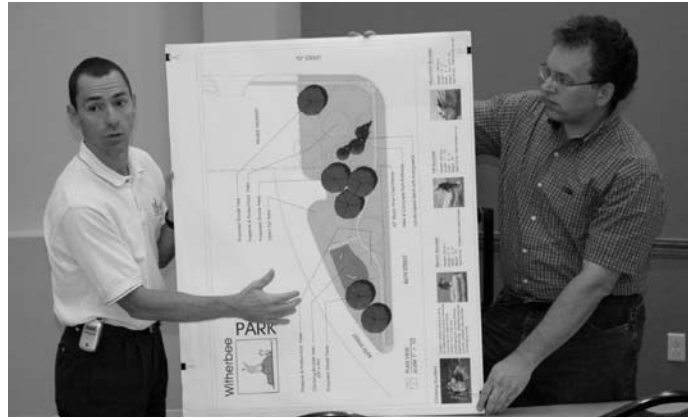


# Witherbee Park at 46th and O Under Study

During August neighbors met at the 46th and O park to hear a design proposal for park improvements. Also at that meeting the property owner of the old gas station/car lot/XXX bookstore at 45<sup>th</sup> and O presented a proposal to tear down the existing building and replace it with one that would attract a more desirable commercial tenant. The park improvements proposed include: Trees and landscaping near O street to replace those lost to street widening, repaving of 46<sup>th</sup> street with a turn-around, a sidewalk from O street south along the east side of the park, a mini playground, replacement landscaping for the sickly crab apple trees at the south end of the park. The park improvement proposal was generally well received. The neighbors learned the commercial re-development at 45<sup>th</sup> and O would not be financially feasible without slight expansion of the commercial property into the current park. Neighbors requested more information and drawings of the proposed building to be presented. The Witherbee Neighborhood Association offered time during the regularly scheduled September meeting for that presentation.

Re-development of Witherbee Park and the commercial lot at 45<sup>th</sup> and O continued at the Witherbee NA meeting. Guests heard were: Lynn Johnson, Director, Lincoln Parks & Rec; JJ Yost, Lincoln Parks & Rec planner, Wynn Hjernstad, City of Lincoln Urban Development department, and Mr. Paul Galter, attorney for Mr. Stuart Marx, the property owner at 45<sup>th</sup> and O. The Parks Department proposal for the park was approved, with the addition of a seating bench near the mini playground. A similar playground was recently built in the Fallbrook neighborhood, and has been well liked. The O Street widening project will pay for the landscaping at the northern end of the park as well as the sidewalk and re-paving 46<sup>th</sup> Street. The mini-playground does not have funding now, and will have to wait to be funded by Parks Department money in future budgets, or perhaps private fundraising. WNA involvement there is likely.

At the September meeting Mr Galter presented the commercial re-development proposal. He explained that the current property could be left as is, but probably would never attract the kind of neighborhood friendly tenant we desire. To make the property more desirable would require replacement of the existing building. Expansion of the building would be



Lincoln Parks & Rec planner JJ Yost (left) presents a design proposal for Witherbee Park at 46<sup>th</sup> and O Streets while Rick Bagby helps hold the map.

possible if it could extend a bit into the current park. He stated that the new building's parking area and property setback would be the part extending into what is now park. Without expansion of the property, Mr. Marx would not be willing to invest in remodeling the building and it will remain as is.

With a vote, those present approved continuing working with Mr. Marx and the City's Department of Urban Development to see if a building design can be found that would preserve the character of the park as much as possible, while allowing redevelopment of the 45<sup>th</sup> and O property. A committee will draft a list of design requests and tenant restrictions, drawing from the work of the 48 and O project. The city's Urban development department will conduct those negotiations with Mr. Marx. Final approval/disapproval from Witherbee Neighborhood Association depends on the outcome of those further negotiations.




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