

Executive Summary

Legacy: Something received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past

This report was adopted by the Dix Legacy Committee at its August 18, 2018 meeting. It has four sections:

(1) the theme that we recommend to guide the park's uses overall; (2) an outline of the legacy we think should be honored or remembered within the park; (3) proposed tangible ways to convey this legacy and what would actually be on the ground in the park; and (4) our recommendations to the Dix Conservancy Park Board, Dix Master Plan Executive Committee and Advisory Committee, the consulting firm MVVA, and the Raleigh City Council.

Wellness: "A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"

The World Health Organization

A Theme of Wellness: Our recommendation is to adopt a theme of wellness as the guiding theme for the park. What will make this park a unique destination site is a theme that honors or commemorates the past and connects it to a vision for the future. The theme of wellness will unite this place's historical legacy, its cumulative meaning, and its destination value.

The Legacy Committee also recommends that the Park Conservancy and the City Council **adopt a broad definition of legacy** in honoring or remembering all that has occurred on this land – the Native Americans that lived here, the Hunter plantation, slavery, Dorothea Dix and her crusade to establish an asylum here, construction of the hospital with slave labor, the hospital during the Civil War, a psychiatric hospital for 156

years, the patients and staff, the buildings and cemeteries, closure of the hospital, and the hospital's legacy in mental health reform and the connection of the past to the future.

The following are the components of the legacy of this land that should be honored or remembered:

- A. The Land Itself
- B. The Native American Legacy
- C. The Plantation and Slavery Part of the Legacy
- D. The Dorothea Dix Mental Hospital Part of the Legacy
 - 1. Dorothea Dix and the N.C. General Assembly
 - 2. Construction of the Hospital
 - 3. The Hospital During the Civil War
 - 4. The Buildings and Cemeteries
 - 5. The Patients and Staff at the Hospital
 - 6. The Closure of Dix Hospital
 - 7. The Legacy of Dix Hospital in Mental Health Reform Policy and the Connection of the Past to the Future
- E. The Evolution of the Legacy of Dix as a Park

Proposed Tangible Ways To Convey This Legacy

What would this legacy look like on the ground? Here are some of the best ideas that the Committee wants considered in the Master Plan:

1. A Site of Conscience – As a new member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, designate Dix Park as a Site of Conscience and connect past struggles to today's issues.
2. A Museum of the Mind -- Establish a Museum of the Mind to show how our understanding of the brain has evolved over time and how that has affected treatment of brain disease

3. Engage the Power of Storytelling – Put storytelling at the heart of conveying the legacy of Dix with the stories of patients and staff.
4. A Haven for Humanity – Retain or renovate some of the existing space for nonprofits that serve or advocate for the mentally ill, as well as space for support groups that meet to deal with mental health, addiction, alcoholism, and other problems.
5. A Coming Home for African Americans – Relocate the African American Cultural Complex to the Dix site, which borders the old African American Nazareth community.
6. Hospitality with a Mission – As part of the design for any accommodations on site, include a conference center with a soul. Use this to demonstrate how mental wellness can be supported in the hospitality industry.
7. Arts and Healing – Enlist artists and craftspeople to create healing art, music, dance, and theater for the site.
8. The Healing Power of Nature – Create a Persian garden, butterfly garden, and sunflower fields to give people a place to “just be” and to experience the healing power of nature.
9. Sanctuary and a Haven for the Lost – Establish certain areas on site as sanctuaries and sites for reflection and quiet.
10. Farm to Table to Soul – Because Dix Hospital had a farm, there is an opportunity to re-create gardens to honor that legacy and to supply food for restaurants on site.

11. Annual Compassion Festival in the Park – Hold an annual celebration that showcases organizations and individuals that are exemplary in their acts of caring, kindness, and compassion for other human beings and our planet.

Recommendations

1. The Legacy Committee recommends that the Park Conservancy Board, MVVA, and the Raleigh City Council **adopt wellness as the theme for the park**. This will connect the legacy of Dorothea Dix to the site and the future purposes of the park in a way that makes it unique among parks within cities.
2. The Park Conservancy and City Council should **adopt a broad definition of legacy** in honoring or remembering all that has occurred on this land – the Native Americans that lived here, the Hunter plantation, slavery, Dorothea Dix and her crusade to establish an asylum there, construction of the hospital with slave labor, the hospital during the Civil War, the buildings and cemeteries, the patients and staff, closure of the hospital, and the hospital’s legacy in mental health reform, thus connecting the past to the future.
3. Because many in the mental health community still feel injured by the decision to close Dix Hospital, the Committee recommends that the design process for the new park be used to **build a bridge with those who remain angry about this closure decision**.
4. The Committee recommends that **space** be reserved within the park **for nonprofits and grassroots organizations** that serve or advocate for the mentally ill. This should include Healing Transitions, which is already housed in the park.

5. The Committee also recommends that **space** be reserved within the park **for use by support groups** that deal with mental health, addiction, alcoholism, and other problems.

6. The Committee recommends that the Park Conservancy, the City Council, and MVVA **take full advantage of the membership with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience** as soon as possible and partner with the Coalition about how to learn from other similar sites in implementing a park Master Plan.

7. The Park Conservancy and the City Council should **partner with and provide funding for the UNC-Chapel Hill Community Histories Workshop** as it implements its plan for the Dix Hospital Historical Database and expands its research on stories and the history of the asylum.

8. As a **high priority**, the Committee recommends that funds be allocated to **interview as many former patients and staff as possible for oral histories** about their time at Dix.

Excerpt