

Accept the 2021 South Park Blocks Master Plan as a guide for future use and development of the Park (Resolution)

Exhibits

Exhibit A:

South Park Blocks Master Plan Main Document:

https://issuu.com/portlandparks/docs/spbmp_2021-final-rec-draft

Exhibit B:

Connected Cultural District Concept:

https://issuu.com/portlandparks/docs/spbmp_2021-0422_app-b

B

**Connected
Cultural District
Concept**





South Park Blocks Master Plan **Appendix B:**
Connected Cultural District Concept

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Special Thank you to the South Park Blocks Master Plan Community Advisory Committee and other area stakeholders for their initial input

PHOTO CREDITS:

COVER

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<https://www.portland.gov/parks/construction/south-park-blocks-master-plan>

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Introduction

During the South Park Blocks Master Plan process, Portland Parks & Recreation and Portland Bureau of Transportation planning staff heard from many in the community about the future of the South Park Blocks. Two key themes we heard were the desire to connect and expand the Park Blocks, and to minimize the impact of the streets surrounding them.

The South Park Blocks Master Plan incorporates these ideas with a recommendation to extend the park blocks across SW Madison St and to explore a similar treatment on SW Main St. Repurposing these blocks for park activities would stitch together a long park block, providing more flexibility and opportunities for community uses. These ideas were well supported by the community and by stakeholders in the South Park Blocks Master Plan surveys and community discussions.

During discussions with key Cultural District stakeholders, the opportunity was identified to take these ideas even further by expanding the park across select blocks of Park Avenue East and Park Avenue West to better connect the park to its cultural neighbors. A Traffic-Free Green Loop would link the Cultural District campus and Portland State University's pedestrianized campus to the south.

This appendix introduces and expands upon these two concepts in a vision for a connected cultural district: the Cultural District Campus and the Traffic-Free Green Loop on Park Avenue West.

Concept

Inspired by the transformation of the South Park Blocks through Portland State University in the 1970s, the Connected Cultural District envisions a campus for children, visitors, events and community activations to take place. The traffic-free zone would span from building to building, creating an expansive new experience, and opening new opportunities for community use. The Green Loop could extend this area as a traffic-free street on Park Avenue West.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- An expanded plaza in front of the Portland Art Museum connecting to the Madison Street plaza proposed in the draft preferred park design.
- A traffic-free block of Main St, with more space for Portland’5 to bring their programming into the public realm.
- A traffic-free section of the Green Loop on Park Avenue West, bringing neighbors, visitors and workers from across the Central City into the Cultural District.
- A traffic-limited Park Avenue East – prioritized for access by school buses, event loading, and use by children.
- An overall expanded park area to better serve community events such as the Farmers Market.



The concept will offer new ways of engaging the park, further integrating it into the urban landscape.

EXISTING CULTURAL DISTRICT BLOCKS



Today the northern Cultural District blocks are three distinct areas separated by streets.

Regular events such as the Portland Farmers Market temporarily close SW Main St for expanded event space within the park

Portland's regularly closes SW Main St east of the South Park Blocks for community events.

SOUTH PARK BLOCKS MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATION



The South Park Blocks Master Plan recommends a closure of SW Madison St between the Park Blocks for expanded public space.

The plan also recommends continuing temporary closures of SW Main St. and recommends to *"Explore permanently closing this street to unite northern three park blocks, allow for regular events, spillover from Schnitzer Concert Hall, and facilitate uninterrupted north-south pedestrian movement."*

