



South Park Blocks Master Plan

Community Advisory Committee Meeting #1

Tuesday, April 16, 2019, 5:30pm – 8:00pm

PSU Smith Memorial Student Union, 1825 SW Broadway, Portland, OR 97201

Committee Members in Attendance: Gaylen Beatty, Julie Bunker, Michelle Comer, Jessica Engelmann, Nicholas Fazio, Lisa Frisch, Randy Gragg, Amber Holland, Keith Jones, Amanda Keasberry, Mack McFarland, Melinda McMillan, David Newman, Stephanie Parrish, Kathy Russo, Judy BlueHorse Skelton, Maya Sykes, Mason Wordell

Committee Members Absent: Wendy Rahm, Andrew VanDerZanden

PP&R Staff: Adena Long, Tate White, Barbara Hart

Facilitators: Kristen Bishop (LCA), Zachary Johnson (LCA)

MEETING SUMMARY

Welcome & Introductions

Barbara Hart of Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R) opened the meeting at 5:35pm by welcoming CAC members. CAC members were asked to introduce themselves and answer the question “what connects you to the South Park Blocks?”.

Director Adena Long welcomed the group and thanked them for their involvement. She shared her commitment to inclusivity and public participation embodied in the CAC’s central role in shaping the future of the South Park Blocks.

Kristen Bishop, facilitator with Lois D. Cohen Associates (LCA), reviewed the meeting agenda.

Public Comment

Tim Davis, a community member, commented that parks throughout Portland were often inactive apart from major events, that neighbors are afraid to walk in the South Park Blocks, that people should be prioritized over cars, and that PP&R should turn on fountains.

Goals, Roles, & Group Agreements

Barbara reviewed the South Park Blocks Master Plan Goals and the CAC Goals. She explained the use of consensus-based decision making rather than voting, and the use of red, yellow, and green cards to signify people’s support for ideas, proposals, and recommendations.

Barbara then reviewed the PP&R Group Agreements and Ground Rules and invited CAC members to pair off to discuss any modifications or additions they would suggest the group discuss. Kristen opened a group discussion of suggested changes and additions. The following ground rules were reviewed and discussed by the CAC:

Initial list:

- Speak honestly and respectfully



- Listen to understand
- Respect the views and opinions of others
- Keep an open mind
- During discussions, allow everyone the opportunity to speak once before speaking twice
- Use discussion to clarify information, not advocate for your position
- Consider the needs and concerns of the local community and the larger city

Additions:

- Lead with racial equity
- Leave time for people to process and ask questions
- Facilitators to lead the group through difficult or uncomfortable situations
- Silence is okay
- Be aware of personal biases
- It's okay to be raggedy
- Focus on ideas rather than people
- Add to end of last item on initial list...the larger city, and the city's place in the world
- Focus on challenges as opportunities for problem solving

This amended Group Agreements and Ground Rules list was approved in its entirety by the committee.

Committee members asked for more information about PP&R's Racial Equity Policy. Staff will provide this information at the next CAC meeting.

Project Overview

Tate White (PP&R project manager for the master plan) provided a project overview that included information about the site plan and context, master plan goals, governance structure, the consultant team, and the project timeline. She then answered the following questions and comments from CAC members:

- Will any work be done on Ankeny or O'Bryant Squares?
 - *The scope for this master plan is limited to the South Park Blocks due to the funding source. The CAC can, however, think about connections between the South Park Blocks and the Mid/North Blocks*
- Is there a specific development that we are trying to interface with?
 - *We want to consider all adjacent development (existing and planned) in thinking about the park block's future and how they relate to their surroundings. A Design Commission process led to the developer of the nearby Broadway Tower committing to build an affordable housing complex, provide funds for a master planning process for the South Park Blocks, and provide funds for improvements to the park block closest to the development. However, the master plan itself is not focused on this tower or single park block.*
- Can you clarify where the master plan area is?
 - *We are looking at the twelve South Park Blocks from Salmon down to I-405.*



