastructure
 - Fountains
 - Restrooms
 - Landscaping/irrigation
 - Electrical/power needs
 - ADA features
- Concerns with crosswalk across Arizona Avenue
- Need for family activities/attractions
- Downtown multifamily development prompted need for passive use
- 2016 Project Background
- Fall 2016 – Kickoff of Dr. A.J. Chandler Park Master Plan – J2 Design
 - Task Force Committee
 - City of Chandler staff
 - Downtown Business Owners
 - Downtown Chandler Community Partnership (DCCP)
 - Residential
 - Stakeholder charette meetings were held with above groups, as well as City Council and general public.
- 2016 Stakeholder Feedback
 - Respect the history of downtown
 - Celebrate
 - Unite
 - Excite
 - Play
 - Gather
 - Relax
 - Connect
 - Represent the “City of Innovation”
- 2017 Master Plan
- 2017 Master Plan AJ Chandler Park

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS asked if the area would have turf or grass.

MS. MOYERS said at the time, it was regular grass.

MS. MOYERS continued the presentation.

- 2017 Cost Estimates
 - High-tech
 - Destination driver

- Large Shade Structures
- Year-round use
- Not a typical park
- City Council Subcommittee
 - September 12, 2017 – Staff presented Master Plan to City Council Subcommittee
 - City Council Subcommittee comments:
 - “concepts presented were exciting and would set Downtown Chandler apart from other cities’ Downtown areas”
 - “liked the idea of connecting the Chandler Library to the Downtown”
 - “concerned with the cost of the park renovations”
 - “opportunity for phasing the project”
 - Staff’s next steps included:
 - ASU tour of power parasol shade structures
 - Identify CIP Funding to present in City Council FY18/19 budget
- Timeline
 - Spring 2018 – During City Council Budget Workshop and discussions regarding competing park projects, Dr. A.J. Chandler Park project delayed to complete other park priorities
 - Fall 2021 – The Parks Bond Subcommittee developed consensus on putting a higher priority on the Dr. A.J. Chandler Park renovation
 - Current CIP for design and construction of Phase 1
 - FY23/24 - \$750,000
 - FY25/26 - \$10,000,000
 - Fall 2024 – Staff initiated RFP to review and update Dr. A.J. Chandler Park Master Plan
 - Dig Studios was selected
 - Design Charrettes
 - DCCP
 - City Staff
- 2024 Master Plan Criteria/Needs
 - Minimize costs
 - Explore eliminating water fountains and towers due to costly ongoing maintenance
 - Shade
 - Update landscaping
 - Activate east side of park
 - Comfortable areas for seating and gathering
 - New restrooms
 - Enhancement of events and programming space
 - Improve crossing Arizona Avenue
 - Maintain existing parking

MAYOR HARTKE asked if we are seeing different usage at the upscale events due to the redevelopment of Alexander and Jonathan attracting a different clientele with the timing of this.

MS. MOYERS said both building owners want to upgrade the park for outdoor activities like picnics and work lunches. It is still an ongoing conversation.

MAYOR HARTKE asked whether the new restrooms would be built in a different location or if the existing buildings would be completely renovated.

MS. MOYERS said open-concept restrooms are popular because they allow for more visibility and prevent inappropriate behavior. This design is more suitable for urban areas, and the goal is to create safe, functional, and accessible public restrooms.

MS. MOYERS continued the presentation.

- Aerial View of Master Plan
- Northwest Corner
- Westside Central Area
- Westside Central Area During Events

VICE MAYOR HARRIS asked about the structure and if other events could have staging.

MS. MOYERS said they are going to address it.

MS. MOYERS continued the presentation.

- Prominent Shade Structures
- Northeast Side
- Eastside Central Area
- Eastside Stage Area
- Eastside – Stage Area

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked why the stage was not on the opposite side, where larger buildings could provide more shade.

MS. MOYERS said one of the main reasons why everyone focuses on the east side is that the overflow of people can continue westward along Commonwealth. If this were reversed, it would limit the number of people there.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said before we decide we should have the artist weigh in.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS asked why it would be different on this side versus the other side.