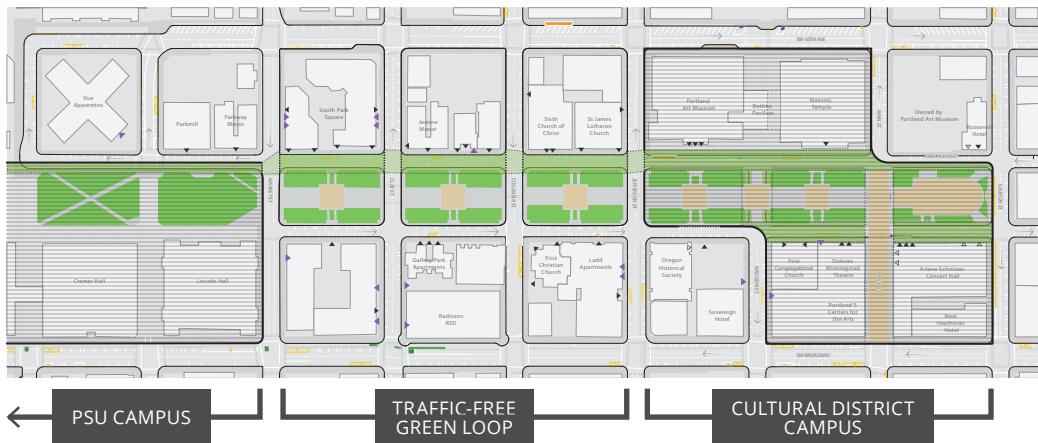
CONNECTED CULTURAL DISTRICT CAMPUS CONCEPT



The Connected Cultural District concept builds upon the South Park Blocks Master Plan recommendations by formalizing the pedestrianization of SW Main St and expanding the park space across SW Park Avenue East and SW Park Avenue West, creating a large traffic-free cultural district campus area.

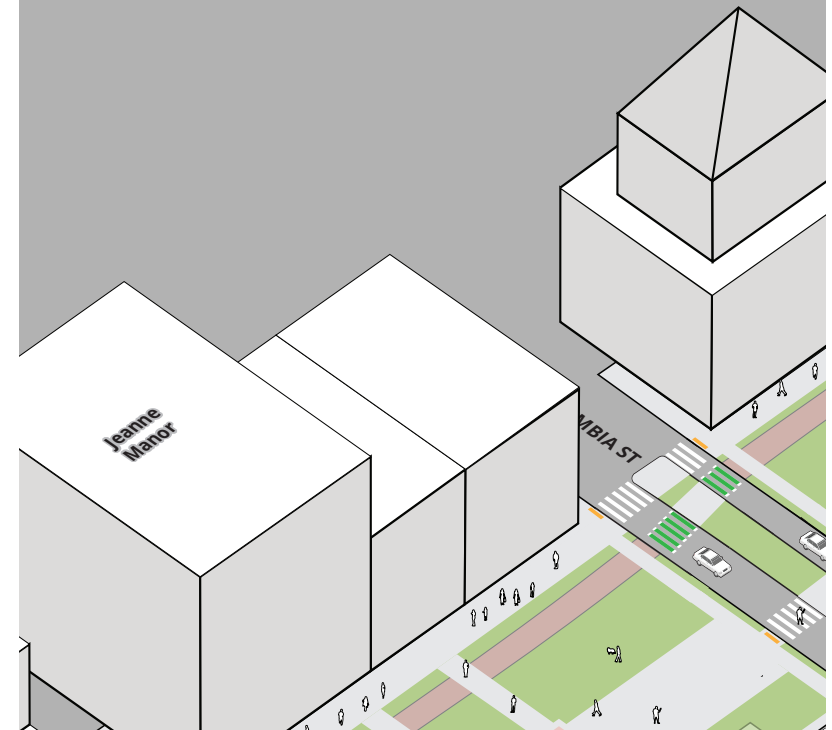
In combination with the Traffic-Free Green Loop, the Cultural District campus and PSU campus can connect in a unified vision of traffic-free public space.

