



South Park Blocks Master Plan

Draft Preferred Design

Frequently Asked Questions - June 2020

1. Which of the three design concepts presented at the end of 2019 moved forward?

The most favored elements from each concept were identified through stakeholder conversations, focus groups, the community survey and guidance from the Community Advisory Committee. These elements and features were drawn together to develop the Draft Preferred Design. Overall, the Emerald Arrow and Braided District concepts had the most popular elements. The X-shaped pathways shown in the Mirrored Chain concept were not well-supported.

2. What other elements did not move forward into the Draft Preferred Design?

In response to community and stakeholder feedback and further technical analysis, the following elements proposed in the three design concepts **did not** move forward into the Draft Preferred Design:

- a. Renovated plaza by Millar Library (Block 3)
- b. New performance plaza outside Lincoln Hall (Block 6)
- c. Connected spaces for gathering and events **with diagonal paths** (Blocks 10-12)
- d. New gateway features in the middle of the park blocks (Blocks 6-7)
- e. Addition of new rose and/or flower beds by SW Market Street (Blocks 6-7)
- f. New planting beds in the streets with limited vehicle traffic between Blocks 9-12
- g. Reconfiguration of raised planting beds in Cultural District to frame diagonal “X” pathways
- h. Short diagonal paths to connect pedestrians from pathways in center to corner crossings in the Cultural District (except at south end of Block 7 to bring people to marked crossings at Market Street).
- i. Regular car traffic removed from one block of Park Avenue West (Block 5)
- j. Regular car traffic removed from one block of Park Avenue East (Block 1)
- k. Woonerf Street Treatment on Park Avenue West (Block 5)
- l. Regular car traffic removed from one block of Park Avenue East at SW College between Park Avenues
- m. Green Loop bike path through Park Block 6
- n. One-way bikeways on both Park Avenues alongside park blocks in the Cultural District that require moving through Park Block 8



3. How will the park master plan and future implementation respect the historic character of the park?

Portland Parks & Recreation recognizes and respects the historic importance of the South Park Blocks. In this project, PP&R has emphasized historic preservation through initial research and documentation of significant historical features through an [Existing Conditions, Issues, and Opportunities Report](#) and the hiring of a consultant team with expertise in historic cultural landscapes.

The South Park Blocks were conceived, designed, and developed over many decades. They have been shaped and changed over time. Significant historical features include the park's spatial organization of linked gathering areas with focal points, the linear arrangement of trees, the linear, promenade-style pathways, and the use of planting beds and turf areas to reinforce this linear movement. There are opportunities to highlight these resources in the master plan and guide new park development to be compatible, yet distinct from what is historic. The original design intent will remain a recognizable characteristic as the future park is planned and designed.

4. How is Portland Parks & Recreation coordinating with historic preservation agencies during the planning process?

Project staff met with a Review and Compliance Specialist and the National Register Coordinator for the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (Oregon SHPO) in the fall of 2019 and again in the spring of 2020. The SHPO representatives remain supportive of PP&R's South Park Blocks Master Plan approach and have shared information about the [358.653 compliance process](#). Oregon SHPO prefers to be engaged when a project is funded and goes through more detailed design and construction. The 358.653 process facilitates compliance of projects for both eligible (not yet listed) and listed properties, to ensure implementation of the master plan respects the historic characteristics of the South Park Blocks. Oregon SHPO, the City's Historic Program Manager, and the expert consultant team agree that the master plan does not preclude a future historic nomination.

5. What Is the National Register for Historic Places and how does it relate to the South Park Blocks?

The South Park Blocks are considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of historic places considered worthy of preservation in the country. Cities in Oregon are required to protect National Register Resources by review of demolition or relocation proposals that includes, at minimum, a public hearing process. At the time of such a hearing, Portland City Council



would hear public testimony and consider the following factors: condition, historic integrity, age, historic significance, value to the community, economic consequences, design or construction rarity, and consistency with and consideration of other policy objectives in the comprehensive plan.

6. Why are you proposing to remove trees and when will this happen?

The historic elm trees and their placement in the park are celebrated and iconic features. Unfortunately, they were originally planted too close together to provide the amount of space that they require at maturity. Dutch Elm Disease is also a serious threat to these trees, and many have succumbed to the disease over time. A strategic plan is needed to sustain the beloved tree canopy before they existing trees reach the end of their lifespan.

The tree succession strategy proposed through the master plan is meant to help ensure a healthy tree canopy over time. This will be achieved slowly with the addition of new, resilient tree species in the park and improving growing conditions with more space between trees and increasing access to light. The master plan will guide new plantings as existing trees are identified for removal by Urban Forestry because they are dead, dying, or dangerous, and as park improvements are implemented.

