



Office of Mayor Charlie Hales
City of Portland

Updated October 8, 2013
July 15, 2013

To Portland's Neighborhood Associations:

Thank you for writing to my office about Washington Park. I appreciate hearing from your neighborhood on issues of concern.

The topic at hand is paid parking at Washington Park. The transportation management plan at Washington Park was created before I took office. Public involvement with neighbors over plans for Washington Park happened from April 2011-November 2012. The plan had not one, but two first readings and public hearings before City Council, followed by a second reading.

For these reasons, I do not plan to reopen this issue for another round of public hearings.

Washington Park faces many challenges, ranging from traffic issues to security concerns, and lacks funding to address them. The most recent Master Plan for the park dates back to 1981. At that time, transportation, circulation and parking were major areas of concern.

Now, more than three decades later, those issues still remain.

That's why Portland Parks & Recreation has been working with the park venues and neighbors to catalog the challenges, consider solutions and set in motion a funding mechanism to implement them.

I wanted to make sure you understand the process for decision-making that has been under way and what will happen going forward regarding the new pay-to-park system and transportation management.

Since 2011, PP&R has been meeting with the groups that work at Washington Park, and with neighbors, regarding issues facing the park. Parks & Recreation, in partnership with Metro (which manages The Oregon Zoo), started a conversation with the surrounding neighborhoods about the zoo's expansion plans, which voters OK'd in 2008.

These conversations began to identify a variety of land use, planning and transportation related challenges that face the park. It was clear to all participants that a comprehensive approach would be required to address the needs of the park, the attractions in the park, the park's neighbors and all of its visitors. In addition, it also was recognized that many of the proposed solutions would require new resources, and that parking revenues would be the most viable, stable funding for these solutions.

One of the outcomes of the series of 21 public meetings, conversations and communications was a Good Neighbor Agreement documenting the shared concerns and future intentions. The Arlington Heights Neighborhood Association signed this agreement, along with each of the venues in Washington Park. Sylvan Highlands Neighborhood Association did not come to consensus on the agreement and did not sign it.

The public involvement efforts, and the media attention they drew, include:

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:

<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/446972>

PRESS COVERAGE:

<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/446970>

A new vision for the Park emerged from the process that led up to the Good Neighbor Agreement (<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/446967>). That vision aims for:

- Better maintenance and security.
- Free park-wide shuttle service.
- Improved safety for drivers, cyclists, pedestrians and visitors with disabilities – including better signs, barrier-free sidewalks, and crosswalks.

In the Good Neighbor Agreement, PP&R committed to develop a new Master Plan for Washington Park that would look at all of the challenges and needs of the park, as well as address the impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods.

The agreement acknowledged that implementation of this vision, the Master Plan, and whatever its recommendations are, relies on paid parking at Washington Park as the funding solution.

A Washington Park Transportation Management Association nonprofit has been created. The nonprofit has a board of nine directors -- representatives from PP&R, Metro/Oregon Zoo, World Forestry Center, Portland Children's Museum, the Portland Japanese Garden, TriMet, the Hoyt Arboretum Friends, and one resident each from Sylvan Highlands and Arlington Heights neighborhood associations. Neighborhood associations nominated their representatives. The nonprofit is recruiting an executive director at this time. Once fully up and running, the nonprofit will be an ongoing forum for people to hear and address transportation-related issues at Washington Park.

We anticipate that you will see new safety improvements this fall, and pay stations activated on Friday, January 10, 2014. You can remain informed on all parking details, including hours and rates, at www.washingtonparkpdx.org/parking.

Oregon's public involvement process for land use issues is long and time consuming. It's intended to be that way. We have great respect for the neighborhoods and residents who took part in the many public meetings, and who came to testify before City Council.

Now it's time to move forward with maintaining Washington Park, one of the gems of Portland's famed park system.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charlie Hales". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Charlie" and the last name "Hales" clearly distinguishable.

Mayor Charlie Hales
Portland