

Dorothea Dix Park

Master Plan Executive Committee

Date: Wednesday, October 17, 2018
Time: 8:30am-11:30am
Location: Flower Cottage at Dorothea Dix Park

Meeting Agenda

8:30am-8:45am: Breakfast
8:45am-9:00am: Welcome & Updates
9:00am-9:45am: Presentation & Discussion with City of Raleigh Budget Office
9:45am-10:00am: Review of Feedback from 10/4 Community Meeting
10:00am-11:00am: Draft Master Plan Review
11:00am-11:30am: Preparation for 10/29 Council Work Session

This Dix Park Master Plan Executive Committee (MPAC) meeting was led by Stephen Bentley, Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources. The meeting began with updates from Joseph Voska on the upcoming events: Fall Fest, Movie Night, Pop-Up Dog Park, and Star Gazing.

Following the welcome and updates, the City of Raleigh Budget Office employees Allison Bradsher and Mary Vigue presented on the city of Raleigh's traditional Operating Funding Sources and Capital Funding Sources. The city's CIP Budget addresses needs for five years and totals \$1.3B. The city's operating budget is \$971M. The operating program funding options include: Ground leases, user fees, rentals, and general fund. Details on each of these can be found in the presentation slides. Vigue explained municipal service districts (MSDs), also known as Business Improvement Districts, of which Raleigh has two. The first is downtown, covers 401 acres, has an assessed value of \$2.2B, and provides financing for downtown cleaning and parking ambassadors. The second is located along Hillsborough Street, covering 136 acres with an assessed value at \$356.7M. It provides financing for street/sidewalk cleaning. Vigue explained that currently, Dorothea Dix Park and surrounding properties do not seem like a viable option for an MSD, due to the current low assessed land value and number of tax exempt properties adjacent to the site. If future development were to occur, an MSD could become viable in the future.

Next, Bradsher explained options for borrowing money in North Carolina. Options include: General Obligation Bonds (GO Bonds), Revenue Bonds, Project Development Financing (TIFs), Installment Financing (LOBs) and Special Obligation Bonds. Bradsher noted that TIFs are not often used in NC and the city has also not used a synthetic TIF or Special Obligation Bond. Additionally, HR&A is working with the Dorothea Dix Park Planning Team to suggest tools for the 6 to 10-year range. New financing tools may open in the timeframe following that.

The MPEC next moved onto discussing each of the six landscapes in the master plan. Their key comments and questions are broken down by those six areas.

The Meadow

The following questions were asked about the Grotto area: Does the Grotto area block off connection to the Farmer's Market? What is the main value of the highly constructed Grotto? Where will all the water come from to fill the Grotto?

Members asked which trees that already exist at the park will stay. Will the allée of trees along the roads remain after the roads are moved? They requested to see maps of which trees will remain based on the current master plan. Dreamville was planned to happen during the master planning process to help inform the event lawn space and parking for large events. MPEC proposed that we still seek advice from large-scale event producers before the master plan is complete.

The Grove

Key questions were: How big is the Botanical Garden? Could the Lineberger courtyard support a greenhouse instead of a pool? Then students in a land stewardship residency program could stay in Lineberger and be close to the botanical garden. What is the potential relationship between the botanical garden and the Raulston Arboretum? Bentley replied to this explaining that we have had initial conversation with them about having potential propagation opportunity at the botanical garden.

Members also noted that there is no parking around the three stone houses, which are supposed to be used for programs. They asked if the constructed seep area is a drop off area.

The Valley

The Committee asked if 5,000 to 7,000 seats for the amphitheater is enough and where the line of "lawn seating" ends. A retractable roof over the stage and seating was proposed. A member asked if there is any way the location of the amphitheater could be changed so that there is a striking view of downtown.

Size and scale of the three dog parks was questioned. The proposed size does not seem large enough compared to our other city dog parks. Members suggested referencing the latest dog park study for guidance on scale and sizing.

The committee discussed the need to have less scattered sports courts. Scattered courts become too out of sight out of mind. Isolated courts also make it more challenging to have pick-up games and community events/tournaments. The committee also noted that parking lots need to be close to the courts to make them accessible for day-to-day use. Members noted that courts should also not be adjacent to the theater or culinary areas. Those spots should be reserved for outdoor arts and culinary classes. From a maintenance perspective, consolidated courts are also easier to maintain. This conversation occurred about courts in the ridge landscape as well.

The Ridge

Committee members asked if the road network supports room for service vehicles for the hotel and event spaces. Underground parking options or a parking deck may need to be considered at some location in the park. Members asked about potential views from the event hub. Will a surrounding pine forest block beautiful views? What is the topography in that area? They also asked if sports courts are well suited around the hub. The city would likely not allow vendors or food trucks to park on them during events, so perhaps picnic shelters or another gathering spaces would be more fitting. Members asked for a high-level test fit analysis of how many of the festivals that occur on Fayetteville Street would be able to happen in the Event Hub. Lastly, they asked how one would get a car over the promenade loop into the event hub and for section cut/ ground level renderings of the promenade loop.

The Downtown Gateway

MPEC members asked if we can put a parking deck in the area reserved for future buildings. That deck could help support the amphitheater. The committee discussed if a sports facility would help “keep heads in beds” at the hotel. Other members stated that teams coming for tournaments would likely not stay in a boutique hotel. Members asked what about the gym design makes it a unique space? Are there indoor and outdoor parts to it?

The main conversation around this landscape focused on what is the “gateway.” They noted that there does not seem to be a ceremonial entrance to the park. They asked if Lake Wheeler and South Saunders will come together to create a gateway entrance where the park comes to a point at downtown. Members stated that there needs to be a stronger connection to downtown

The Creek

MPEC members asked why we are making such a strong connection to Pullen Park but not to downtown. Members suggested building a simple interim bridge, like the one near NCMA, to make an early connection between the parks. This would only be done once there is a good destination for people to go to within Dix Park.

The committee asked if there really is enough water in the area to fill the creek and pond. They noted that Rocky Branch Creek is getting a lot of attention, but we will need to think about what happens downstream into SE Raleigh Walnut Creek area.

MPEC Members concluded by asking to see the master plan with a translucent overlay of existing conditions so that they can better understand what existing conditions (trees, fields, etc..) will remain the same.

October 29th, these plans will be taken to City Council for a work session.

Meeting close.