

Dorothea Dix Park

Master Plan Executive Committee Meeting

Date: Wednesday, November 14, 2018
Time: 8:30am-11:00am
Location: Flower Cottage at Dorothea Dix Park

Meeting Agenda

8:30am-8:45am: Breakfast
8:45am-9:00am: Welcome & Updates
9:00am-10:15am: Draft Master Plan Review
10:15am-10:30am: Preparation for 11/26 Council Work Session
10:30am-11:00am: Upcoming Meeting Schedule & Next Steps
11:00am: Meeting Close

The Meeting began with an update on upcoming events. The Dix Park University Remix event on Friday will bring together college students from across Raleigh together to give their ideas and feedback on the park. Saturday, the team will do outreach at the Pop Warner Football Super bowl event at Shaw University. In the afternoon, there will be a pop-up dog park and sky watching with the Morehead Planetarium for the Leonids Meteor Shower.

Kate Pearce gave an update on a meeting that she and Stephen Bentley had with DOA and DHHS on the timeline for DHHS finding a new headquarters. The meeting was a commitment to transparency on both sides. DHHS stated that it is unreasonable for them to have moved off the property by 2021. The City stated that they will continue forward with the Dix Park project, even while DHHS is on the property. The City noted that park phasing was planned with the DHHS lease in mind to respect their space. MPEC members asked about future releases of buildings.

Kate Pearce next asked the committee members what issues with Dix Park are keeping them up at night. She explained that her biggest concerns are the downtown gateway landscape, equity, and affordability. Pearce highlighted the importance of looking into opportunities for community benefit agreements, workforce training opportunities, and more. The committee spoke about a community economic impact document produced in 2006 that projected potential economic benefits from the park that would bring more capital to the city. Committee members noted that additional capital would allow for more funds for other city projects including affordable housing. Members asked about early equity-building projects, such as getting GoTriangle to add a bus route that would connect areas in need of public transit to the park. Pearce responded by noting that the parks staff is holding a meeting this week about early wins/changes that can be made in the interim park period. MPEC members also noted that the city can address many large projects at once, such as building more affordable housing, improving transit and creating Dix Park. Perhaps press about Dix Park is overshadowing the work the city is doing on other important initiatives. Communications may need to improve on this front to educate the public. A member referenced an early quote by Van Valkenburg that creating a large city park is inherently egalitarian because the wealthy can escape to their mountain or beach homes to find respite, but for

many Dix Park can be that escape within the city that people need. While this is true, members also noted that we need a serious plan for delivering a serious number of affordable housing units in proximity to the park.

Other concerns from MPEC members included building long-term political support, funding, infrastructure limitations in the interim, entrances, transportation, partnerships, and phasing. In addition, discussion focused on the need to ensure funding for the entire park system, including Dix Park. It was also noted that for some months now, the MPEC has requested clarity on the transportation network. Pearce responded that this work has been ongoing and will request in-progress materials from MVVA. For infrastructure, concerns arose around what power, water, sewer, etc. the city will have control of in the beginning phases of the master plan. A master plan of infrastructure is a needed follow up study. For phasing, the concern is that phases are too geographically-based. The Creek landscape creation in phase one will cause a lot of disruption, so can some positives be added in other sections of the park during that time to make the overall park still appealing in the interim? For transportation, how will the six landscapes connect from a road network standpoint? Is it too broken up? Will there be an inter-park transit system? For entrances, are they too understated? MPEC wants grand gateways into the park. Pearce suggested that public art can play a role in creating that experience. Lastly, for budget, what is the overall cost of the project? How will that influence other parks in our system? How much revenue will the park generate?

Pearce walked MPEC through new changes to the site plan from MVVA and answers MVVA provided to MPEC's questions.