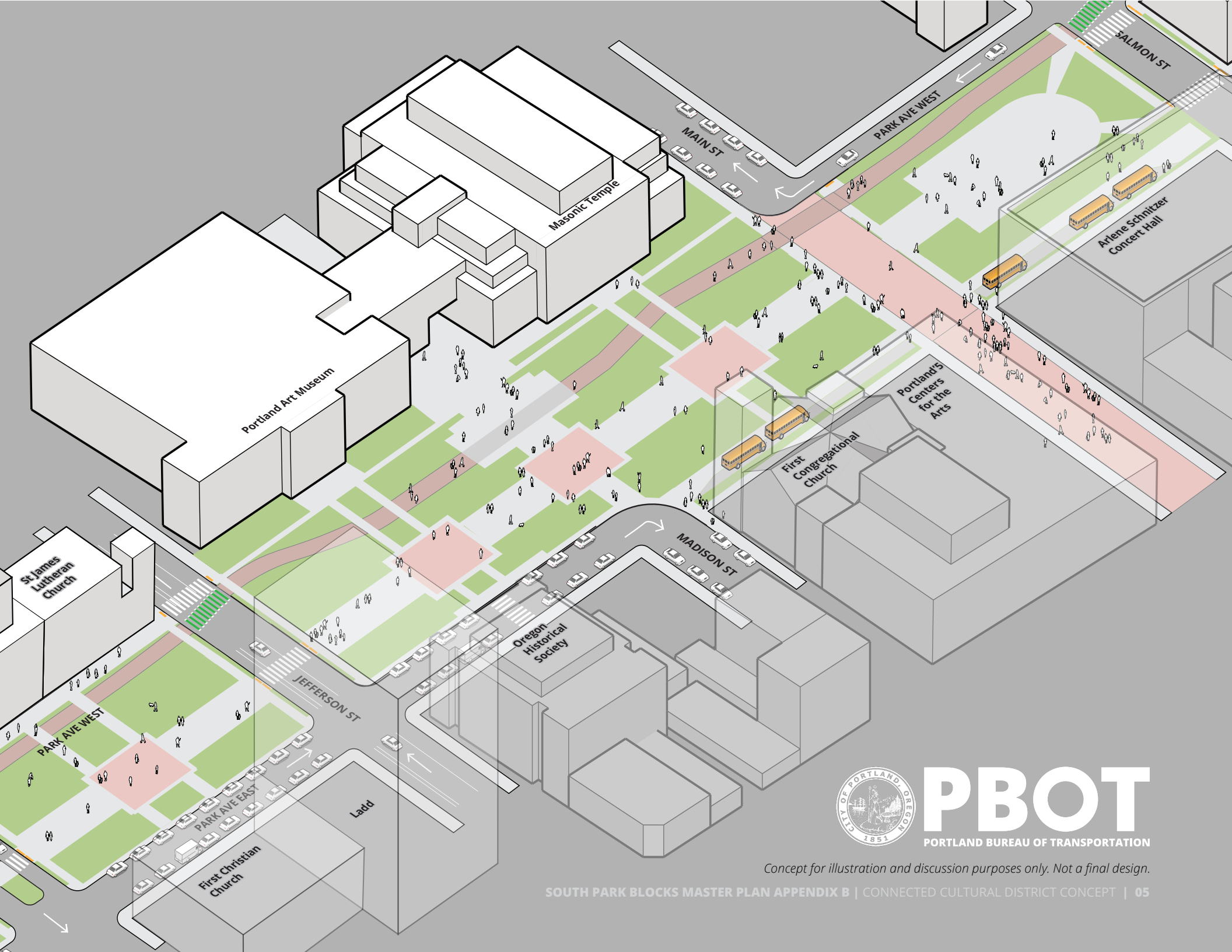
TRAFFIC-FREE GREEN LOOP CONCEPT



A traffic-free Park Avenue West could further enhance the safety of the Green Loop and vitality of the South Park Blocks. The Traffic-Free Green Loop would act as a strengthened connection for the South Park Blocks' two distinct campuses: The Cultural District campus to the north and Portland State University's pedestrianized campus to the south. In addition, the Traffic-Free Green Loop concept has the potential to create more green and active space on the South Park Blocks.

The Concept for a **Connected Cultural District** with a Traffic-Free Green Loop





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Concept for illustration and discussion purposes only. Not a final design.

ARLENE SCHNITZER CONCERT HALL

Park Avenue East facing south toward the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall. School bus access and critical venue access needs can be preserved, while general motor vehicle traffic is prohibited.

