



# Washington Park Reservoir Improvements Project Open House #3 Summary

#### Introduction

The third Washington Park Reservoir Improvements Project Online Open House was available on the project website from February 12 through February 28, 2014. The online event coincided with community outreach and tabling throughout the Washington Park area.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the open house was to provide project information to neighbors, community members and stakeholders, and to gather feedback on the community-selected design concept for the visible features of the reservoir site. Information from the open house will be shared with the project team as designs are finalized.

## **Meeting Notification and Outreach**

The intended audience for the online event was park users and other Washington Park Reservoirs stakeholders, including property owners and neighbors in the area.

Notification of the online open house went out prior to the event, and included:

- A postcard mailed to approximately 5,000 addresses in the immediate project area;
- Emails to members on the interested parties list, including area neighborhood associations;
- A Portland Water Bureau media release and blog post;
- Posts to the Portland Water Bureau project website and Facebook page.

In addition to the online open house, targeted outreach and tabling was done during the same time period to further educate the public about the project and solicit their feedback. This included:

- An email reminder to the interested parties list, and an email to encourage Community Sounding Board members to forward the online open house link to their constituents;
- Flyers (100 to 200) were distributed to businesses around NW Burnside, NW 21st, NW 23rd and Goose Hollow;
- Door hangers (about 150) were distributed in the neighborhoods immediately surrounding Washington Park;
- Four tabling events were held at nearby neighborhood businesses in NW and SW Portland. Stickers, cards, and flyers (200 to 300) were distributed during these events.

#### **Community Participation**

The online open house questionnaire was completed 156 times. In addition to the written responses, project staff spoke with hundreds of people at events in the project area.

When questioned why they were interested in the project, roughly three quarters of respondents indicated they visit Washington Park, and more than half indicated that they have an overall interest in our municipal drinking water. Others expressed that they are interested because they are ratepayers and/or that they live in the area near Washington Park.

#### **Summary of Feedback**

Generally, verbal feedback was consistent with the feedback received through the online open house. The following is a summary of all feedback received during this outreach phase. For a complete list of all comments from the online responses, refer to **Appendix A**.

Support for the proposal:

### Generally, most people like the proposed concept:

- People were supportive of **the large expanse of water** in the upper reservoir.
- They also supported the **potential for habitat** in the lower reservoir.
- Many commented that they also like the potential for **improved access** to the reservoirs.
- Many people were **thankful to learn about the project** and were **supportive of the process and the direction** the Portland Water Bureau is headed with the designs.
- A few comments expressed that the project is not needed but that if it has to move forward, the **designs are nice**.

Beyond general support for the concept, some questions and concerns were raised:

- **Cost** many people recognized the need for the project but wanted to make sure the Portland Water Bureau would use water rates wisely and that long-term maintenance would not be too costly. Others felt that the state of Oregon and the federal government should help cover some costs of the project.
- **Maintenance** many people wanted to make sure there would be long-term maintenance of the native plantings and maintaining the Cascade features through future landslide damage.
- **Effective wildlife habitat** some people expressed a concern that the Lowland Habitat should be designed to attract wildlife, and not just be a habitat in name only. It was suggested that the project team coordinate with the Portland Audubon Society to ensure habitat acts as a functional wildlife habitat. Others noted that all plantings should be native.
- **Mosquito habitat** both supporters and detractors of the Lowland Habitat had concerns about mosquitos.
- **Secure our water** many people thought that burying a reservoir for security reasons was important. Some suggested that all access to the reservoirs should be limited, even with a buried reservoir. A minority of commenters continues to question the need to cover or bury the reservoirs for security reasons.
- **Project not needed** a handful of people commented that the project was not needed and that the current reservoirs should be maintained.
- **Construction coordination** there were concerns raised that construction should not overlap with the Japanese Garden construction (which will extend into 2016).
- **No fence needed** a few comments expressed that no fence is needed around the Cascade concept, as the surface water will no longer be drinking water.

# Appendix A

# Online Open House Survey Question Responses – All Open Ended Responses

Is there anything you would like to share with the Community Sounding Board or project team, as this concept is further refined?

