

CONVENOR'S SHEET

The Topic: Microspaces

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Brief Summary:

Microspace can be either tiny stand-alone parcels or small spaces within a larger park.

This space is intentionally left untouched and un-programmed.

What are the tools to promote use of, and to manage land remnants/very small parcels.

Become better observers-see what happens in that space, go slow and avoid the temptation to intervene.

How do you design a non-designed space?

A paradigm shift is needed both at the agency and community.

Safety/litigation issues.

FLIPCHART NOTES

Issues

- Fear of nature
- Neighbors don't want un-tidy lots (tidiness vs. natural diversity)
- Safety issues with un-programmed play spaces
- Liability
- Should children be directed or allowed to explore/undirected play
- How do you design a non-designed space
- Perceptions – “weeds” or native restoration
- Neighbor vigilantes clean up kids forts
- Why should city maintain what's mainly a benefit for neighbors
- Mindset of parks staff- remove piles of dirt, mow.
- Different opinions of what unstructured space should look like.
- BMX bike holes, destruction
- People want to get to the water
- Paint ball courses
- Don't discover areas for a while
- Materials are stolen to make play structures
- State law “open space” is not “park” if it's not developed- deemed vacant county can sell it.
- County property dept's interpretation of state law.
- If open space exists, people claim it –some encroach, some destroy it.
- Small open spaces swallowing up by development.
- Fewer natural areas in neighborhoods than a generation ago – Gov't park systems need to take up the role of providing natural areas for exploration of nature.
- If areas are safe and not harming the environment or people, leave unplanned areas alone- such as informal fishing trails.

Microspaces

- Issue: fear of nature, especially kids.
- Solution? City lot sized parks, microspaces could be inside a larger parks

Examples:

- Vacant lots: City of Minneapolis
- Riverbend Nature Center, Faribault
- Edina – open space along back of suburban lots
- City of Albany
- Arboretum examples of microspaces change landscape elements, small sitting areas, etc.
- Nature Centers – Lowry themed play structure, amphitheater developed environment that's safe.
- Groundwork
- Long Lake Regional Park, New Brighton park is left alone, graffiti is on one blank wall.

Solutions

- State law indemnifying for undeveloped areas – like trail indemn. Law.
- Microspaces could be in a larger park or along a trail. Easier to do, more changeable as user needs change.

Issues:

- Tragedy of commons in park community spaces have strict rules.
- Get kids/teenagers involved in planning, designing, maintaining, building spaces.
- Need to see more examples on Best Practices website.
- Resist fast solutions, do more observing, think more before “fixing” problems.
- There's a value for natural/open space.
- Volunteer group take ownership of land.
- Kid's won't graffiti walls in parks – promise not to mark other areas.
- Paradigm shift to think differently.
- Use Right of Way strips for play space.