

Dorothea Dix Park

Master Plan Advisory Committee

Date: Wednesday, December 5
Time: 4:00pm-8:00pm
Location: Mordecai Visitors Center, 1 Mimosa Street, Raleigh, NC

Meeting Agenda

4:00pm: Welcome & Project Updates
4:15pm: Draft Master Plan Discussion & Schedule

Master Plan Review Schedule- **Subject to Change!**

- **Wednesday, December 5**- MPEC and MPAC receive draft copies of book (electronically)
- **Week of December 10**- City meets with key stakeholders (internal & external) to review content
- **Thursday, December 13**- MPEC provides comments back to staff on book
- **Friday, December 14**- MPAC provides comments back to staff on book
- **Week of December 17**- Staff provides comments to MVVA. MVVA revises draft for public review. Staff uploads to DixPark.org
- **January 7**- City Council Work Session to review draft book
- **January 9**- MPAC meeting to discuss final rounds of edits to draft book (proposed)
- **January 10**- MPEC meeting to discuss final round of edits to draft book
- **January 16**- MPAC meeting- makes recommendation to MPEC (proposed)
- **January 23**- MPEC meeting- makes recommendation to Raleigh City Council
- **February 6**- Final Community Meeting
- **February 19**- Raleigh City Council Meeting

5 Stations:

- The Land
- The Framework
- The Program
- Implementation
- Phase Now

6:15pm: Dinner Break & Continued
Discussions 7:00pm: Key Messaging
8:00pm: Meeting Close

Meeting Summary

Dix Park Project Manager Kate Pearce began the meeting by discussing results from a survey sent out to the committee. The survey asked about each of the six landscapes proposed in the master plan and if members agreed on the concept of the landscapes. Answer options were strongly agree, agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree.

Overall, the majority of people agreed or strongly agreed with the six landscape concepts. Pearce noted that she will send the results and comments out to the committee members. Concerns were later discussed in the stations.

Pearce introduced the master plan booklet four section format--The six landscapes, the framework, the program, and implementation. In response to the framework section, a member asked if the current edges are appropriate and thought out enough. Pearce responded by explaining that the master plan book will not lay out a plan for any of the property that does not belong to the city (i.e. the western edge of the park where the Department of Agriculture and NCSU are neighbors). The master plan does explain some future path and road connections in the implementation section though. MPAC will be sent the draft master plan electronically.

Conservancy members and staff in attendance provided an update on fundraising and conservancy work. So far, \$9M has been raised. The conservancy is also starting a large strategic fundraising campaign. The conservancy has also been asked by the city to help build political will for the park. They also noted that other conservancies in the country take a role in park management, particularly with building renovation. The conservancy will likely lead the Chapel redevelopment project. An MPAC member asked if we come to a point of confusion between the City and Conservancy, where does power lie? Pearce explained that City Council is the ultimate decision maker. The city bought the park. The Executive Committee is made up of both City staff and Conservancy board members. The conservancy paid for the amazing planning process and the amazing programming at the park such as Fall Fest, SunFest, Destination Dix, Light the Woods with Sound, Movie Nights, Star Gazing, etc. The City and Conservancy are currently writing their updated Memorandum of Understanding for their partnership.

The conversation changed back to the park to address a lingering question, what is the grand gesture of the park design? Dan Parham, creator of the project's online engagement platform Neighborland, answered this question. He explained that Dix Park has not only one iconic experience but many within it. The proposed sweeping meadow in Dix Park is as amazing as the one in New York's Prospect Park, the Promenade Loop is as wide and unifying as the New York Highline, the redesign of the AJ Davis portico arches are as iconic as Central Park's Bethesda Fountain and the Raleigh skyline view from The Grove is as striking as the view of Manhattan from Brooklyn Bridge Park.

Pearce next broke committee members up into five stations-- one for Phase Now ideas and the rest for the four sections of the master plan. Caroline Lindquist led the Landscapes station, Nick Smith led the Framework section, Grayson Maughan led the Program station, and Kate Pearce led the Implementation section.

Below are summaries of MPAC feedback from each of the stations.

