



South Park Blocks Master Plan

Community Advisory Committee

Thursday, June 20, 2019, 5:30pm – 8:00pm

1900 SW 4th Ave, Room 2500 C, Portland, OR 97201

Committee Members in Attendance: Julie Bunker, Jessica E. Engelmann, Nicholas Fazio, Amber Holland, Keith Jones, Amanda Keasberry, David Newman, Stephanie Parrish, Wendy Rahm, Maya Sykes, Andrew VanDerZanden, Mason Wordell, Savahna Jackson

Committee Members Absent: Gaylen Beatty, Michelle Comer, Lisa Frisch, Randy Gragg, Mack McFarland, Melinda McMillan, Kathy Russo, Judy Bluehorse Skelton

Special Guest: Sequoia Breck

Community: Cara Rothe, Jo Durand, Marion McNamara, Mary Vogle

PP&R Staff: Tate White, Barbara Hart

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

Planning and Design Consultant Team: Melissa Erikson and Rachel Edmonds (MIG), Shannon Simms and Teresa Chenney (Mayer-Reed), Sharon Daleo (Toole Design Group)

MEETING SUMMARY

Welcome & Introductions

Barbara Hart of PP&R opened the meeting at 5:34pm by welcoming CAC members. She acknowledged CAC members Savahna Jackson, Wendy Rahm and Andrew VanDerZanden who were attending their first meeting, and asked them to introduce themselves. She then reviewed the set of meeting materials and invited CAC members to introduce themselves and answer the question “To mark the summer solstice, what is your favorite summertime place or activity?”

Meeting facilitator Kristen Bishop of LCA reviewed the meeting agenda.

Kristen asked CAC members to review the April 16, 2019 meeting summary for approval. The CAC approved the meeting summary as presented with no revisions.

Public Comment

No public comments were submitted.

Progress Updates

Tate White of PP&R provided progress updates. She thanked CAC members for attending the walking tours that were offered in May. She noted that since the last CAC meeting, the project team had met with the technical advisory committee (TAC) and shared a presentation very similar to what the CAC would see later that evening.

Tate then provided an overview of upcoming project activities:

- “Party in the Park” public event, July 17th



- Concept Development Workshop, August 6th
- Focus groups, including with the Parks Accessibility Advisory Committee, immigrants and refugees, and students – PSU and high school age.

CAC members asked the following questions, with responses by PP&R in italics:

- Are the Technical Advisory Committee meetings open to the public?
 - *TAC meetings are for staff and are not open to the public, but meeting notes are public record. There will be opportunities for further interaction between the CAC and the TAC, including joint meetings. The group was provided with a list of CAC members and TAC members in their meeting materials.*
- When will the focus groups happen?
 - *Planning for the focus groups is in progress. Ideally, the Accessibility Advisory Committee focus group will occur before the design workshop. This group will be engaged later in the process as well once design concepts are available. The other focus groups will be engaged later, once preliminary design concepts are ready for review. Information about these focus groups will be provided to the CAC.*
- Why isn't a specific representative from Planning and Sustainability on the TAC?
 - *There is a representative from the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability's Urban Design Group. The staff person asked about was invited but not able to commit to the TAC. He is an available resource that will be involved when his expertise is needed.*

Reflections on Walking Tour

Barbara opened a discussion about the walking tours led by Tate White for the CAC in May. The following observations were shared by CAC members, with responses to some in italics:

- Comment about the significant presence of youth playing throughout the park blocks, outside of the playground block. Many nearby day cares, schools, and residents use the blocks to play on a daily basis.
 - *Barbara noted that PP&R is in contact with the St. James Children's Center and is reaching out to the other nearby childcare centers.*
- Walking from PSU up to Shemanski Park, there is a clear division at Market Street. The speed and volume of traffic is a safety challenge.
- The "orphan blocks" in the middle of South Park Blocks seem underdeveloped and underutilized. Some attention should be paid to these blocks.
 - *Tate explained that "orphan blocks" refer to the middle blocks that are more difficult to program for events due to traffic volumes. It is not possible to close the streets between these blocks for events.*
- Comments about tearing out grass were interesting and worth considering, as well as reasons for grass being left in place.
- It is not necessarily a bad thing to have some blocks with less programming.
- Green loop integration will be challenging.



- Integrating the PSU blocks with the other blocks will be challenging. There are gaps in the PSU open space plan.
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- The blocks surrounding Market Street have quick moving traffic, a streetcar stop, the entrance to PSU, high numbers of people, and some of the worst pedestrian crossings.
- There is no sense of arrival to the park; there is not gateway.
- The scale of the blocks was notable. It is a long corridor with lots of space.
- The blocks were able to accommodate a lot of people during PSU's graduation weekend.
- Urban design at the edge of the park should be considered. There are some poor edge conditions along the whole corridor. The streetscape should be activated.
- Shemanski Park is a beautiful space, but there is a parking lot on one side and the back of the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall on another.
- Looking down the entire length of the park from the end highlights the canopy and the pathways.
- The park blocks are used in a variety of ways by people of all ages.
- The hardscapes on the orphan blocks are sometimes filled with children.
- Challenges to potential Green Loop integration include the school buses that park on Park & 9th for the cultural institutions. The Green Loop may not work on the park blocks.
- The PSU blocks play an important role as a campus quad. The campus culture is important to sustain.
- Leftover flowers from the farmers market were noted. Maybe there is an opportunity to work with PSU and other stakeholders on composting.
- There is a movement of students, faculty and staff to disarm campus police officers after the June 2018 shooting that killed Jason Washington. [A new report on Public Safety is available](#) and includes a campus survey that found 52% favored disarming police. Efforts to increase the police presence in other areas of the South Park Blocks may be in conflict with efforts underway on the PSU campus.
- There is a lot of focus on people, but we need to consider the habitat quality as well. Animals, including migratory birds, suffer with a lack of landscape diversity.
- There is an opportunity for educational growing spaces with native plants.
- There is a lack of a coherent plan, particularly along the PSU blocks.
- Better signage is needed. Perhaps including signage to let users know that they are on one block of twelve.
- It would be great to have different cultural monuments on each block.
- There is not a single evergreen conifer. Conifers would be a good replacement for dying trees.
- Tree root zones should be protected.
- Gravel mulch around the trees encourages people to walk on tree root zones while bark mulch does not.
- A lot of the yellow ADA tape is worn down.
- Lack of dog waste bag stations.
- The PSU blocks are great for commuting on foot.
- The direction of the pathways is not always convenient.



