

Dorothea Dix Park

Master Plan Workgroup: The Park and Its Program

Date: Tuesday, September 12, 2017
Time: 6:00pm – 8:00pm
Location: Raleigh Municipal Building, Council Chambers (Room 201)

Meeting Summary

This first meeting of the Workgroups was intended to bring the group up to speed on the process that the Master Plan will follow as it comes together over the next 18 months. This is summarized at www.dixpark.org. You can review this by clicking “Learn more and join the conversation” under “Master Plan” on the home page.

The discussion illustrated the role of the Workgroups relative to the Executive Committee, the Advisory Committee, the Staff Team and the Design Team (consultants). This is also listed on the web site under “Master Plan”.

The group set out to discuss four questions. Below are summaries of those discussions.

The Hospital and the Park are both sanctuaries. Are there connections?

The answers to this question as discussed in the groups centered on words like safety, service, introspection, welcoming, health, crossroads, views, pathways. Some examples of sanctuary spaces are mountain streams, churches, anyplace where there’s water. Paths are often transformative – like labyrinths. Big outdoor rooms can be sanctuaries as well – safe, open. Long views put things in perspective. In the same way enclosed spaces like the Ramble at Central Park can be sanctuaries.

- Both are safe places
- A place for introspection
- Quiet – away from the hubbub of city life
- Welcoming to people from other places
- Well-being is the highest priority
- Service is a basic purpose of both
- Service to all ages, races
- Brings people together who otherwise might not cross paths
- Recreation / open space is documented to benefit mental health
- Views are inspirational – transcendent
- Diverting or distracting people from stressful situations

- Nature is an essential element for any sanctuary
- Like a church – needs to feel enclosing, protecting
- Sanctuaries are compassionate, caring
- Thinking places
- Lots of moving parts that work together toward a mission
- Good wayfinding is necessary in order to avoid stress in sanctuary situations

Where would you meet someone at Dix Park?

There is a clear need in the park now for some wayfinding – leading you to places. Wayfinding is directional signage to help someone navigate a place. Most landmarks are probably buildings. We do currently not have access to the buildings so they are not places where you'd tell someone to meet you and most people don't know the names of the buildings. Several people mentioned noteworthy public art as a potential to address the lack of landmarks in such a large space. Words generated in this discussion include buildings, hills, big trees, public art, open fields, bathrooms, signs.

- A visitor's center (future)
- The Big Ginkgo
- The Sledding Hill
- Soccer Fields
- Harvey Hill
- Corner of the Meadow (at Blair Drive)
- By the bathrooms, wherever they are!
- By the Bus Stop near the Healing Place
- Dix Hospital marker
- Cemetery
- Plantation House (on Spring Hill tract)
- 3 Stone Houses (near Boylan Ave.)
- Railroad Crossing (local residents walk down the tracks from Lake Wheeler to get into the park)
- Gazebo
- Softball field (near Lake Wheeler Road)

What events can only happen in Raleigh?

This discussion talked about events that do happen here, as well as ideas about what might happen here that will be Raleigh-specific or NC-specific. Words that swirled around this conversation included college sports, farm-to-table, foodies, music (traditional and indie), trees, history.

- Acorn Drop
- Kirby Derby
- SparkCon
- Hopscotch
- IBMA
- Bike Fest
- African American Cultural Festival

- Great Raleigh Road Race
- Krispy Kreme Challenge
- Turkey Shoot – NC State Fair
- Experience Two Historic Carousels
- Oaks – festival of trees
- Farming, Food and Technology come together here
- Celebration of Greenways – 110 miles
- The Five Squares – legacy of a planned city
- Living History – the story of this place
- College athletics – celebrate
- Fireworks over the skyline
- Satellite exhibits from all the museums

What is the role of a building within a park?

This was a most provocative discussion that generated ideas for a wide variety of uses for buildings. Most everyone felt the buildings on the campus now created a unique environment and many should stay, but people also realized the challenge of renovating and maintaining a large inventory of buildings. Important words generated by this discussion include landmark, mixed-uses, food and beverage, museum/history, gathering space, shelter.

- Cultural anchor
- Restrooms!
- House activities that are enhanced by being in a park
- NOT a traffic magnet
- Market
- Artspace – artists studio
- History - a reminder
- Place for community groups to gather
- Concessions
- Zoo – animals - barn
- Protection from the weather – extend activities to all seasons
- Aesthetics – celebrate architecture
- Museum – house artifacts, create a story
- Maintenance
- Socializing – a recreation center
- Food
- Welcome center
- Wayfinding – landmark
- Theatre, arts, performance
- Not-for-profit offices
- Places to live
- City Museum
- Think of it as the Olympic Park – a lot of varied uses
- Generate income to support the park

- Beer Garden!
- Crossroads of Art/Technology/Agriculture – very NC things

What's next??

EVENTS: You can volunteer to help at Dix Park events. See the Calendar of Events. If you wish to volunteer contact Caroline Lindquist, Dix Park Planner, Caroline.Lindquist@raleighnc.gov. Please encourage your friends and acquaintances to attend.

TALK TO YOUR CONTACTS: One of your jobs as Workgroup members is to expand the conversation – talk to your friends, your family and your workmates about Dix Park and the Master Plan process. Ask them what they think. Collect their ideas and send them back to us. Ask us questions or send comments you thought about later – contact Dan Howe, dan@pstreetstudio.com, with any questions or ideas or comments!

LECTURES: Another one of your jobs as Workgroup members is to educate yourself on the challenges and opportunities of the park. A great way to do that is to attend educational lectures. See those opportunities on the Calendar of Events.

PLAN TO ATTEND THE BIG NOVEMBER PUBLIC MEETING: Put it on your calendar – November 16 at 6 pm. This will be the first of 5 big public meetings during the Master Plan process. The location is still being finalized. You will want to be at this one; please help us spread the word!

EXPLORE THE WEB SITE: Get on www.dixpark.org and explore.

NEXT MEETING: The next Workgroup meeting will be in the afternoon of November 5th. More details are coming soon; we'll be in touch.