

Dorothea Dix Park

Master Plan Workgroup: The Park and The Site + The Park and Its Partners

Date: Thursday, September 14, 2017
Time: 6:00pm – 8:00pm
Location: Walnut Creek Wetland Center

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 rejuvenation, separation from stress, nature, vista, healing, reprieve. Some examples of sanctuary spaces are mountain streams, churches, anyplace where there’s water. Paths are often transformative – like labyrinths. This is a place you should come out of and be “better” when you leave. Long views put things in perspective. In the same way enclosed spaces like the Ramble at Central Park can be sanctuaries.

- Privacy
- The legacy of Dorothea Dix herself
- A sense of permanence, solidity
- Regionally-beneficial
- Decompression
- Well-being
- Nature and the out of doors is key to sanctuary
- A reprieve from ailments – physical and psychological

- Both require a community
- Both require continual investment
- Both can evolve
- Meditation – peace
- There is a spirit to the place
- Cemetery – a resting place
- Vistas are important
- Chance to reconnect with each other
- Get away – separate from stressful lives
- No wifi
- Explore – discover – be open to new experience
- Healing – come out better than when you went in
- Therapeutic
- Rejuvenation
- Trees - how trees communicate (“The Hidden Life of Trees”)
- Be in the city without knowing you’re in a city

Where would you meet someone at Dix Park?

There is a clear need in the park now for some wayfinding – leading you to places. Most landmarks are probably buildings, but right now we do not have access to them so they are not places where you’d tell someone to meet you, and most people don’t know the names of the buildings anyway. Several people mentioned noteworthy public art, public gardens or water as real needs to address the lack of landmarks in such a large space. Words generated in this discussion include meadow, grove, garden wayfinding.

- The grove – Boylan Heights side
- Cemetery
- Farmer’s market
- Harvey Hill
- Greenway
- Concert stage
- Hospital – but you have to pick a specific place / side – there is no main entrance
- Pink flags – Matt Tomasulo’s idea – create pathways
- Big meadow
- Rocky Branch Trail
- A water feature! (wish list)
- Public art! (wish list)
- Public garden (wish list)
- Community garden
- Topiary
- The “hover field”
- Allee walk
- There is no meeting spot that stands out now
- Parking lot near greenway (on Rocky Branch)

- In front of chapel
- Frisbee - Soccer field
- NC State student parking lot
- Trash mountain

What events can only happen in Raleigh?

This discussion revolved 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.

- Farmer's Market
- Governor's inauguration
- The State Fair
- Hopscotch
- Civil War stories about Dix Park
- Mountains to Sea Trail
- African American Cultural Festival
- City of Oaks Marathon Road Race
- Events with NCSU / classes
- Something funny - to make you laugh
- Cultural events - African- American Cultural Festival - Fiesta del Pueblo, something for hunters, Bike Fest
- Health care, creativity, education, technology gatherings
- Family events - this is a very family-oriented culture
- History - Fall Line city at the cusp of Piedmont and Coastal Plain - Joel Lane
- Craft festival
- Urban Agriculture
- Giant pumpkin patch
- Foodie stuff - restaurant fest
- Blackberry Festival - Engage with Agriculture Department
- Tug of war tournament for local colleges
- Movies
- Techie gathering
- High-Tech public art installations
- Craft Beer festivals
- Local Music
- Barbeque and basketball - ACC Tournament event
- Environment - Green movement

What is the role of a building within a park?

This was a 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, living/working space.

- Bathrooms
- Food
- Music
- Tourist destination
- Shelter from elements
- Rental space – groups
- Museums / education
- Cultural Center – bring people together
- Live/Work/Play spaces – whole life support
- Ruins – as art or history
- Revenue generation
- Showers / changing station
- Landmarks
- Community center
- Housing
- Artist studios
- Innovation centers
- Creative space
- Emotions get trapped in buildings
- Concessions
- Meetings
- Schools
- Conservatory
- Gazebo
- Retreat center
- Asylum – for refugee families

Some summary ideas

Now and again we got off-topic, but many of these ideas need to be captured. There was a universal feeling that Dix Park is disorienting – no landmarks, no wayfinding. Big ideas floated around – like a train that connected the carousels at Chavis Park and Pullen Park and went through Dix Park on the way. Also maybe we can offer the opportunity to wander the steam tunnels – an adventure. Perhaps workforce housing on a temporary basis should be offered – a place to start in the community. We need water in this park – a landmark, a place to gather. It will also be important to bring children into the park in a big way, but we don't want to compete with the successful things at other parks like Pullen and Chavis Parks but to serve as a compliment.

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.