- Deferred maintenance is an issue.
- There are several Christian churches along the blocks. Can we incorporate things from other religions?

Racial Equity Plan Discussion

Barbara reviewed PP&R's racial equity policy. PP&R is working on structural and cultural change to combat racism. The CAC can help advance these equity goals, particularly goal 3 (engagement of traditionally underserved populations) and goal 5 (investments to increase access to parks and services).

Barbara then opened a discussion of the plan. Questions and comments are noted below with responses in italics:

- There is a lack of diversity on the CAC.
- Example of public art installation with music from around the world may be a good precedent.
- How are perspectives from other parts of Portland being considered?
 - *Community events are being promoted throughout the park system. We work with community leaders throughout the City.*
- Will there be an opportunity to look at models from other parks around the world? Different cultures use parks differently. Are we implicitly leaving out this element?
 - *MIG and PP&R consider different models and examples of parks from around the world through their work. Our focus group work with immigrants and refugees will contribute to this. We are also working with indigenous groups.*
- There was a fantastic presentation during the Park Foundation's speaker series about this topic.
 - Tate notes that she attended this presentation and agrees. The Green Dreams programs are available online at <https://www.portlandpf.org/green-dreams>.
- Will the public event include other cultural models?
 - *Listening is the primary focus of the event. Images and boards about potential design elements/uses will be included.*

Opportunities and Challenges

The Design Team led by MIG gave a presentation about the issues and challenges associated with the South Park Blocks. Melisa Erikson of MIG introduced the project team members in attendance. Rachel Edmonds of MIG provided a history of the South Park Blocks as well as an overview of the vegetation character. Shannon Simms of Mayer Reed discussed the Green Loop concept. Sharon Daleo of Toole Design Group discussed transportation in and around the park. The presentation slides are attached to this meeting summary.

Questions and comments from CAC members during and after the presentation are noted below with responses by MIG and PP&R in italics:



PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

- There are bike lanes in multiple places around the park.
 - *Yes, bike routes are included on the map on slide 32.*
- Portland5 is in preliminary discussions regarding closing Main permanently. There have been a few accidents in the area when the gates go down for events. There is also bus and truck parking along Salmon during events.
- Have you collected data on the number of parking spaces and how it relates to parking demand management?
 - *Tate has gathered some data from PBOT and will be sharing with the consultant team.*
- Can you discuss the types of plantings in the blocks?
 - *Staff reviewed the vegetation map and noted the turf and beds. Roses were previously a unifying feature of all the blocks.*
- People who run tours often stop by the rose beds.
- The southern-most bed on the Roosevelt block is a mixed bed, not a rose bed.
- What is the current succession plan for the tree canopy?
 - *Currently, trees are replaced one-to-one as needed. The project arborist wants to think long-term.*
- How does the one-one planting process get changed?
 - *The Urban Forester and the Urban Forestry Commission will have a role in this discussion.*
- Educating the public about the tree succession process can help mitigate sadness about dying trees. This is a public education opportunity.
- Houselessness was not mentioned on the usage slide. There are also some illegal activities that occur in the park, like smoking and drug use.
- During the Green Loop Pedalpalooza, many people mentioned that they saw the South Park Blocks as a model for the rest of the Loop.
- The PSU open space plan talks about the Green Loop being on SW Broadway instead of adjacent to the South Park Blocks.
 - *We are working with PSU throughout this process. There are PSU representatives on the TAC and PSU will be included in the concept development workshop.*
- There should be a critical look at the City's historical preservation/registration efforts. It would be helpful to understand the priorities and context for the City of Portland, and how these connect to the South Park Blocks? How can relevant information be shared with the CAC?
 - *The rehabilitation/treatment approach acknowledges current uses and provides flexibility. The park is not a good candidate for a preservation approach because a lot of the functional space is newer.*
- Historical preservation is now focused primarily on adaptive reuse of old buildings.

Kristen then asked CAC members to review the sorted list of Opportunities and Issues provided and identify their top five priorities by July 15. The CAC responses will be compiled and shared with the Design Team in advance of the August workshop.



Next Steps & Evaluation

Kristen and Barbara reviewed the key upcoming dates and encouraged CAC members to help promote the July 17 “Party in the Park” community gathering. Information about the event will be posted to the project website and emailed to CAC members to make it easy to share the news with their groups and members

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.

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- Food was good
- Thank you to everyone who presented, really great information

Kristen closed the meeting at 8:05pm.

DRAFT