The Landscape

- The Downtown Gateway landscape feels less like a downtown connection and more like a neighborhood connection. Consider dropping the name downtown when naming this landscape. If the landscape was called The Gateway, it would flow better with names of all the other 5 landscapes that are only two words (i.e. The Creek, The Meadow, etc.). Calling it the Downtown Gateway suggests that the area will become as dense as downtown, which puts further pressure on an already vulnerable neighborhood, Fuller Heights.
- Is there enough parking for the future play area in The Downtown Gateway landscape? Lindquist explained that Phase A may include temporary gravel lots in the area reserved for future building space to support the playground. In full build out, the parking by The Valley would be the only main parking area. Would this be enough? Pullen Park is already short on parking and we do not want to repeat that challenge.
- A committee member who works in the theater industry noted that proposed programming seems too specific for theater. Trends in performance type, size, and style may change over time. Emphasis should be put on the *flexibility* of the theater spaces for rehearsal or performance space.
- Some members had safety concerns about The Grotto. They fear people will try to jump into the water from the proposed high rocky ridge.
- One table discussed that the parking concerns could be better addressed if the public saw how number of parking spaces will fluctuate by phase buildout and thus be able to be more responsive to the needs of the times.
- Discussion about renaming The Event Hub just The Hub or even The Wheel to reference the famous Raleigh song Wagon Wheel. This takes some emphasis off the car since the hub is associated with a car hub cap.
- Members pushed back on a parking deck for additional parking. They said only underground parking would do, but it would be a major investment and therefore not flexible to evolve with the times if parking lots are phased out.
- Some noted that The Grove's Botanical Garden feels too formal in contrast to The Grove. It should only have NC Native Plants to highlight NC Ecology. This will differentiate it from the Raulston Arboretum.
- Many members suggested renaming The Ridge landscape, The Hill to reference and honor the site's past name Dix Hill.
- Suggested housing for people who work at Dix Park, such as the arborists and maintenance crew. This was inspired by the Presidio model.
- Confusion over the name The Grotto. The general public does not know what a grotto is. Simplify it by calling it a the pond.
- Basketball courts and sports courts are located throughout the city. They do not seem as needed here. Replace some of them with picnic areas so that the park can be more focused on community gathering, events, and family reunions. The picnic shelters at Pullen Park (and many other city parks) are completely booked all summer long for birthday parties. There is clearly a demand.
- The sports fields are good for bringing in younger crowds and families. There is a big culture around families watching sports field games. That brings even more people to the park.

- How do seniors or disabled people access the meadow? Is The Event Hub close or connected enough? Are there good paved paths from the Hub parking to the Meadow?
- Rename the Downtown Gateway. The word Gateway does not denote a place. The design does not make it feel like a place. A gateway is defined as a means of access or entry to a place. All the other landscapes are actual places. Many members stated that this landscape is the least exciting part of the park design. It also seems the least thought out.
- Member suggestion: Since the city will not have building access for some time, could some of the activity proposed on the ridge be temporarily moved to the “future buildings area” during Phase A? This would not require too much infrastructure, just picnic tables, picnic shelters, water fountains, temporary bathrooms, gravel lot for lunch hour food truck area, and gathering spaces. It would help bring life to that side of the park in the interim.
- The community feels like the site plan hasn’t evolved enough since July. It seems like feedback is falling on deaf ears. Some feel like the community does not have the same power as MVVA and like their feedback is being overruled.
- Members noted that we may be doing a lot of engagement, but where is that feedback going? How is it informing designs?
- A member noted that many running groups use the park for training and workouts. Can there be a track in the plan by the soccer fields? That or at least marked distances?
- There should be an official grand arch entrance (like the portico arches) added in Phase A to The Downtown Gateway that makes people feel they are really entering something special. Those beautiful portico arches will not be built out for so long.
- A rooftop garden should not be built on the hospital building. The hipped roof should be restored on that and the green roof should be put atop the Royster building, which also has a great view of downtown.
- What happened to the tower idea?
- In Phase Now we should start connecting people with the Creek through clean ups and education programs. We should also start connecting the fields with walking paths (i.e. Sunflower Field, Williams Field, Big Field, Flowers field.) Start creating that interim perimeter Loop for running and walking.
- We can’t be hesitant to do temporary things.

The Framework

- Questions about MLK as a major thoroughfare and its long-term feasibility.
- Opportunity of an entrance along at the overpass of Western?
- Show both options of land bridge (Pullen Park and to downtown), let community decide. Downtown connection is them most ignored corner of the plan.
- Event Hub: 250 parking places, disrupts meadow, current parking located there now, going to be used for the decade. Disrupts walk from chapel to cemetery, road connects to Boylan. Other uses for the event hub. **Perhaps have MVVA show what the event hub could look like if parking is phased out in future years?**
- Need easy access into the natural landscape via ADA accessible paths.