EXISTING CULTURAL CAMPUS BLOCKS

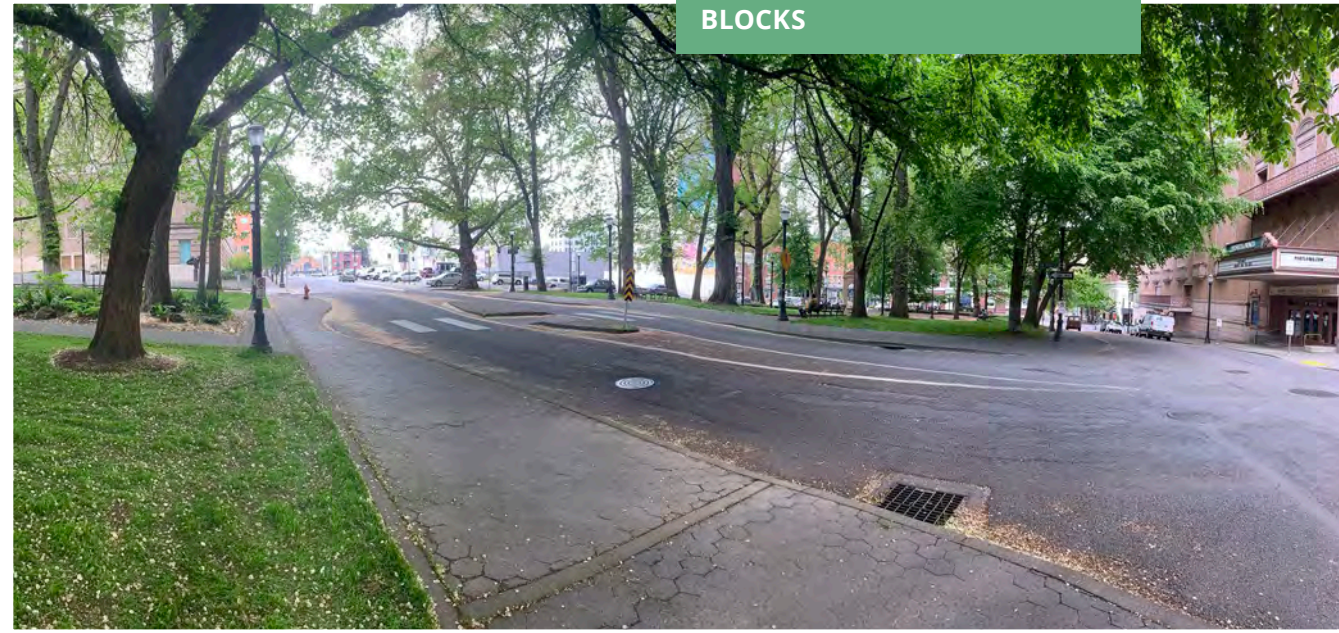


CONNECTED CULTURAL CAMPUS CONCEPT VISUALIZATION

Visualizations are for illustration purposes only and do not represent a final design design that would better reflect the park master plan and accessibility considerations.



EXISTING CULTURAL CAMPUS
BLOCKS



SW MAIN STREET

Main Street facing northwest, with the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall on the right. A permanently pedestrianized block would be available for passive and active community uses.

CONNECTED CULTURAL CAMPUS
CONCEPT VISUALIZATION



Visualizations are for illustration purposes only and do not represent a final design that would better reflect the park master plan and accessibility considerations.



PORTLAND ART MUSEUM

Park Avenue West by the Portland Art Museum facing Southeast toward First Congregational Church and the Oregon Historic Society. Streets become expanded plaza spaces.

CONNECTED CULTURAL CAMPUS CONCEPT VISUALIZATION

EXISTING CULTURAL CAMPUS BLOCKS



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**SOUTH PARK BLOCKS MASTER
PLAN RECOMMENDATION**



TRAFFIC-FREE GREEN LOOP

Park Avenue West between
SW Jefferson & SW Columbia.
This alternative design con-
cept extends the Park Blocks
to the edge of bordering
properties with a traffic-free
environment.

**TRAFFIC-FREE GREEN LOOP
CONCEPT VISUALIZATION**



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Considerations

The Connected Cultural District concept is an emerging idea. Early responses from the public about this concept were positive.

There are many questions left to answer, and much work to do with stakeholders, institutions and neighboring property owners to pursue this concept. After initial conversations with immediate neighbors, staff documented key considerations that would be addressed. Considerations for the Traffic-Free Green Loop on Park Avenue West would be further evaluated during the next phase of Green Loop planning.

ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

The Cultural District Campus would be directly served by all transportation modes. Strategic loading access to buildings and properties will be paid attention to, as well as network circulation to maintain transportation stability or enhancement. Access to private automobiles would be limited within this area to prioritize people walking and biking.

