

Dorothea Dix Park

Master Plan Workgroup: The Park and the Region + The Park and Transportation

Date: Tuesday, September 19, 2017
Time: 6:00pm – 8:00pm
Location: Raleigh Municipal Building, Room 303

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 around words like peace, escape from stress, nature, wildlife, healing. Some examples of sanctuary spaces are mountain streams, churches, anyplace where there’s water. Paths are often transformative – especially when there are places to sit. Sometimes movement and sitting – together – is an important process to feel transformed. Long views put things in perspective. In the same way enclosed spaces like the Ramble at Central Park can be sanctuaries.

- Legacy is important, not lost
- Quiet, refuge from the activity of the city
- Parks and green spaces are therapeutic
- Health, wellness
- Return as much to green space as possible
- Old trees have history and meaning
- It may be a sanctuary but it’s also a dump – we threw things away there
- Place to set things aside

- Get away
- Uses need to be flexible – sanctuary means different things to different people
- Peaceful
- Beautiful
- Preservation of history
- Transport you to a different place
- Other sanctuaries – places in your house, Umstead, walking-sitting, places with water, immersion in nature
- Birds and wildlife
- The concept of hospital implies sanctuary, healing
- Place to recover
- Being outside is in itself healing
- Physical activity is calming
- Animal sanctuary, too

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. Right now the campus is not good for this – the roads are confusing. 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. The multiple entrances to the site without any hierarchy are disorienting. 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 movement, greenway, wayfinding disorientation.

- Stone entrance at Western Boulevard (Boylan Ave)
- Soccer fields
- Big field / meadow
- The gym
- Rocky Branch trail
- Big Hill (sledding hill)
- Cemetery
- Gazebo down near the greenway
- Softball field
- Greenway parking lot near Western Ave.
- Parking lot at the hospital
- Farmer's Market – a connection is needed
- Need a way to traverse the site – maybe personal automated vehicles

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 sports, farm-to-table, kids, music (traditional and indie), trees, fun.

- Celebration of the Oaks

- Highest point in the capital city
- Regional connection – along I-40
- Connected greenways – celebrate
- Things that make Dix Park unique: Big field, greenway connections
- The Arts
- City of Oaks
- Civil War History
- Krispy Kreme Challenge
- Acorn Drop
- IBMA
- Hopscotch
- State Fair
- Farmer’s Market
- Local Food / restaurants / farm to table
- NC State / Colleges / competitive
- Hurricanes (hockey)
- Kirby Derby
- SparkCon
- Maker-spaces
- Net zero energy facility
- Model Aircraft events
- Kid opportunities – connect to Chavis and Pullen and downtown (Marbles)
- Food truck rodeo
- Oktoberfest – Craft beer

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, housing / accommodation, food and beverage, museum/history, gathering space, shelter.

- Bathrooms
- Coffee shop
- Picnic area
- Brewery
- History / museum
- Meeting rooms
- Offices – non-profits
- Wedding venues
- Maker spaces
- Accommodation / hostel
- Library
- Restaurant

- Incubator – start-ups
- Meet-up space
- Community groups
- Bike Fest
- Basketball – sheltered
- Shelter from the elements
- Administration – visitor center
- Offices of tech companies
- Culinary school
- Event space
- Fellowship residences
- Artists community
- Too much: Big retail, permanent residences, traditional school
- Maintenance – clean and safe
- Historic buildings like Balboa Park
- Dance Hall
- Historic preservation – honor the legacy

Some summary ideas

There was a universal feeling that Dix Park is disorienting – no landmarks, no wayfinding, entrances are confusing and have no hierarchy – nobody knows where the “main entrance” is. As you might imagine this group centered on transportation – several ideas about people-movers, personal autonomous trams, bridging over Western and Centennial Boulevards to reconnect, emerged in the discussion. Interesting ideas about buildings circulated, including hostel accommodations and rental housing, as well as maker spaces / incubators and indoor recreation. 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 cannibalize the good things we’ve done at other parks like Pullen and Chavis Parks.

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.