- If we are designing a park for accessibility, we can't rely on neighbors for shared parking
- Opposing opinion: I'm not sure if having the event hub diminishes the meadow experience.
- Entire park needs to be accessible
- Plan for service roads
- Connection to Chavis, go up to South (Lenoir) and connect, rather than directly West
- Elevated pedestrian bridge to Duke Energy Center for The Performing Arts. Opposing, why would we want to bypass business. Safe walk to downtown.
- Southwest corner needs thought and intention.
- There's currently an assumption of Fuller Heights shrinking or going away.
- There are concerns that the small area plan, will locking in current development styles
- Downtown Gateway is misnamed
- Viewshed, cutting of trees in Grove to open up the view.
- Need for a tree plan now
- Downtown Gateway naming issues, what is the scale of development, think of landing point from downtown for pedestrian/bike access. Lake Wheeler Road is a downtown gateway, not THE downtown gateway.
- Make a tramway from convention center to the park.
- Describe that edge as a delivery edge (full Lake Wheeler edge).
- Articulate values for the park more clearly.
- Railroad connection would solve a lot of issues, maybe number 1 option.
- Will Healing Transitions be addressed in the Master Plan?
- Focus on parking gardens. Efficiency standpoint with structured parking.
- How are we planning on policing parking in the neighborhoods?
- Accessibility to the meadow seems limited.
- Examine bike parking.
- Not worried about viewsheds at Spring Hill. (viewshed not a laymans term)
- Be careful with the historic registry boundary, take out registry boundary, consider the whole thing is a boundary
- Put detail spreads of event hall interiors in the appendix
- Be careful with Spruill building because of its history. Be thoughtful how we deal with it and its removal.

The Program

- The Event Hub seems like a major vehicular traffic spot that should not be in the park
- Food legacy needs a plug. Will food trucks be the thing in 10 years? Since we aren't sure, we don't need to call areas for that out in the master plan.
- Show was to provide opportunities for food and community growth
 - Jobs
 - Culinary training
 - Hospitality hub concept
- Programming section should open with the Dix Legacy of Wellness.
 - Tell why wellness matters
 - Have we asked Healing Transitions how they want to be represented in the plan?
- Sports section should make statement about bringing people together through sports

- Courts need to be more grouped to achieve that.
- How many miles of biking trails and walking trails will be in the park?
- How do trails connect strongly to the greater greenway system?
- On pg. 154, calling them wild landscapes seems like a stretch
- Don't want park offices in the Chapel building
- Push back on botanical gardens. Want for walking gardens
- Give back to mental health and that actual past
- Can't white wash what happened on that land
- Can we have a food pantry there?
- Re-entry programs for people
- Pg. 148 the art and garden community section should highlight the space for artists
- Make community gardens a destination for program
- Need to address mental health in document
- Add food education to the garden section
- Mental health is an element of the park that makes it universal—something all can relate to.
- The Cemetery fix up needs to be in Phase Now
- Pg. 150 should mention the Farmer's Market neighbor and NCSU
- Educate on where food comes from
- Is reducing sports courts not acknowledging the younger audiences?
- Pg.152 should have yoga on it- we have had a lot of yoga at the park already and will continue to
- How do we honor people who worked at the hospital and lived there?

Implementation

- Implementation strategies should be flexible to accommodate changes (market, resource availability, philanthropic capacity, etc.) over time.
- Include an introduction to the phasing section—why the phases are what they are.
- Add cemetery to Phase A.
- Note that the reason Phase A projects are what they are is b/c of the existing leases with DHHS and the concept of starting from the outside and moving in.
- Each phase should have something for everyone.
- Note what park spaces will be available during phased construction.
- Think about moving all development potential to Phase D.
- Consider using the Graham Building site as a 'test site' in Phase C.
- Are phases consecutive? If not, think about reworking the graphic on pages 214/215. Add a key to this graphic, enlarge the font size, identify more studies.
- Build out Phase Now information.
- Add Opportunity Zone information to Phasing.
- Use more commonly understood language to describe the funding tools.
- Note that not all funding tools are available during all phases of work.

MPAC Members will receive the draft master plan book to review and provide comments.