

Dorothea Dix Park

Master Plan Workgroup: The Park and Its Buildings

Date: Thursday, September 21, 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 on words like mind-body, escape from stress, serenity, contemplative, healing. Some examples of sanctuary spaces are beaches, mountains, churches, forests, anyplace there is 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.

- Parks are elements of the mental health system
- Escape from urban life
- Ease and peacefulness
- Contemplative
- Nurtured by the environment
- Safe, both emotionally, physically and mentally
- Both spatial, but in different ways
- Seeking sanctuary – removal from something
- Refuge
- Relaxation

- Happy place – healing
- Clearing out the mud
- Fresh air
- Exercise
- A park “cradles” you
- Different from everyday life
- Graveyard is a refuge – changes your thinking
- Architectural ruins – transport you to another time
- Destinations to recover
- Serenity, quiet
- Bring friends and families together
- Holistic – mind and body healing at the same time

Where would you meet someone at Dix Park?

This was a difficult assignment because there are not many landmarks of significance on the campus. 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. The buildings are anonymous. The hospital has been ruined because it’s main entrance is gone. The multiple entrances to the site without any hierarchy are disorienting. Words generated in this discussion include Harvey Hill, high point, fields, entrances.

- Drone field
- Gazebo near the greenway
- Farmers Market
- Underneath the trees
- Steam house
- House of Many Porches
- Sledding hill (Harvey Hill)
- Softball field
- Soccer fields
- In front of the hospital where you can see downtown
- Spring Hill plantation house (Japan Center)
- Field by the cemetery
- Bridge over the railroad tracks
- Chapel
- Greenway
- Civil war carvings on rocks near Hunt Dr.
- An entrance
- The Big Ginkgo
- The carpentry shop
- Flowers field

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, and often simply about what was uniquely “Raleigh”. Words that swirled around this conversation included sports, agriculture, human culture, music (traditional and indie), families.

- SparkCon
- Hopscotch
- First Friday
- IBMA
- Acorn Drop
- Marathons
- Universities – academics and sports
- Kirby Derby
- Krispy Kreme Challenge
- Strong and fair government
- Oaks
- International culture
- Greenway system
- Food
- Entrepreneurs
- Breweries
- Startup culture
- The weather here – good and bad
- Two Carousels
- Centennial campus
- Circuses
- Theatre
- State Fair – Farmers Market
- Urban agriculture
- Bicycle races
- Orienteering
- Kid-friendly stuff – families

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 gathering, views, gathering space, history, shelter.

- Food
- Bathrooms
- Receptions – events
- Non-profit space
- Weddings

- No living in the park!
- Open office used by many groups
- Gathering place
- Picnic spots – shelter from the weather
- Interactive structures – you can move things
- Structures as art – Millennium Park
- Views – focus attention
- Buildings can tell history
- Revenue source
- Backdrop for activities
- Maintenance – storage
- Aesthetics – architectural interest
- Reflection of the story of the place
- Education

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. Interesting ideas about buildings circulated, including maker spaces / incubators and “interactive” building space. We need a place to gather in this park, and the buildings need to reinforce that. The important things about Raleigh seem to swirl around food / urban agriculture, colleges and the intellectual and sporting culture that accompanies them, and the rich pastiche of cultures that are being drawn to the area.

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.