



City of Portland, Oregon
Bureau of Development Services
Land Use Services
FROM CONCEPT TO CONSTRUCTION

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Briefing

DISCUSSION MEMO

Date: June 24, 2021
To: Design Commission & Historic Landmarks Commission
From: Arthur Graves, Design / Historic Review Team
Arthur.Graves@portlandoregon.gov
Re: South Park Blocks Master Plan
Briefing Memo – July 01, 2021

For briefing materials, please see the South Park Blocks Master Plan – Draft Preferred Design webpage here: [South Park Blocks Master Plan | Portland.gov](http://SouthParkBlocksMasterPlan.Portland.gov)

Representatives from Portland Parks & Recreation (PPR) will provide additional information and receive your feedback on July 01st. PPR was previously before both Commissions at a joint hearing on this topic on December 5, 2019 and July 14, 2020.

The proposed South Park Blocks Master Plan was sponsored through a donation to the Parks Foundation, resulting from LU 15-281248 DZM MS which allowed for additional floor area at Broadway Tower through a Central City Master Plan.

The Recommended Draft Design is divided into the following sections: Introduction, Site History Summary, Community Engagement, Recommended Design and Tree Succession Strategy, Project Phasing and Partnerships, and Project Costs. The information online provides some information about existing elements and proposed changes. This is most clearly described in the Block-by-Block Tour.

Regarding the existing character of the park blocks, Staff notes that the Downtown Neighborhood Association has commissioned a National Register nomination for the South Park Blocks; this nomination has been presented to the Historic Landmarks Commission prior to its consideration by the State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation. Because the South Park Blocks are not yet listed on the National Register, they are not yet included within the Historic Resource Protection overlay zone; once listed the blocks would only be subject to Demolition Review. They are located within the Design overlay zone, however, and per 33.420.045.I, development associated with Parks and Open Areas uses that do not require a conditional use review are exempt from Design Review.

Potential changes to the blocks vary between minimal, such as maintenance measures, to more impactful changes such as the introduction of new elements and alterations to the circulation patterns. One major element to be accommodated with the master plan area is the Green Loop which is proposed to be accommodated on the west side of the park blocks and would result in reconfiguration

and repaving of the Park Avenue (West) sidewalks, increasing their width from 5' to a 12' wide path to be shared with bicycles. Area dedicated to automobile traffic would be reduced to 12' wide for 6 of the 8 blocks exposed to vehicle traffic on the west side.

Staff requests the Commission's comments on the following (page numbers indicated in parentheses):

- What tangible and intangible elements of the park blocks existing character are worthy of retention or preservation and should be identified as such in the Master Plan?
- Is the proposed level of impact to existing elements appropriate?
- Is there adequate continuity in materials, features, and amenities so that the SPB is successful as a unified design?
- Is there successful transition between the SPB two districts?
- Is a terminus at the south park (Block 1) recommended? (82/148)
- Is the proposed design successful in balancing: hardscape w/ softscape; programmed areas w/ unprogrammed areas; active areas w/ quiet areas?
- The proposed SPB master plan is heavily programmed. Does this help/hinder wayfinding and orientation?
- Is the proposed Tree Succession Strategy supported with regard to density of plantings, increased diversity of genus and species, tree form, and maintaining canopy?
- Is the full closure of NW Madison supported? (114/148)
- Regarding the Green Loop:
 - Is the proposed location and treatment of the Green Loop supported in its proposed location? (122-123/148)
 - Is the transition from between the two districts successful? (92-93/148)
 - Does the proposed location create too strong a barrier between the SPB and access to the west (particularly in the proposed "Cultural District" area)? (125/148)
 - The Green Loop is largely absent immediately to the north and south of the SPB. Are there interim measures/comments proposed to ensure that users of the Green Loop do not use the SPB in un-programmed ways?
- Please comment on any issues/features/design components that are critical to the success of the SPB. Specifically, with an eye on future value engineering that may take place later on.
- Are any aspects of the SPB Master Plan contradictory or a hinderance to North Park Blocks (which were not a part of this design and master plan process)? (19/148)
- What other questions should PPR consider as they move forward with the master plan?

Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

The following was provided by the applicant for Commissioners to review prior to the July 01, 2021 briefing:

[South Park Blocks Master Plan by Portland Parks & Recreation - issuu](#)

The applicant added that this website works best with Chrome and Safari internet browsers and an Ad Blocking software disabled. It will work on a smart phone, tablet, or computer.

The presentation will provide more content and questions specific for the Commissions.