- I hope the water features will not be expensive to maintain.
- I'm sure someone has brought this up before, but is there a plan for avoiding mosquito problems?
- With these concepts and knowing how the faults are moving what will these designs look like in 10 years, 20 years 50 years? It seems like the reservoir 3 concept assumes an unreasonably optimistic stability of the underlying soils. If the soils under it shift can maintenance reset it? Or does it have to be rebuilt? It seems with its long flowing sight lines to be really visually sensitive to even minor soil movement. It might be useful to introduce elements to break the sight lines so minor disruptions can more easily be hidden.
- It should stay reservoirs.
- There's way too much easy access to wash park reservoir----any kind of poisoning could occur by the public with criminal intent...e-coli is natural occurring---if you have boil notice over that what about terrorist contamination, or some off person thru rat poison in, there's 100+ things that could threaten the purity----at least keep it fenced off off limits to public, cameras, security. We live in a piece of heaven here but live in a world of harmful dangerous people!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Is the Lowland Habitat going to be actually designed for natural habitat (birds, small mammals, amphibians, insects)? Or simply a visual 'metaphor' for natural habitat ie: sterilized water, non-native/non-supporting plants etc. There are several increasingly rare animals we could assist with a feature like this: monarch butterflies, native and honey bees, native squirrels, migratory birds but they require a functional wetland, not a play pretend one.
- The wetlands are a great addition in attracting birds and making the site much more recreational and educational as well as functional. It would be a good place just to go and watch wildlife or take kids. The Cascade concept is fine if one wants to just sit and be pensive, but the wetlands has that plus much more active interaction with nature. It's a winner! Also, it's great you are covering and securing the water supply. I want our water to be as secure and protected as possible.
- The water area on Reservoir 4 looks more like a swamp. What steps will be taken to ensure it doesn't become a breading ground for mosquitos?
- Good balance between the visual aquatic setting of Reservoir 3 and the natural setting or
  Reservoir 4. The Reservoir 3 concept looks like it might have been the most expensive and,
  if so, I would question the cost effectiveness of that selection for a site with a primary
  purpose of water treatment versus delighting park visitors. I nonetheless believe the
  combination is the most aesthetically pleasing choice.
- Are mosquitos a concern?
- The Cascade proposal is superior in that it retains much of the current "open water" character of this area while adding an attractive and calming waterfall feature.
- I like the Lowland Habitat more than anticipated.
- I like the concepts and designs. Can the walkways be opened now for walking access until construction begins.
- Hopeful that final design might also incorporate some additional parking, as the park is
  already challenging to find a space in summer even with the new paid parking probably
  turning some people away, if these new "attractions" will be so visible, I hope there is also
  more capacity.
- Nice designs. I hope the outcome at Mt. Tabor is as nice.
- Designs look great. We live nearby and loved it as a running loop and this will add so much

- more variety in that space. Get cracking!
- I am sorry this project is moving forward but it appears inevitable. These are nice
  concepts and increasing pedestrian access to this portion of the park will be a positive
  outcome.
- Please consider exclusively using native plants for all landscaping. They require less maintenance and are the best choice for our wildlife. I'm sure the Portland Audubon Society would be more than happy to advise and assist. I am currently enrolled in their Backyard Habitat program and I'm very impressed with their organization.
- I like them both!
- The designs for both reservoirs are a dramatic improvement over current ugly upper and non-accessible lower reservoir. I appreciate Parks personnel working closely with interested parties. I prefer Lowland concept for lower pool that will complement the more open upper pool. The Japanese Garden capital improvement project is scheduled to start in 2015 and will extend into 2016. I hope there is not overlap as construction of 2 projects in nearby areas could be extremely disruptive to neighbors and users of the park.
- Love the improved / increased public access to the site.
- Erm, what about the mosquitos? Wetland=mosquitos, people.
- Why did the committee select the lowland habitat when the public preference was the reflecting pool? I am concerned that this lowland habitat (although designed and installed with the best of intentions) will degenerate into a landscape dominated by weeds and trash. Who will weed this managed landscape? Who on staff will be qualified to make management decisions regarding plant maintenance? Where will the money come from if the "habitat" fails and needs to be replanted periodically? Who will pick up the trash that will inevitably blow in or be tossed into the habitat? A reflecting pool will in the long run look better year-to-year, but should be easier to maintain. And if it is not maintained properly, the public will see this more easily and more clearly than a shallow pool of weeds.
- I like both Cascade/Lowland Habitat.

#### Why are you interested in the Washington Park Reservoirs?

- I'm interested in historic preservation.
- I work for the Water Bureau.
- Doing the best to restore natural balance when the opportunity arises.
- When I visit friends in the area or am downtown and drink from the water fountains, I drink water from these reservoirs.
- I am a city planner.
- I work for the Portland Water Bureau.
- Historic view preservation.
- Historical factors.
- I live in NE Portland and own a house above Washington Park.
- Interested in quality of design.
- The reservoirs are historic treasures of which we have too few examples in Portland.
- Federal fear-mongering = covered reservoirs?
- Interested in keeping our city beautiful.
- Current open reservoirs are ugly and present health dangers.
- I'm a journalist.