



South Park Blocks Master Plan Frequently Asked Questions July 2019

What are the South Park Blocks?

The South Park Blocks are twelve narrow blocks of green space stretching from SW Salmon to SW Jackson Streets between SW Park and SW Park/9th Avenues. They are some of Portland's oldest parks, providing distinct character to surrounding neighborhoods in the downtown core, access to natural features in an urban setting, and transportation connections with an emphasis on the pedestrian experience.

The South Park Blocks are an identifying feature of Portland and have long served the immediate neighbors as well as providing space for city-wide functions including the Rose Festival, Portland Farmers Markets, Portland State University campus activities, Cultural District events, and more. Rows of historic elms line the blocks and multiple blocks have plantings of roses and other landscape features. Almost every block contains public art with some accompanied by a fountain or memorial. School groups attending plays often eat their lunches in the parks. Neighbors walk their dogs and tourists explore the South Park Blocks as one of the leading destinations in the City.

What is a Master Plan and why is one for the South Park Blocks needed?

The South Park Blocks Master Plan will provide a comprehensive and inclusive vision that will guide the use and development of these historic park blocks into the future. There has not previously been a master plan or design created to guide the development of the South Park Blocks. Instead the park has been shaped incrementally and sometimes haphazardly by changes in the nearby land uses and cultural trends.

The plan will provide an opportunity to learn about and build upon its history and existing features, confront new challenges and opportunities, and combine these learnings with public and stakeholder input to enhance the South Park Blocks for current and future needs.

Areas of greatest opportunity for change likely include incorporating the Central City 2035 Plan for a Green Loop, planning for a long-term planting design in the park

including managing the historic tree canopy over time, and revitalizing the South Park Blocks as a significant segment of the connecting thread of Portland’s downtown park blocks.

What will the master plan process look like and who will be involved?

A community-supported vision for the South Park Blocks will be developed in a year-long project guided by a Community Advisory Committee with periodic check-ins with the community. Portland Parks & Recreation has hired a consultant design team to assist in technical analysis of existing conditions, development of design concepts, and refinement of a preferred design.

The three phases of the master planning process are shown below:



Visit the project website for updates, community event information and to request email updates throughout the project at www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/SPB.

How is the master plan process being funded?

This planning project was made possible by funds received by the Portland Parks Foundation, contributed by Walter C. Bowen, CEO of BPM Real Estate Group to satisfy the approval conditions set by the Portland Design Commission for the Broadway Tower project. The Broadway Tower is a new office, retail, and hotel building on SW Broadway between SW Columbia and Clay Streets. The BPM Real Estate Group made a commitment to build affordable housing and provide funding for a South Park Blocks Master Plan and to fund improvements on the specific park block nearest their affordable housing development between SW Columbia and SW Clay Streets.

How will future improvements be funded?

Funding to implement the other 11 blocks of the South Park Blocks Master Plan has not yet been secured. The future projects recommended by the master plan will be placed on PP&R’s Capital Improvement List and will move forward as funding becomes available.

How will the South Park Blocks Master Plan address trees and other existing features in the park?

The historic elm trees and their placement in the park are celebrated and iconic features of the park. Unfortunately, Dutch elm disease is a serious threat to these trees and many have succumbed to the disease and old age over the years. While they are a beloved feature of the park, in the future the trees will die. Understanding the existing condition of the trees and proposing long-term management and succession planting strategies to maintain a lush and green canopy will be an important objective of the plan.

Better understanding and respecting the South Park Block's historic significance will also be a central consideration for the master planning process. We recognize the South Park Blocks are not a blank slate and will be sensitive to the impacts of proposed changes or new additions.

What is the Green Loop and how will it fit into the Master Plan?

The Central City 2035 Plan was adopted by City Council June 2018. The plan proposes a linear park, referred to as the Green Loop, that connects people to places within and beyond Portland's downtown neighborhoods and the Willamette River. The Green Loop is naturally envisioned to align with the downtown park blocks before connecting across the river to the east side. Although it has more park-like characteristics, the Green Loop is meant to provide an active transportation corridor for riders, striders, walkers, rollers and strollers of all ages and abilities to travel safely.

Careful consideration of how the Green Loop takes shape near parks and public spaces is needed to minimize potential for collisions between more stationary park users and those using the Green Loop as a transportation corridor. Through the master planning process, we will explore park designs alongside options for the green loop, including what side of the park blocks it runs along, what it will look like, safe intersection crossings, and how the park retains connectivity to neighbors across the Green Loop.

South Park Blocks Master Plan

www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/SPB

Barbara Hart, Community Engagement

Barbara.hart@portlandoregon.gov 503-823-5596

Tate White, Project Manager

Tate.white@portlandoregon.gov 503-823-6005

SOUTH PARK BLOCKS // master plan update

Summary of Major Findings

Existing Conditions, Issues, and Opportunities Report

HISTORIC FEATURES

- Portions of the park changed substantially in 1877, 1971, 1984, and 1987
- Historic features include Joseph Shemanski Fountain, Abraham Lincoln statue, Theodore Roosevelt 'Rough Rider' statue, north-south vistas, linear arrangement of mature shade trees, both diagonal and north-south walkway layout, and various plaques



TREES ASSESSMENT

- 382 individual trees evaluated
- Approximately 90% are in fair to good condition and have moderate to good structure
- Preliminary treatment recommendations:
 - 75% retain (285 trees)
 - 8% remove (29 trees)
 - 17% optional (68 trees)
- Master Plan to provide guidance for strategic and proactive tree management and succession planting
- Opportunity to address climate resiliency with all choices related to vegetation selection



TRANSPORTATION IN AND AROUND THE PARK

- Dangerous crossing locations at Clay, Market, and Mill
- Opportunity to extend pedestrian priority at crossing locations over vehicles
- Opportunity to provide all door boarding at streetcar platforms
- Parking along South Park Blocks is highly utilized
- Opportunity to re-evaluate the number of accessible parking spaces provided in the South Park Blocks

PARK USES AND FUNCTIONS

- More residents, dogs, students, and members of the houseless community living in close proximity to the South Park Blocks
- Planned or expanded presence of PSU in the University District and South Downtown
- Planned or expanded presence of Cultural District institutions such as Portland Art Museum, Portland5 Performing Arts Center, and Oregon Historical Society
- Popular venue for Wednesday and Saturday Farmers Markets and potential for other events