MS. MOYERS said holding the event on the east side would allow more attendees by extending the event space into Commonwealth Road without reducing the area.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS said when we talk about how many people we can accommodate, what numbers are we looking at versus here and there.

MS. MOYERS said they could accommodate up to 17,000 people at the current stage location but ultimately decided that it was too many. They have asked for events to be moved to Tumbleweed Park. They have learned from this experience and now understand how to organize larger events better. The stage was built for large events, as the DCCP wanted to see, but it did not generate the expected revenue.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS said snipers and security personnel need to be positioned at the garage during large events. Councilmember Ellis asked if there is a structure for this.

MS. MOYERS said this would be included in the study that needs to be conducted. Another factor to consider is the occurrence of multiple events simultaneously.

MAYOR HARTKE asked about the acceptable threshold for staying here rather than relocating to Tumbleweed and the usual recommendation.

MS. MOYERS said once an event gets to 10,000, we ask that it move to Tumbleweed Park.

MAYOR HARTKE said the intense sun limits us for most of the year. The shade from the Arizona Avenue building relieves the heat, making environmental sense. He is interested in considering whether this project makes sense despite the heat.

MS. MOYERS said that compared to the last plan, there are now double rows of trees in the area. The trees are intended to provide more shade, although it may not be visible in the picture. However, this does not address the stage.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said there was a previous discussion about placing playground equipment, a fountain, and other amenities on the east side of the street.

MS. MOYERS said the play shade pavilion is easily accessible with plenty of parking as a destination. However, it is a long walk if one is waiting for a restaurant table.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS expressed concern about the proposed changes, particularly the plan to replace the event space with a play area. He also questioned the decision to remove iconic towers and relocate a tree, feeling that these changes do not reflect the area's traditional themes.

MAYOR HARTKE said we would do extensive community engagement.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said he liked the thought process. It is not much of a walk, and he liked that it is away from the busy part of the strip.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said the columns could be refreshed, making them more innovative but keeping the inviting feel.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS asked what would be done on both sides of the park. Are you going to mirror the same, or will you just do a different thing on each side, the west and the east side.

MS. MOYERS said it would be different on the west side and then one on the east side. They would be different, with different elements.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS asked if the lack of a traditional park in that area would be an issue. It is an easy fix if we want to replicate it on the other side. It would be on that side if it is different on the other side. Then you will have to modify it to look different.

MS. MOYERS said she understood.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO mentioned the term "play area," possibly referring to different recreational activities on each side of the street. It's important to have a more focused and practical approach.

MAYOR HARTKE asked about large shade structures and if there would be room for special events.

MS. MOYERS emphasized the need for structures large enough to enhance special events and reduce associated costs. She also highlighted the importance of ensuring that the facilities meet the needs of special events while also being suitable for residents. Ms. Moyers believes that there is currently a missing element a place for people to sit, have a cup of coffee, and simply enjoy the environment.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON mentioned that the discussion was slightly off-topic, but she wanted to address the issue of the earlier slides regarding the canopies. She asked if there are plans to partner with the DCCP to ensure the park's maintenance, especially considering seasonal changes and different park elements like seating. She also questioned whether additional staffing would be necessary to manage the park effectively, considering factors like high winds and other elements.

MS. MOYERS agreed that any work on the park is an elevated service, especially if it involves hardscape and additional features. DCCP has been involved in the discussions, and they are considering seeking their assistance. A provision in the budget for a downtown operations person would offer more hours for this purpose.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON mentioned the uncertainty about the outcome, as the current 16 units could decrease to four or change in other ways. Specific structure details, like assembly ease and weather resistance, will be addressed during the design phases. Councilmember Poston echoed the Mayor's sentiments about initial color dislikes during the city hall design stages.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS asked which part is real lawn grass and which is turf.

MS. MOYERS said she did not have the answer to that now, but it will be an important part of our discussion.

MS. MOYERS continued the presentation.

- Future Shade Opportunities
- Park Pavilions for Smaller Events or Ancillary Large Events
- Kiosk Opportunities
- Restrooms Estimated Costs

VICE MAYOR HARRIS asked if there were Wi-Fi, there, would be outlets in the park, and EV charging stations.

