Residents to weigh in on Horse Farm

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LAFAYETTE — It’s expected to take several years and millions of dollars to develop the park at what’s known as the Horse Farm in Lafayette, and planners are asking residents where to start.

A conceptual plan for the park calls for a playground, walking paths, pavilions, a carousel, an amphitheater, tree houses, a sculpture garden and a dog park, among other things.

New ponds would be dug, and the large concrete coulee that runs through the park would be stripped of concrete and transformed into something a bit more natural and appealing.

Work on the park is set to begin this fall, but there likely will not be enough money to do everything at once.

“What we are focusing on is asking the public to prioritize our funding,” said Elizabeth “EB” Brooks, director of planning and design for Lafayette Central Park.

The nonprofit group is overseeing development of the

Draft plan for new park

1. Visitor Center/Entrance
2. Bridge/Boardwalk
3. Multi-Use Pavilion
4. Mini-Golf/Small Game
5. Playground and Picnic Facility
6. Great Lawn
7. Dog Park
8. Children’s Discovery Garden
9. Treehouse
10. Cypress Swamp Gardens
11. Pond
12. Display Gardens
13. Multi-Use Trail
14. Iconic Pavilion
15. Sculpture Walk
16. Respite Lawn

Source: Design Workshop

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yet-to-be-named park on what’s now a vacant 100-acre tract on Johnston Street.

Anyone interested in having their say can show up from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday at the Lafayette Farmers and Artisans Market at the Horse Farm or submit their opinions in an online survey available through May 14 at www.lafayettecentralpark.org/take-survey.

The forums and survey queries residents on what they think about the current plan, then lets them vote with fake money on which components they would choose to pay for if funds were limited.

"The trick is there is $20 million worth of stuff, but they are given $10 million," Brooks said.

The playground comes at a price of $100,000; pavilions, $1.5 million; tree houses, $700,000; and so on.

Brooks said $10 million is what’s expected to be available for the first phase of the park’s development, assuming Lafayette Central Park meets its fundraising goal of $30 million for the initial phase.

About $15 million would go into an endowment to pay for future maintenance expenses, and $5 million would be needed for basic infrastructure, such as water lines, leaving about $10 million for park features.

Lafayette Central Park is looking for input on where to begin on the development of the Horse Farm, a vacant 100-acre tract of land that is expected to include a playground, walking paths, pavilions, a carousel, an amphitheater, tree houses, a sculpture garden and a dog park, among other things.

Lafayette Central Park will kick off its public fundraising campaign with a Party in the Park event on May 18 with music, food, arts and crafts, and children’s activities.

A jambalaya cook-off fundraiser is scheduled for June 20. Residents also can contribute by buying an engraved board to be placed on boardwalks in the new park.

Brooks said those smaller fundraising efforts are in addition to the large private donations Lafayette Central Park is now seeking to make the park a reality.

The Horse Farm property was once owned by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Years ago, former UL-Lafayette President Ray Authement proposed to trade some of the property with commercial developers for land closer to the school’s main campus — a controversial idea that was abandoned in 2006.

City-Parish President Joey Durel and UL-Lafayette President Joseph Savoie later negotiated a deal for the city to buy the property for use as a park.

The City-Parish Council agreed in 2012 to pay UL-Lafayette $5.8 million for the Horse Farm and also to trade the university an 8-acre city park near the school’s main campus.

The only stipulation on development of the park came in that agreement, which prohibits permanent basketball courts, tennis courts and fields for organized team sports.