- Comment: Once the master plan is complete, there is only funding for implementation of improvements to a portion of the area.
 - *We are keeping this in mind throughout the process. This plan provides an opportunity to identify necessary improvements and add them to PP&R's Capital Improvement list, which will make it easier to act on them in the future when funding options become available. Funding for implementation beyond the contribution by the Broadway Tower developer is currently unidentified.*
- To clarify, are we planning for just one block?
 - *The master plan is for the entire South Park Blocks. There is identified future funding for implementing improvements on the block between SW Columbia and Clay Streets. Funding and implementation for the rest of the blocks will be a future step.*
- Are we thinking about design standard implementation?
 - *We're going to see how we can use the master plan to influence, if not create, design standards. PP&R master plans are not typically codified but are approved by City Council.*
- Where does this fit into scope of the City's master plans?
 - *Most PP&R master plans are for new parks. We have a unique opportunity with this master plan to work with an existing park. Another example of this is the recently completed Washington Park Master Plan. Although the two parks are quite different especially in size, there is a similar level of complexity involved with the South Park Blocks.*
- Will this master plan pave the way for agreement among bureaus?
 - *We hope this will be a success story of aligning visions of bureaus like the Bureau of Transportation (PBOT), Bureau of Environmental Services (BES), and other bureaus and partnering agencies. The Technical Advisory Committee is made up of representatives from these groups and will help create an aligned plan for coordinated implementation.*
- What are the components of the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA)?
 - *The developer funding was not technically from a CBA. This was a special public benefit required by the Design Commission. The full public benefit package includes funding for the Master Plan, approximately \$200,000 worth of improvements on one park block, and a building with affordable housing units.*
- Will we learn about PSU's Master Plan?
 - *The consultant is reviewing PSU's Master Plan and it is important for context. This could be discussed at the joint CAC/TAC meeting. PSU is also working on an open space plan, which will also be considered.*
- What are the typical steps in developing a master plan?
 - *The initial technical investigation is important. Before that, we engage in a scoping process with the bureau and stakeholders to consider what is working, what is not, and what should be looked at. This sets the stage for identifying goals, opportunities, and challenges. A technical review is conducted where we dig deeper into the physical and contextual aspects. We remain focused on*



engagement throughout the process. A series of design alternatives is developed, usually three, and presented to stakeholders and the community for feedback. We then pick one of the designs or create a hybrid option for further refinement.

Discussion

Zachary Johnson, facilitator with LCA, led the group in an issues/opportunities activity. Group members were asked to write down issues and opportunities on sticky notes. All responses are attached at the end of this summary. Zach then led a group discussion where CAC members stated one of the issues and one of the opportunities they identified.

Next Steps

Tate provided information on the next steps in the CAC process. Doodle Polls will be sent out to schedule times for walking tours of the Park Blocks and for the next CAC meeting, which is anticipated to occur in May. Overall, the CAC process will consist of 5 to 6 meetings over the course of a year.

Wrap Up & Evaluation

Kristen thanked everyone for participating and asked for feedback on positive aspects of the meeting as well as things that should be changed for future meetings. The following feedback was provided by CAC members:

+

- Appreciated the ground rules and being able to modify them
- The packet of background information was useful

Δ

- More breaks
- Better food (more dinner items)
- Email questions in advance so CAC members can think about them

Kristen closed the meeting at 8:00pm.