MS. MOYERS said yes, innovation is always what we are talking about. Wi-Fi in the downtown area, we would need to work closely with parks and neighborhood resources that were part of the plan back in 2016.

VICE MAYOR HARRIS asked for a separate line item for ongoing maintenance costs and exploring sustainability options, such as solar panels, for managing energy consumption in city projects like park Wi-Fi installation.

MS. MOYERS continued the presentation.

- Phase 1

MAYOR HARTKE asked if it would be one set of bathrooms.

MS. MOYERS said yes.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS asked if there was any way to have both canopies in phase one because of the uneven balance. We do not know when phase two will be implemented and do not want it to look half-built.

MS. MOYERS said yes.

MS. MOYERS continued the presentation.

- Phase 1 (cont.)

- Next Steps Options

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS said option 3 is a band-aid; why waste \$6 million. It is going to look uneven.

MR. WRIGHT said the ADA is part of the \$10 million.

MS. MOYERS said we felt the same way. It seems unbalanced to walk down Arizona Avenue and wonder what is happening. It just did not feel balanced to us.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS said 18 million will complete the entire design of phase one.

MS. MOYERS said yes.

MAYOR HARTKE asked what would the other \$8 million get.

MS. MOYERS said with the \$18 million you get everything.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO asked about the water features.

MS. MOYERS said that is reserved to the Council and City Manager.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said if we wanted to do a water feature, we already have the plumbing on the other side of the street the playground should be its own feature on the other side, away from traffic.

MS. MOYERS said we could get water either way; it was an area we could look at.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said he is trying to figure out how to extend the season; the pavilions, restroom improvements, and a water feature would bring people down there.

MS. MOYERS said an interactive water and light feature.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS said it allowed more flexibility in the kids' area on the east side, which is already connected to the library.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS asked what the plan is to incorporate feedback.

MS. MOYERS said we would start outreach once we get direction from the Council.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS asked for directions in phases one, two, or three. Those are the options. After that, we will gather public input.

MAYOR HARTKE asked about Mesquite Park, the urgency of funding source bonds, and how we will do this. We have \$10m that could do option 1, but we do not currently have option 2.

MR. WRIGHT said that the year after the next fiscal year if you decide to look at phase 1, we will go back as part of our capital program exercise to figure out how to fund that.

MAYOR HARTKE said if we do phase 2, we are taking park dollars from something else out of the capital fund.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said to proceed with phase one; they need to secure funding and decide on the location for the kids' playground. They are keeping the option open for phase one to evolve into phase one. They also emphasized the importance of keeping people downtown for longer periods.

MAYOR HARTKE said another option is to do nothing, he was not hearing much interest in investing \$3 to \$6 million to make it functional, but that is still an option. We could proceed with option one, which would give the green light to proceed. We can move forward and then get community input.

MAYOR HARTKE talked about the options and asked for thoughts from the Council.

COUNCILMEMBER ORLANDO said he would like us to do the bathrooms, shade, and ADA.

COUNCILMEMBER ENCINAS said he is more for option 1: work with what we have, try to cover the 2 canopies, and look at where we can get the other \$8 million.

MR. WRIGHT said Council gave staff more to think about.

COUNCILMEMBER ELLIS asked where the other \$8 million would come from. She would rather take the \$10 million, figure out the other, and then do an \$18 million.

VICE MAYOR HARRIS said he was okay with the \$10 million; he would prefer to do the \$18 million, but if staff thinks it can be done sooner with the \$10 million, he is okay with that, and we can find the other \$8 million.

COUNCILMEMBER POSTON is a fan of option 1, and if we look at the balance of shade structure, she disagrees with the towers. She did not see it fitting into the vision as an attraction to the area.

MAYOR HARTKE said he could look at option 1, he did not take away from parks on the rest of the community.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

ATTEST: *Dana R. DeLong*
City Clerk

Kevin Harthe
Mayor

Approval Date of Minutes: May 23, 2024

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Work Session of the City Council of Chandler, Arizona, held on the 9th day of May 2024. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

DATED this 23rd day of May, 2024.

Dana R. DeLong
City Clerk

