

Dorothea Dix Park

The Park and The Site Workgroup

Date: Tuesday, July 24, 2018
Time: 6:00pm – 8:00pm
Location: Walnut Creek Wetland Center

Meeting Summary

Grayson Maughan began the meeting with updates on the sunflowers and upcoming events. The Dorothea Dix Park Facebook page has now received 3million impressions as a result of SunFest and the Sunflower Photo Contest. The park will host a movie night and a sky watching night in August.

Dan Howe presented on where the project is in the overall master plan schedule. We are currently between community meetings three and four. At this point, all of the workgroups are meeting as a part of the iterative design process to review the initial drafts of the master plan.

The group broke into a 15-minute table discussion about their highest priorities for the master plan and if priorities have changed or evolved through the process. The groups agreed on the following priorities:

1. Preserve the big field open space
2. Restore Rocky Branch Creek and create spaces to interact with water
3. Connect the edges of the park to create intuitive entrances and flow throughout the park
4. Highlight the beautiful varying topography of the site
5. Emphasize and maintain the views along the ridgeline of the park

Grayson then presented an overview of the most recent draft master plan. This includes the park being broken up into six different landscapes: The Grove, The Stream, The Meadow, The Ridge, The Valley, and The Downtown Gateway.

Each table was handed a large print out of the draft master plan (dated July 17, 2018) to discuss, question, and provide thoughts. The feedback is listed below broken down by the area of the site plan.

Circle Event Area. (Note: This is a circular event area with spoke-like vegetated parking strips.) People questioned the thought behind the event space. They did not think that an area with such a good view of downtown should be dedicated to so much parking. The high-value view areas should be preserved-

not reserved for parking. Many also expressed concern about the parking being within this pedestrian / bike loop.

View opportunities. There was a strong interest in enhancing view opportunities towards downtown. Ideas proposed included a public viewing garden on the roof of the hospital, a viewing tower, and a removal of the power lines along Lake Wheeler Road to enhance the downtown views from that entry to the park.

Meadow landscape. (Note: This area is primarily on the western side of the park and also known as The Big Field.) There was mainly strong support of the meadow. One group noted that the meadow is nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, so does there need to be something in the middle to break it up a bit? Should there be an iconic tower in the middle or at least crisscrossing paths through it?

Water. Water was repeatedly mentioned with strong support expressed for the redesigned Rocky Branch floodplain area. Many people also said they would like to have a place they can get their feet wet—In a splash pad, pond, etc. One member noted that it is almost taunting to have water places like Pullen where you can see the water but aren't allowed to get in it. Perhaps something like Falls Park on the Reedy in downtown Greenville, South Carolina. A group also asked if there be some floating gardens in the pond area.

Edges. Several people mentioned that the edge along the Big Field by Spring Hill needs to be more defined. There needs to be a more defined entrance to the park on that side. Along Lake Wheeler Road, there are powerlines. People asked if those powerlines can be buried because they obstruct the view, do not create a welcoming entrance to downtown, and they also could make it hard to soften that edge because the powerlines could prevent tree planting. If stoplights are going to be added on Lake Wheeler, there needs to be a serious discussion with the Fuller Heights neighborhood. Since Lake Wheeler is such a busy road, widen it so that you can have pedestrian islands with trees that will slow cars down. The connection to downtown for pedestrians and cyclists also needs to be more safe/welcoming/defined. Lastly, many workgroup members noted that the entrances need to each have a unique identity to help make the site more navigable—suggestions for this included different plantings at each entrance or a specific color for each park entrance way.

Internal pathway transitions. Another desire expressed was to make sure to carefully design transitions between landscape archetypes in the park - from contemplative spaces to open ones, from open to enclosed, from active to passive. People wanted to make sure this was consciously designed into the pathway system. Separate pedestrian paths and car roads where possible. People asked, how do you get from one side of the park to the other without walking?

Ped-Bike Loop. Some concern was expressed about the pedestrian-bike loop conflicting with the access road to the "hotel". The pedestrian and bike loop should be wide enough for running races and biking races as well as everyday bike and pedestrian use. There should be a clear separation between areas for cars and people to protect the pedestrian.

The Grove. There was desire for the area where the cottages are proposed to be removed to become an artist garden/community garden area. There was a question around sledding. Will the pond still allow kids to sled down those great hills? Will there be another spot they can sled if not there?

Buildings/Residences. Many groups strongly pushed back against the idea of long-term housing at the park. Many said it will create more inequality. Especially with Fuller Heights being a lower income neighborhood with many rental homes.

If a hotel is built, it should have a big front porch with rocking chairs that anyone can use, not just people who stay in the hotel. There should also be a green roof on top that all can access to have expansive views of the city.

Groups stated that the portico should be the defining feature of the park. The portico arches could be the logo for the park.

Many workgroup members said that the chapel should become a wedding venue.

Connections/Transit: Many people suggested that parking should be minimal in the park and shuttles should take people to the park. The importance of the connection of the park to I-40 and to downtown was also emphasized since that is the gateway to downtown. Additionally, there needs to be a connection to downtown that integrates with Union Station. Chavis needs the same access to Dix Park as Pullen Park has.

Performance Area- If you are in the audience looking at the performance center what is your view? Is it good? Could it be better? What are the views of the stage from the central loop? One group stated a preference for no permanent performance venues in the park—only temporary venues OR allow the permanent venues to also be used by local community groups in between big events.

Additional comments on the site map analysis:

- Connect Kirby-Bilyeu Neighborhood to the cemetery area.
- The portico would be a great early renovation to excite people. *(Staff Note: That building is under lease back to DHHS until 2025.)
- Add pavilions along Lake Wheeler Road to soften the edges of that side.
- Better connection to Lake Raleigh should be a high priority.
- There should be stronger connections to Hunt Library so that the public can benefit from that resource.
- There should not be so many paths through the grove area if we are trying to maintain it.
- Family cookout areas are needed.
- Ceremonial space (i.e. weddings and events) is needed.
- Farmer's Market plan should make the Farmer's Market the gateway to the park.
- Recover the land on Spring Hill and Kendal Circle to make it part of the park.