



February 28, 2018

The Honorable Ted Wheeler
City of Portland
1221 SW 4th Avenue, Room 340
Portland, Oregon 97204

Dear Mayor Wheeler:

Board Members

Patricia Frobes, Chair

Kendall Clawson, Vice Chair

Paul Agrimis

Tonya Booker

Michelle Dedeo

Jenny Glass

Ian Jaquiss

Joseph O'Leary

Jim Owens

Gladys Ruiz

Judy BlueHorse Skelton

Kathy Fong Stephens

Christa Stout

Paddy Tillett

Jeff Anderson, Ex Officio

Meryl Redisch, Ex Officio

The Parks Board is looking forward to meeting with you on March 6th. We appreciate your taking the time to begin a dialogue about an essential city service – a world-class parks system accessible to all. In preparation for the meeting, we thought it might be helpful to briefly review our current state and identify 3 priorities that we believe must be addressed to preserve a unique legacy and meet the needs of a rapidly changing and growing city.

In 1998, under the leadership of Mayor Vera Katz, a team of citizens and Portland Parks & Recreation staff, along with thousands of residents, developed the Parks 2020 Vision to protect our parks and open space heritage, make recreation services available to all and leave a legacy for our children that is better than our inheritance. The 2020 Vision resulted in (among other things):

- a citizens Parks Board that advocates for parks and the implementation of the 2020 Vision
- a Parks Foundation that has brought new resources to the long-term stewardship of the city's parks and open space
- an SDC Program to provide resources to serve needs generated by growth
- 1200 acres of new natural areas
- stable parkland per capita at around 19 acres per thousand residents despite significant population growth
- percentage of households within 3 miles of a full-service community center increasing from 55% to 70%
- percentage of households within ½ mile of a park increasing from 78% to 80%, despite significant population growth in underserved areas
- 4 urban public plazas, Patton Square, Jamison Square, Director Park & Gateway Plaza

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In 2011, Portland Parks & Recreation received the National Gold Medal Award from the National Recreation & Parks Association for, among other factors, demonstrated excellence in long-range planning, volunteerism and environmental stewardship. According to a Summer 2017 Community Needs Survey conducted by Portland State University, 86% of Portlanders rated the quality of Portland parks good or excellent.

Twenty plus years ago we created a clear direction for the future, as the future looked in 1998. But, as you have said, Portland is experiencing a metamorphosis, transitioning to a global city with tremendous opportunities and significant challenges. We, as a Parks Board and Parks Bureau, want to help you, Commissioner Fritz and the rest of the City Council capitalize on those opportunities, meet those challenges and address the issues Portlanders care most about, including equity and inclusion, engaging with and protecting our natural environment, economic growth and transparency and accountability.

Mr. Mayor, the Parks Board would like to begin a dialogue with you on the following key issues with an objective of helping you achieve your goals of growth and sustainability for the City. All of the Board's work on these issues is informed and driven by the Board's commitment to equity and inclusion.

Issue 1- Long Term Vision

- Portland's system of parks and open space is a unique asset that attracts newcomers, supports growth and is a fundamental prerequisite to the livability of the city. A robust and healthy parks and open space system is an essential city service, just like roads, water and sewers. The system supports the City's economic well-being and the health of its citizens. Explosive growth puts increasing pressure on existing park assets and widens existing gaps in service. Our commitment to equity and inclusion demands the creation of new parks and services that can be accessed by all - not just those who can afford to pay. In addition, we have unrealized opportunities that did not exist in 1998, including reconnecting with the Willamette River, 'the City's largest unofficial park' and development of Slabtown, the Green Loop, the Rose Quarter and Zidell Yards.

- We need to develop a new vision - a vision for 2030 - that will drive the City's commitment to the maintenance and continuous development of an equitably

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distributed world-class parks system that preserves what we have, capitalizes on new opportunities and is accessible to all.

- The Bureau has requested \$500,000 to support the development of this new vision. What are your thoughts about this request? How can the Parks Board encourage you to support the request?

Issue 2 – Impacts of Houselessness

- The City’s parks and open space system is impacted by the challenges that affect the City as a whole, including issues related to houselessness. Safety issues associated with improper use/camping in Portland parks affects all Portlanders, parks visitors and employees alike; impairs the equitable use of the parks and recreation system; erases past public investments in natural area habitat; and negatively impacts the Bureau’s ability to maintain mission critical programs and protect parks infrastructure and sensitive natural areas.

- The Parks Board actively supports cross-bureau organization/planning and cost sharing and the Bureau’s S.A.F.E. Task Force. We would appreciate your thoughts on how the Parks Board can most effectively support you, Commissioner Fritz and the City Council in developing, communicating and enforcing a comprehensive policy/philosophy about what we as a City believe and plan to do about houselessness impacts on our parks system.

Issue 3 – Long Term Financial Stability That Supports Equity and Inclusion

- The budget for parks has been cut in 7 of the last 10 years. When the budget has not been cut, new funds have been provided for new services or costs, but prior cuts have not been restored. We can’t continue to deliver to all Portlanders the essential city service of a robust park system under current conditions and we are putting the existence of a world-class asset at risk. We need to consider a variety of alternatives that will support long term financial stability for our parks system: leveraging and supporting private partnerships, including our partnership with the Portland Parks Foundation; passing a new bond measure to build on the work made possible by the 2014 replacement bond; developing a cost recovery policy that increases revenue but does not disadvantage underserved communities and developing a strategy for the most effective use of SDC funds to expand services to

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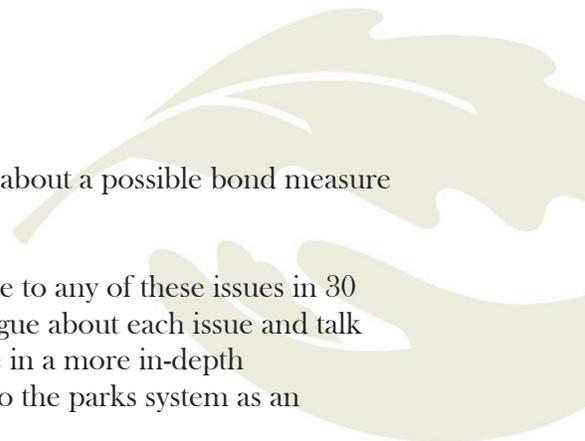
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underserved communities. What are your thoughts about a possible bond measure in 2020?

Mr. Mayor, we recognize that we cannot do justice to any of these issues in 30 minutes. Our intention on the 6th is to begin a dialogue about each issue and talk about how the Board can most constructively engage in a more in-depth conversation with you about the city’s commitment to the parks system as an essential city service.

Thank you for your taking the time to meet with us on the 6th. We look forward to beginning our conversation.

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