

# Dorothea Dix Park

## Master Plan Joint Workgroup Meeting

Date: Monday, February 26, 2018  
Time: 6:00pm – 8:00pm  
Location: Raleigh Convention Center

### Meeting Summary

The focus of this meeting of the Workgroups was to discuss ideas and issues related to Neighborhood Connections, Natural Forces and Sacred Spaces. The meeting presentation began with an update of the project's progress and overall project schedule. The presentation also shared information on each of the three meeting topics. After each topic presentation, small groups gathered to discuss. At the end of each round of small group discussion, the small groups reported to the larger group.

The following was discussed and reported from the small groups:

#### Greenways:

- Western Boulevard needs a safe pedestrian crossing. Ideas include a land bridge, or at Boylan Avenue at grade or grade-separated, or in some other way at the terminus of the Rosengarten Greenway, or a combination.
- Rocky Branch / Walnut Creek Greenway going east is in poor shape and not easy to navigate. Improvements are due here. Though Chavis is proximate (1.25 miles, 2.5 on the greenway) it seems far away.
- The width of the standard greenway in this area seems undersized. A different (wider) width for greenways approaching Dix Park might be appropriate – make them attractive to runners, cyclists, walkers.
- Connection from Dix Park to NCSU / Centennial / Walnut Creek is weak. The land bridge across Western will help, but no good routes exist to Centennial and the Walnut Creek greenway west of Lake Raleigh.
- Greenway extension paralleling Western Blvd could be continued to Avent Ferry on south side. There is a multi-use path paralleling Western Boulevard all the way down toward the Beltline.
- Wayfinding is a big issue. A visitor would not know how to get on the greenway, or where the greenways go. The system, particularly in this area, is opaque unless you are familiar with it. (A number of people at this meeting, who are generally familiar with the greenways,

did not know that the Walnut Creek greenway extended through Centennial Campus to Lake Johnson – and our maps don't reflect it either!)

#### Automobile:

- It was generally acknowledged that a substantial proportion of users of the park will get to the park in a car.
- There was a lot of exploration about existing parking (downtown, Centennial campus) and about possible locations for parking external to the park (Spring Hill, Farmers Market, Governor Morehead) and how to get people into the park from these external parking facilities. Parking should not take up a lot of space in the park.
- Particularly for large events, a transportation system (shuttles, trams) should be established to get people from existing parking on NCSU campus, downtown, etc. into and from the park.
- Pedestrian
- Access from the south is very difficult – improvements to Lake Wheeler Road, particularly around the I-40 interchange should make it easier to access the park area from the south.
- At-grade crossing or grade-separated crossing at Boylan needs to be pedestrian-centric.
- West Street corridor extending to Lake Wheeler Road is an opportunity for a strong pedestrian link from Downtown. Union Station and the Warehouse District are important pedestrian connections and a conscious effort to link them to the park is important.

#### Other Transportation:

- There was a strong interest in a tram or gondola to link downtown, Centennial Campus, and the parking resources around the park to the park, and also provide some means for traversing the park, which is a long distance across, particularly for the elderly and young children.
- The R-Line or something similar running short headways through the park were of high interest to link important nearby destinations with the park.

## PLANTS AND LANDSCAPE

#### Plant Palette:

- The general attitude is that the plant palette in the park should start with “native” trees and shrubs, but should also balance management.
- Plants and landscape as an educational experience as representation of North Carolina's landscape were of interest to many. This could be done with a Piedmont prairie, a stand of longleaf pines, mixed hardwood forests and/or boggy areas with acidic soils like the Sandhills.
- There were a couple of calls for an arboretum – a place that would be an educational resource regarding the native Piedmont landscape – a complement to the more cultivar / trade-oriented JC Raulston Arboretum at NCSU.

- Though not a general consensus, there was some talk about thinning understory or removing selected trees to enhance the view from Harvey Hill to downtown.

#### Hydrology:

- Daylighting some of the buried drainage ways in the park got some positive attention –the success of the Rocky Branch restoration through the NCSU campus provided a good example.
- Rocky Branch was a focus of much of the discussion of water. There was support for “naturalizing” the stream.

#### Urban Agriculture:

- Urban agriculture had a mix of reactions. A number of people thought that urban agriculture was important to the agricultural legacy of the state and the hospital campus, and could be done in a way that wasn't as “messy” as a typical farm.
- Others felt that there were many other opportunities throughout the community for community gardens, City Farm, the Interfaith Food Shuttle teaching farm, etc. that would argue against dedicating valuable park land for this purpose.
- A fair amount of the discussion relative to urban agriculture, as well as to parking, pedestrian access and history, centered around the Farmer's Market. This seemed to be the place that an urban agriculture presence should be adjacent to if in the park. People also were thinking about how to get pedestrians there and back from the Farmer's Market and how the Department of Agriculture could be a partner in any urban agriculture effort.