

Dorothea Dix Park

Master Plan Advisory Committee Meeting

Date: Wednesday, September 25, 2018
Time: 6:00pm – 8:00pm
Location: Walnut Creek Wetland Center

Meeting Agenda

6:00pm	Welcome + Project Updates
6:15pm	Program Discussion led by MVVA
7:15pm	Park Framework Discussion led by MVVA
7:30pm	Introduction to Park Phasing led by MVVA
7:45pm	Preparation for Community Meeting 4
8:00pm	Meeting Close

The Dorothea Dix Park design team, Michael Van Valkenburg and Associates led this meeting. Those in attendance from the design team were Matthew Urbanski and Carlin Tacey. The meeting focused on the six landscapes of the site and the programs that those landscapes support. Each landscape will be presented at the October 4th community meeting.

Urbanski began with the guiding principles for the site. He explained that the first principle “Open Up” implies that there must be a physical transformation of the park to break down the physical and perceived barriers of this place as a park. Second, we need to be resourceful by understanding the land, nurturing it, and highlighting its intrinsic features. Third, we need to celebrate contrasts from both a cultural and landscape perspective. Specifically, the park is a celebration of contrasts: natural vs. built, active vs. passive, a retreat and a destination.

The master plan book will be broken into four sections: The Land, the Framework, The Program, and Implementation. The Land section explains the six proposed landscapes. The Framework is all about how one moves to and through the site. It shows the circulation patterns within the park and how the park is connected into the larger framework of downtown and the region. The Program explains all the activities that one can do at the site. Lastly, Implementation shows the proposed phasing of the park design and provides the roadmap on how to accomplish the master plan.

MVVA walked through the six landscape boards in detail to explain the program of each space. Each program is called out in a bubble image on the boards.

The Creek Landscape is proposed to be a key element within the park. MVVA plans for it to become a breathtaking example of a riparian landscape. MVVA’s proposal pulls the creek back from Western Boulevard, creates a berm to protect the area from traffic noise, restores the creek bed, widens the floodplain, and creates better access to the creek via walking paths. MVVA worked with their subconsultant hydrologists, LimnoTech, to scientifically determine a new meandering creek geometry

based on flow patterns of the creek. Urbanski explained this landscape will create a feeling of interiority and retreat.

The Grove Landscape is intended to be a very vegetated area of the park. MVVA proposes a small natural amphitheater area just down the hill from the chapel and a botanic garden to increase horticultural variety. A constructed steep will capture storm water runoff from the top of the hill and create moisture in the landscape that will help diversify the ecology.

The Meadow Landscape includes The Big Field and edges that touch the State Farmer's Market, Department of Agriculture property, and NC State's Spring Hill Property. The panhandle-shaped Department of Agriculture property creates a natural valley that would support a tiered pond system for filtering water leading into Walnut Creek. The big open meadow would stretch from the Farmer's Market edge northward towards Pullen Park, like the sweeping lawn of Olmstead's famous Prospect Park. Mown grass would transition to a prairie of native piedmont plants then to woodland along the edges. The south edge of the big field has a proposed grotto/low lying waterbody. This element would add a dramatic element to the landscape.

The Downtown Gateway is the section of the park along Lake Wheeler Road. MVVA stated that the neighborhood scale connection needs to be stronger along Lake Wheeler Road. Shuttle and bus stops as well as widening the right of way between Grisom Street and Fuller Street is proposed. The design proposes that the athletic field along Lake Wheeler Road become a playground. The Buffalo and Brenner houses would be repurposed to support the playground uses (i.e. concessions, bathrooms, etc.) It was proposed that there could be residential buildings along the lake wheeler edge to help generate revenue and keep 24-7 eyes on the park. It is not determined if this proposal will stay.

The Ridge Landscape simplifies the current maze of buildings into a strong framework for the civic side of the park. The goal is to make a very activated, lively space on this side of the park. MVVA explained proposed uses for the buildings including a rooftop garden on the original AJ Davis Hospital Building that would overlook downtown and the park. All programmatic proposals for the building can be seen in on the presentation boards.

The proposed loop that unites The Ridge is over 40 feet wide at some points to feel like a large front porch like area that can double as temporary roadway/drop of point for large events at the park. The loop connects into an Event Hub on the far west side. The garden-like parking spoke areas of the Event Hub could be spaces for tents during festivals or parking spaces on a normal day. This space could replace the role Fayetteville Street plays during festival season. The spokes also point outward allowing one to access all areas on the western side of the park. Between the spokes are long-leaf pine groves as well as some sports courts.

MPAC members further questioned the thought behind the event hub. Ubranski explained that every great park needs to have hard paved event surfaces for festival food trucks and tents. If grass fields were the only event spaces, the impact from droves of people and from event infrastructure would wear down the fields.

The Valley Landscape has a new proposed trestle that bridges the urban and the natural environments in the park. The 16-foot elevated trestle would go over the proposed amphitheater and connect to the grotto area at the bottom of the meadow. It would allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross over it and

look down to the amphitheater below. The boiler plant is proposed to be converted into a concessions area that would support the amphitheater and make that area less of a dead space between concerts.

MPAC members asked questions such as how big the event hub will be, how big the pond will be, and how wide the meadow will be. MVVA responded by saying they will provide a data sheet that distills all the information. These sheets will be at the community meeting on October 4th. MPAC also asked for more clear delineation of where the current vs. proposed roads are. MVVA responded by saying that they will make current conditions posters for each of the 6 landscapes to help with orientation.

Urbanski touched on the plans for phasing. He briefly explained the phasing boards, noting that many of the phasing decisions are based on current needs and limitations. Needs include public utilities need to place a new pipe in along the creek area. Limitations includes the lease back areas that the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) still has control over. The overall strategy for phasing is to work from the exterior to the interior of the park. This will help activate the edges while DHHS still is occupying the property. The first phase includes making a destination playground along the Lake Wheeler edge. Temporary parking spaces for the playground would be added along unused existing park greenspace so that DHHS would not lose any parking spaces. MPAC members questioned if this playground would be like Sassafras playground at Laurel Hills. Urbanski encouraged MPAC members to look at images of Maggie Daley Park in Chicago to get a sense of the quality of playground he means.

Kate Pearce briefly discussed roles for MPAC at the upcoming community meeting. Follow up for roles will be sent out via email.

Meeting close.