7. We heard food insecurity is a challenge many Portland State University (PSU) students are facing. Why are there no community gardens shown in the Draft Preferred Design?

The South Park Blocks are narrow spaces that serve a large and diverse community in the downtown area. Design and technical analysis suggest there is insufficient space and solar access to support a successful community garden within the South Park Blocks. Portland Parks & Recreation acknowledges there are an insufficient number of plots to meet demand in downtown Portland. Through previous planning and policy work, PP&R has established that we do not have enough appropriate park land to meet this demand. To resolve this challenge, our Community Garden Program partners with schools, churches and other property owners to combine community garden resources with increased land capacity. The Community Garden Program is interested in partnering with PSU to expand the existing [student garden programs](#) on University property. Having more space to work with will help benefit more students experiencing food insecurity.



8. Tabled intersections and signalized crossings were popular features in the last design phase. Why aren't these shown in the Draft Preferred Design?

The park master plan will recommend that Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) continue analysis on crossing enhancements that prioritize safety. Final recommendations from PBOT will be part of detailed design and construction planning to implement the master plan and/or PBOT's own capital improvement projects. The median islands currently shown in the Draft Preferred Design represent PBOT's current thinking as the best treatment in response to community feedback, elements from the Draft Preferred Design, safety, traffic circulation, and planned transportation improvements that have already been approved outside of the park master plan.

Upon further analysis, the Portland Bureau of Transportation has found that tabled intersections and crossings may be inappropriate and possibly infeasible for implementation across busy streets in this area due to their use as priority transit and freight routes. More detailed explorations of these concepts in the downtown have revealed technical challenges including but not limited to drainage issues. The park master plan will note public interest in this treatment and recommend PBOT continue to explore the feasibility of tabled intersections and crossings near the South Park Blocks.

9. How does the Green Loop bike path on Park Avenue West relate to the park?

Other than a diagonal shared use path through South Park Block 2, the Green Loop bike path is proposed along the vacated right-of-way path in the University District and within the street right-of-way of Park Avenue West. The legal right of way along Park Avenue West extends several feet into the park. The right of way area currently used for the sidewalk along Park Avenue West is proposed to be used to provide a green, park-like separation in between the bike lane and the park. A hardscape sidewalk that formerly served cars would become a landscaped area adding to the park, improving the pedestrian and cycling experience, and absorbing more stormwater runoff. The Draft Preferred Design includes connections from Park Avenue West to the park's central promenade to encourage people to walk through the park.

10. How does the proposed Green Loop bike lane impact parking on Park Avenue West?

On-street parking alongside the park on Park Avenue West will be replaced by the separated bike lane and green buffer. On-street parking loss will also occur on the building side of Park Avenue West and will be confirmed through more detailed design. During these later phases, PBOT will minimize reductions to on-street parking supply where possible and consult with property owners to preserve necessary access and loading areas.



11. What is the Rose Lane Project and why are other transportation projects shown?

Because the South Park Blocks are surrounded by and intersected by streets, we accounted for existing and planned transportation projects to align our work with other bureaus and agencies. The Draft Preferred Design incorporates Portland Streetcar's desire to implement all-door boarding to improve accessibility. Key technical advisors and partner agencies, including fire and emergency providers, will continue to be consulted through more detailed design phases.

The [Rose Lane Project](#) report was unanimously adopted by City Council on February 13, 2020. Rose Lanes are corridors where transit priority treatments are used to get buses and streetcars out of traffic. Through project development, PBOT will determine which treatments best address the needs and context in specific locations. Not all Rose Lane corridors will include bus-only lanes.

[Central City in Motion](#) is PBOT's effort to plan, prioritize, and implement transportation improvements in the city's core. Eighteen projects were prioritized through this planning effort. They include new pedestrian crossings, bus lanes, and bikeways. The SW Columbia and Jefferson bike lanes shown in the South Park Blocks Draft Preferred Design were part of Central City in Motion.

12. What are next steps? When will the plan be implemented?

Community comments will guide refinements to the Draft Preferred Design as part of the South Park Blocks Master Plan. The draft Master Plan will be presented to the Portland City Council for consideration and acceptance later this year.

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 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. Implementation of projects on this park block will occur first.

Implementation of the remaining projects recommended for the park will be placed on the PP&R Capital Improvement List and will move forward for detailed design and construction as funding becomes available. Additional community engagement will be a key part of these detailed design and construction projects in the South Park Blocks.