Opportunities

- Improve active recreation opportunities in the South Park Blocks
- Real opportunity to involve youth! So many schools/campuses adjacent to this.
- Promote passive learning about history, environment
- Programming entity like Pioneer Courthouse Square to make stuff happen
- Planning & designing for climate resiliency & low maintenance (long term lack of \$\$\$ for high maintenance)
- Create vibrant diverse & resilient ecosystem in heart of city for all species
- Access for all to urban greenspace & nature
- Can churches be engaged?
- Design for aging population
- Active engagement
- Think about climate change when considering landscaping & park features: i.e. fountains, trees, ground cover, fossil fuel usage
- Leverage this CAC to develop community
- Trees! Can they be native? Should they be climate resilient? Diverse? Big or small?
- Community gathering space enhancement
- Pet friendly vs. ecologically relevant
- Gathering place for communities
- More public activities
- More nature in urban setting
- Build new ideas on historic foundation
- Vegetation & gardens planted for food
- Designing for future modes of mobility (scooters, bikes, etc.)
- Design for cars now & a minimal car future
- Meaningful placemaking for residents and visitors
- Economic equity
- Art!
- Partnerships! Great education & cultural & religious institutions up and down the blocks
- Intimate scale of the park blocks, feels human
- Engage PSU students at unified sports events
- Design for a bigger vision than originally planned for
- Share Portland's story (areas of interest and education)
- Bring outlying communities together
- Rethinking conventional large city park/boulevard design & use
- Connections to Director Park and beyond
- Improve urban forest health—don't plant any more elm
- To ultimately have more cultural events in the "cultural district"
- Cultural equity
- Comprehensive approach to livability: safety, design, vitality
- Urban design @ the edge. It matters!
- PSU student design planning, engagement with Green Loop class
- Inclusion of houselessness needs
- Public amenities
- All weather use—is this possible?
- Neighborhood amenity to regional attraction
- Activation—events & activities
- Opportunity to make the area more family friendly. The farmers market already does this. How to build off of this in other ways? *Ad hoc* community center?
- Connecting the outer blocks surrounding the park blocks. Are there development opportunities that could bring in more money?
- Focus on food—a new model for how cities eat and feed themselves
- Opportunity to bring more focus to the cultural district
- Environmental equity
- Be "pro-working class", making the park work for working class communities and people in poverty
- Make a bold statement about climate change & people-focused cities
- Public art
- Engage surrounding business/non-profits as resource (funding augmentation)
- Innovative usage for aging population/disabilities
- Collaboration with homeless shelters
- Opportunities to connect to past histories and indigenous futures
- Accessibility for all: abilities, age, race, economic level
- Ecological diversity
- Cross cultural identity
- Create a useful space for gathering of community for everyone
- Beautiful area (even more than it already is)
- Tourism
- Enhanced gathering place
- Sustainable design
- Support PP&R ecologically sustainable landscaping initiative
- Partnerships—ways to encourage & support them
- Resilience/earthquake response

Issues

- Green loop impacts to historical South Park Blocks
- School buses: both museums need them, green loop doesn't
- Finite space & growing population density
- Scarce funding
- Historical designation of South Park Blocks
- Plan won't get used
- Lack of commitment to vision
- Statues and fountains preclude a lot of programming
- Shaking the perception that public space isn't for everyone
- Public health & safety
- Funds for maintenance
- Cars vs. no cars
- Fountain (ecological use of water)
- Ratio of nature to other
- Trees failing
- Tree canopy: perception trees are all dying
- Public safety and public health need to be addressed
- Needles, trash, and nearby homeless camps as a deterrent to use. This is a major challenge that at the very least needs coordination w/ other agencies/bureaus.
- How to make the South Park Blocks inclusive for many, including the houseless population
- Cars—too much parking but people love the parking
- Not enough various perspectives to represent all the communities
- Funding for all the good ideas
- Safety/perception of safety
- Lack of funds for implementation
- Safety—keeping the area drug and crime free
- Parking—supports neighboring businesses and is well used
- Cleanliness & safety
- Costs—no budget
- Bad street/park behavior
- Moving people safely through the space
- Maintenance learning curve: not designing to the lowest common denominator
- Inter-agency communication
- PCPA loading dock—it's there
- Designing for continuity of "place" even though funding may be sporadic
- White people (white & men) take up too much space in conversation, recommendations, and decision making
- Lack of diversity/representation on the committee
- How to address the needs of our homeless community vs. park users. Does it have to be a dichotomy?
- The discussion of homeless populations and ideas for mitigation
- PPR gatekeeping & lack of transparency
- Lack of shared understanding of leading with racial equity
- How to make sure this process, master plan, and developments recognize the indigenous tribes native to this area and their history
- Maintaining healthy green space—clean, healthy trees & plants
- How to help farmers market—plumbing, electric, loading, etc.

Issues and/or Opportunities

- Long term maintenance. What materials do we use? What species? Resilience? Who is the steward? Funding?
- Houseless communities & need for services. Opportunity with nearby social service orgs (i.e. Outside In)
- The relationship of South Park Blocks to other parks. Different spaces for different purposes.
- Arlington Club: why aren't they here? Not invited? Didn't want to come?
- The museum's parking lot! Issue: it detracts. Opportunity: long term building, short term beauty improvement