

Dorothea Dix Park

The Park and Its Buildings Workgroup

Date: Tuesday, July 31, 2018
Time: 6:00pm – 8:00pm
Location: Walnut Creek Wetland Center

Meeting Summary

The meeting began with a presentation on the buildings for the master plan. Following the presentation, the Master Plan Workgroup was broken into groups to discuss the principles document for buildings at Dix Park provided by MVVA. The notes below list the building principal followed by the group comments on the degree to which they agreed (strongly agreed, agreed, disagree).

Building Principles

1. Honor A.J. Davis' positioning of hospital at the top of Dix Hill and its orientation to downtown Raleigh.
 - Agree, hospital bldg. can serve as a symbol of openness, restoration of portico is key to this,
 - Strongly agree, visible all over the city and from the heart of the City of Raleigh.
 - Strongly agree, symbolic columns might need more to really be seen from downtown. They should be a beacon to the park. How do you allow people in the space to see the views seen in that space originally?
 - Strongly agree, this is the backbone of the park. All parks need an iconic feature. This is an opportunity.
2. Understand that rehabilitation is the most appropriate treatment of these historic resources.
Note: This means rehabilitation of the building for a new use (i.e. factory→Videri Chocolate building) as opposed to restoring the building to it's original state (i.e. The Mordecai House)
 - Strongly agree, rehab and renovation aren't the same.
 - Agree, balance the character of the place.
 - Do not implement a universal application across all buildings. Tailor the building use to what the building space can provide.
 - Agree, only rehabilitate if the building has historic value. It is okay with less buildings if it serves the master plan of the park for aesthetics and purpose.

- Strongly agree, Opportunities should provide cultural recreational components. This can help create a unique workforce for the city.
 - What's the definition of historical significance?
3. Advocate for buildings and building uses in the park that contribute positively to the life of the park
- Strongly agree with emphasis on contributing, define what positive means.
 - Strongly agree, integrate experiences and show historic relevance where possible.
 - Does "positive" reference the revenue generation?
 - Strongly agree, if a building has no value, remove it. If it is useful, keep it.
 - Agree, advocate that the buildings should be considered for equitable access and they belong to the citizens of Raleigh so should be available to all.
 - Perhaps change it to "Advocate for buildings, building use, and removal..."
4. Pursue a strategy for buildings that provides revenue for the park
- Agree with some caution, green space needs to be balanced.
 - Strongly agree, balance with other parts of the park, make the buildings as public as possible for as long as possible
 - Agree, it's a good thing if it contributes to the park.
 - Neutral, be careful, we don't want it to become a theme park to create financial benefits. It should not have to compete with funds for other parts of the city.
 - Strongly agree, number 1 priority, what happens if there's a change in City Council attitude? The type of income is important. It needs to fit the park.
 - Neutral, we don't want to take funding from other parts of the city

General Comments:

- Strongly disagree that there should be focus on revenue generation because it could change the experience of the park if we are too focused on revenue.
- We are in danger of pursuing a huge rehabilitation project and calling it a park.
- Looking at the latest plan, there is concern about potential development along Lake Wheeler. It could become a very urban experience that could be catered toward the rich if it's not done well. It's a balance.
- If we have ground leases, what is the minimum length that we must make available and how much control does the public have?
- We have other parks, this is unique.
- What does the City of Raleigh need? How does it contribute to environmental stewardship? Civility? How can the buildings contribute to those values of what we want Raleigh to be? Once you take the buildings down, they're down. There may be uses for those things in the future.
- Subsequent decisions will be made on each of the buildings after this masterplan. We're establishing the criteria to guide future decisions.

- Do not think of this just as a park, but as a civic gathering space— that gives it more potential to respond to the democratic needs of the community.
- Negative uses of the buildings would be market rate housing or buildings that are not accessible across classes.

The group then discussed ideas for building use at the park. Ideas are listed below.

- Educational space
 - kitchen for cooking classes, culinary institute
 - collaborate with local schools to use facilities for fairs
- Office space is not a good idea for in the park
- No long-term residency
- Add “Is the building use a good fit for the City” to the buildings criteria?
- McBryde building ideas
 - Iconic hotel. Raleigh doesn’t have one.
 - If office, may it local, startups, not corporate to foster creativity and innovation.
 - Athletic facility – move basketball courts closer to Haywood
- Keep Haywood a gym
- The Power plant could be a good concession area or brewery to serve the amphitheater. It would be revenue generating and gathering space.
- Keep Spruill as hostel style rooms.
- Co-op spaces or flex spaces, perhaps as parts of mixed use building
- The Lineberger building could be an African American and mental health museum
- Power plant/wood storage as performance venue. The trestle could have drop down screen.

The group then answered, “To what extent is it important to bring people from outside Raleigh? Why don’t we just focus on Raleigh?”

- “When visiting a city, what is the iconic place? Usually where you see the people of the city hanging out, get the vibe of what that city is about. If somebody comes to Raleigh, I would want people to say, ‘We have to go to Dix Park to see what Raleigh is about.’”
- “We need to think about how Raleigh will be in the future not about how Raleigh is now. Dix Park needs to be a dominant and iconic park like other older cities.”
- The park planning should pay attention to attracting both locals and tourists. Tourism to the park can help with the economic vitality of the city. For example, Seattle center has the mix of locals and tourists. It caters to both.
- The Park originally was a state hospital so served the state and not just the city. The park can build off that history and serve state-wide.
- “It warms my heart to see the culture of people at Dix Park seeing all the people that live around you watching a movie with the skyline of Raleigh as the backdrop.”

Discussion ended here and the meeting was adjourned.