The Grotto- The landscape is not trying to block the connection to the Farmer's Market, but it is recognizing that the wholesale section of the Farmer's Market will likely stay, even with the new master plan. HH Architecture, the firm creating the master plan for the Farmer's Market, has met with MVVA and both understand the want for a strong connection between both entities. HH Architecture has finished their discovery phase of the master plan and is moving into the concept phase. Since the wholesale section is likely to remain, plans may work towards wrapping the retail section around towards the park. The other question MPEC had about the Grotto was if there will be enough water to create the landscape. MVVA is working with Limnotech to determine the best water sources. It is thought that the water table may be high enough to use some ground water as well as potential water from a reuse line put in by Public Utilities.

The Event Hub- Pearce noted that the sports courts by the event hub have been replaced with picnic and event areas. She walked them through MVVA's latest diagram on the hub. Members asked if all events that currently fit on Fayetteville Street will be able to fit in the Event Hub. Pearce explained that for very large events, the promenade loop and the Ridge can be incorporated into the festival grounds. Not all events will need to move from Fayetteville Street. MPEC members asked if they can still sit down with event producers like the Dreamville Staff to hear their thoughts on the plan. A member noted that the success of Fayetteville Street is in the middle of downtown, so it concentrates activity. The Event Hub is not the central point of the park, that is more the Ridge. The benefit to the Hub is that it could host events that feel too small for Fayetteville street and still make those feel cozy or packed. If the Hub is going to be the active section to the more landscape heavy side of the park, it should offer services such as bathrooms and concessions. Those would service visitors to the meadow and prevent them from needing to go all the way to the Ridge for food. Members noted that the area may need to be renamed to just "The Hub" because events can take place at many areas in the park.

Entrances- Pearce explained that there are two key entrances on the eastern side of the park, the playground area of the Downtown Gateway Landscape and the S. Saunders entrance by the creek. Members discussed a need to improve the S. Saunders entrance. A typical T-intersection with Lake Wheeler may not be the best answer. A roundabout may help make a better entry point there. The upcoming neighboring development along Lake Wheeler and South Saunders will also influence that entrance. Along Western Boulevard, the Pullen Road Extension will be more of a back of house road, so the Hunt Drive and Boylan entrances will be the key connectors.

Sports Courts-The updated plan has some consolidation of sports courts as well as proposed linear parking along the railroad near where Hunt Drive currently is. Sports courts have also been moved from the event hub and consolidated some near the Ridge Landscape.

Overlays-Pearce presented the overlay maps provided by MVVA that show the existing conditions and the proposed conditions. This allows one to see which trees remain in the current site plan. MPEC requested to see the tree inventory data on tree location, age, and health. Pearce noted that MVVA is also doing a viewshed study of views from the park looking out and from the city/surrounding areas looking in.

Performance Venue- Pearce explained that 5,000-7,000 seat amphitheatres are the sweet spot for park theaters. MPEC previously questioned the location of the theater because it does not capitalize on the great views of downtown from the park. MVVA explained that the location is intentional because since it is in a valley, it causes the least sound disturbance to neighbors to the park. MPEC noted that part of the reason Red Hat is successful is because of its proximity to downtown restaurants, bars, etc. If a park amphitheater will be successful, there needs to be a seamless connection to downtown. A member asked if the gas station at Western Boulevard and Ashe Ave. will remain. The city is exploring that question.

Funding- MPEC received a packet of available tools for funding. These include public, earned income, contributed income, and value capture. The true understanding of cost will be solidified in the design detail process. Cost estimation will need to be known for the different time frames (i.e. phases and full build out). Pearce noted that by the council work session in January, there should be a more solid conceptual cost estimation. Members noted that funding should be presented as a toolbox of options instead of a plan because the tools available for funding will evolve with time. Members also noted that information should be gathered and shared about the positive economic benefits of that the park will have on the area.

The city is working on a three-year work plan and a ten-year strategic plan for the park. The city has created a detailed plan for now to February 2019 to prepare for the master plan going to council. MPEC members discussed moving the City Council date for the plan roll out from early February to February 19th.

Note: MPEC members not in attendance were Jim Goodmon, Orage Quarles, and Chancellor Woodson

Meeting close.

