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From the Wichita Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/wichita/news/2018/03/21/naftzger-park-design-unveiled.html>

## Naftzger Park design features wifi, dog park

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Mar 21, 2018, 6:00pm CDT Updated: Mar 22, 2018, 8:14am CDT

About 100 onlookers were among the first to get a look at renderings for a retooled [Naftzger Park](#) in downtown Wichita on Wednesday.

Drawings, done by New York design firm SWA/Balsley, were unveiled during a public meeting at the Wichita Downtown Development Corp. headquarters. Architect [Tom Balsley](#) of New York design firm SWA/Balsley was one of the presenters.

"We didn't have any preconceived notions going into this," Balsley said. "As we listened to people, we heard the strengths and challenges and opportunities. Generally speaking, people liked our concept with the curving forms."

The designs showed a tree-lined, wifi-enabled park space that would be part real grass and part artificial turf. It also would feature a dog park, a small stage area, a canopy area with seating and new-age collaborative furniture throughout.

Though it features a pond area now, there was no standing water included in the proposed layout. In July, the city had two public input meetings where four separate designs were revealed.

Naftzger Park is just west of where a planned \$23 million mixed-use development is slated to go and just north of Intrust Bank Arena.

A group that includes [Nick Esterline](#) of Seneca Property LLC and [Brad Saville](#) of Landmark Commercial Real Estate plans to turn the nearby Spaghetti Works building into a 41-unit apartment complex. A separate build-out, seen in the renderings, will include retail and office space.

[Quentin Ellis](#), president of construction and development for Esterline's TGC Development Group, helped work on the design.

"This is a great plan and we think it would bring a lot of energy to the park," Ellis said following the meeting.

In public forums in the past, some raised concerns about artificial turf, which one attendee questioned on Wednesday. Balsley said its not uncommon to build parks nowadays with fake grass, adding that New York City likely has "between 50 and 100."

The redesigned space would also feature a skim fountain with water jets — similar to what is now found in Old Town Square — along with a native prairie grass area and room for food trucks on its outskirts.

Troy Houtman, Wichita's director of parks and recreation, said the city envisions the park hosting small musical acts, chess tournaments and yoga classes. To become a reality, the plan will need to gain approval from the City Council.



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