

Childers and Arendes give parents' perspective on Spring Garden Park development

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

Outdoor movies, ice cream socials, and dog walking have been put on hold this summer at Spring Garden Park. Families with small children are finding other parks to attend while anticipating the completion of Southwest Portland's newest park.

Even though the neighborhood is losing the park for a year, families are making due with trips to Custer, Woods and Gabriel parks.

An August visit to the park found the entire property scraped down to the top soil with trees, shrubs, and plants gone.

A chain link fence surrounds the park edge along both streets. Tractors of every sort were lined up and parked for the evening. A water truck, steam roller, and road grader were also present.

The park project has been a mix of emotions for the community over the past few years. A simple natural play area was improved with a \$10,000 grant from Multnomah Village Umpqua Bank.

Further action by community members and park advocates turned the small park into a multi-million dollar project.

Funded by Portland Parks and Recreation, the park will have a splash pad, contemplative garden, picnic shelter, an improved natural play area, and a gathering area in the form of a small amphitheater.

It was the gathering area which sparked some tension causing a rift with neighbors. While many applauded the additional features and improvements, others felt the gathering area (with an electric outlet) would bring noise and amplified music to the park.

Friends of Spring Garden Park were wholeheartedly behind all the improvements, including the gathering space allowing movies and music.

But some folks in the neighborhood said they were disappointed by media coverage, including previous stories in *The Post* on the park development.

Post editor Don Snedecor and reporter Erik Vidstrand sat down with Sara Childers and Carine Arendes, co-chairs of Friends of Spring Garden Park, in July to get their specific take on all the developments.

The leaders explained that the park was an undeveloped 4.65 acre site with a dramatic downhill slope to the north at Southwest Spring Garden Street.

The Friends of Spring Garden Park was formed and were successful in acquiring the Umpqua Bank grant.

They used the money to develop a small natural play area complete with



Bare soil and trees gone are among the changes as Spring Garden Park construction continues. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

children and their families came to enjoy the park.

"When there was an opportunity to grow the park, Portland Parks organized community outreach events involving teenagers, parents, and other interested parties. A park advisory committee was developed and meetings went on for months," Childers said.

According to Arendes, "The city leaders were thorough in getting everyone on the same page. The gathering space is only 40 square feet. City facilitators allowed all voices to be heard with agreements on final plans."

Electricity will be available but will have a lock box, she said.

The women explained that teenagers felt they needed a space for them beyond gardens, splash pads, and a sandbox. Retaining walls with large rocks were designed with the teens in mind for simply hanging out. Due to some budget cuts, some of the components originally in the design had to be curtailed substituting less expensive building materials.

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logs, large rocks, and sand.

"This area fosters natural play," Childers said as her two young children drew pictures nearby. "This is unlike traditional parks with swings, slides, and monkey bars."

Childers said that they partnered with the Multnomah Neighborhood Association, Capitol Hill Library, and the parks bureau. Events such as National Night Out, and pie and ice cream socials were held. Fire fighters brought their trucks, city commissioners came to give speeches, and most importantly, neighborhood

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