

Dorothea Dix Park

Master Plan Executive Committee

Date: Wednesday, July 11, 2018
Time: 8:30am - 11:30am
Location: Flower Cottage at Dix Park

Meeting Summary

HH Architecture gave a brief introduction explaining their plans for working with the Department of Agriculture on a master plan for the NC Farmer's Market. They plan to align their work with MVVA's master planning process for Dix Park so that the two master plans are complete in spring 2019. As part of their work, HH Architecture will do site visits to other Farmer's Markets throughout the country that have a similar structure (retail and wholesale) to Raleigh's Farmer's Market. City Staff will also provide a few case studies to aid in that research. In the interim, the City and the Farmer's Market plan to make an early, low-cost connection to Dix Park, possibly as early as Fall 2018.

City Staff provided a Dix Park brief communications update. Since, the Sunflower field installation, the Dix Park Facebook page has had one million impressions. Engagement numbers continue to climb.

Adrienne Heflich with MVVA provided an updated draft master plan concept. The new concept addresses previous questions and concerns notes by the Executive Committee in June including parking and circulation patterns.

MVVA also provided technical analysis of Rocky Branch Creek from the subconsultant LimnoTech. They would like to install groundwater level sensors to do more in-depth analysis that would aid in creek restoration. This data is important given that a closed landfill abuts the water source. The state does not have a lot of information on the actual volume of what is in the landfill. The landfill was closed to municipality in the 1970s but continued to receive waste from the Raleigh Convention Center and DHHS. A better understanding of the quantity and content of the landfill is necessary.

The committee also reviewed more in-depth design proposals for the Lake Wheeler Road edge of the park. There are some challenges along this section of Lake Wheeler including the fact that the Anderson Building is only 65 feet away from the road right of way. This proposal noted that

between Fuller Street and Grissom Street is the only at-grade area along Lake Wheeler Road. This makes it the most logical potential point for a gateway into Dix Park. The proposal included three lighted intersections along Lake Wheeler Road and a multi-use path in the park that would connect the greenway to Rocky Branch Trail and the Walnut Creek Trail—furthering the connection between downtown and the Farmer’s Market. The current draft master plan proposes renovation of the park buildings along Lake Wheeler as well as adding a building to support the park. The ground use of the buildings would be public. Both aim to make a stronger edge along Lake Wheeler and to provide opportunity for generating revenue for maintaining the park.

An idea was introduced that there needs to be additional development along Lake Wheeler Road to create a strong edge along the park. The Southern Gateway Corridor Study calls for density along the residential side of Lake Wheeler, should we mirror it on the park side. There was a lively debate on the scale, height, density and types of uses of the proposed development. One comment was to relocate City Hall to Dix Park. No decision was made; further analysis needs to be done to understand future operations and maintenance costs in order to determine how much, what type, and where development may be needed to support the park.

MVVA presented slides on proposed parking lots. These are placed to not block key views or require land terracing. Lots would have an equally wide strip of planted trees and green space to shade the lots and manage run off water. The proposed plan includes 2100 total spaces, 710 of which could be shared between the Farmer’s Market and the park. The committee considered metered parking, but the Mayor pushed back noting that as soon as we charge for parking it no longer is a park for everyone. The group began to explore the idea of shuttles to parking areas to limit spot numbers in the park.

Lastly, the committee reviewed MVVA master plans of other parks to explore options for master plan formats—from highly technical for only design professionals to more prose based for the public at-large to comprehend. MVVA suggested that the Dix Park Master Plan document have a heavy executive summary detailing the history of the site that the public can digest as well as implementation details for coming phases.