SCHOOL BUSES AND ACCESSIBLE PARKING

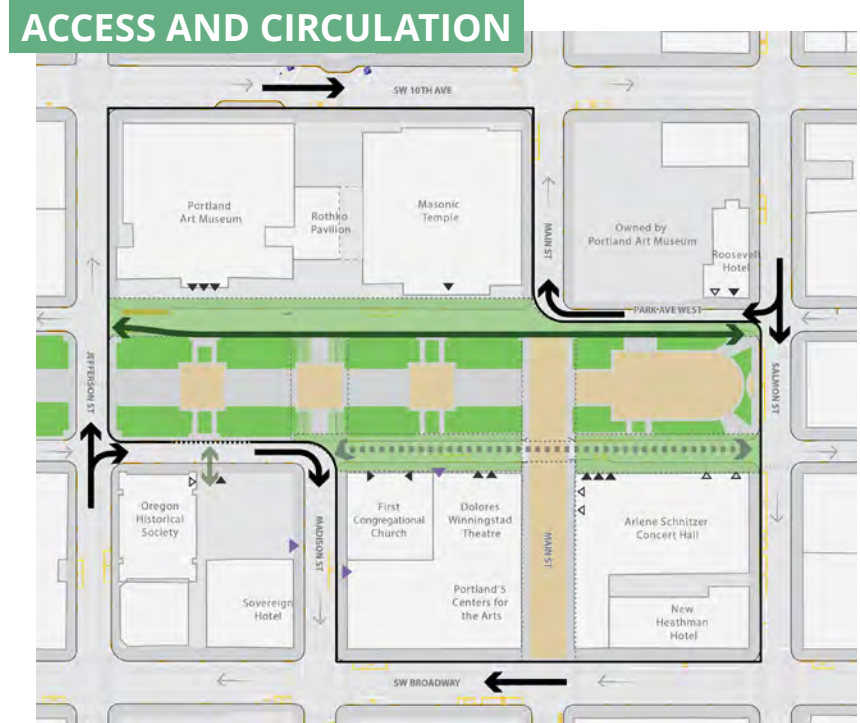
Throughout the South Park Blocks, community institutions would maintain continued access for priority patrons and critical operations, such as accessible parking and group loading.

OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT AND ACTIVATION

New and expanded spaces bring opportunities for more community events and activations. The processes of permitting, and maintenance of the 's new public spaces will be considered to ensure this space is successful and accessible for community-focused events.

OWNERSHIP, FUNDING AND MAINTENANCE

Funds for reconstruction and ongoing maintenance will need to be identified and secured.



The Connected Cultural District would be directly served by all transportation modes.

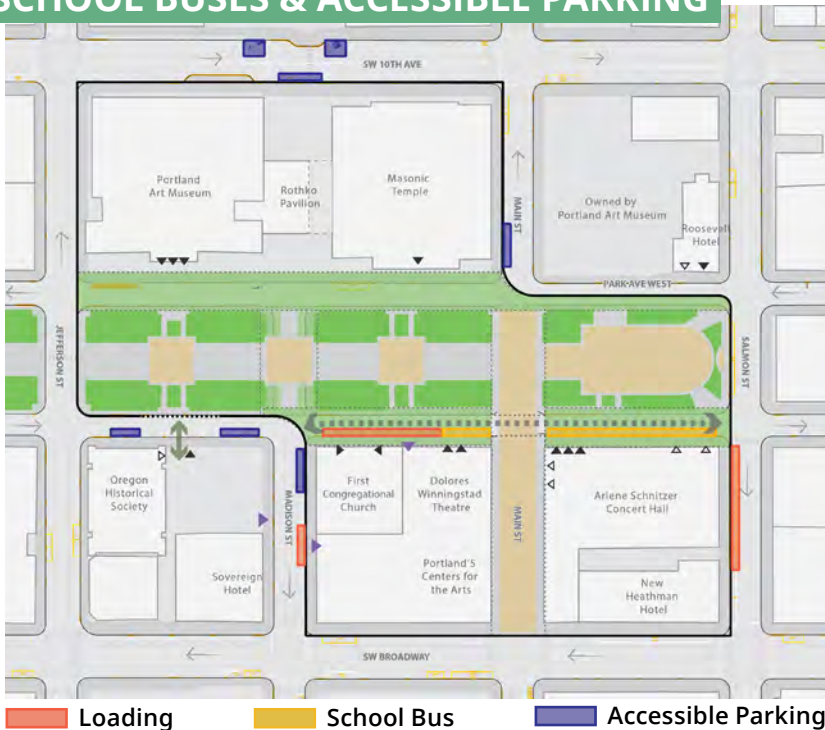
PRIORITIES

- Maintain & enhance city connections for all modes.
- Green Loop path through the heart of the .
- Continued access to buildings for delivery vehicles.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Transit service and access.
- Preferential access preserved on Park Ave East for cultural institution needs.
- Property access on Park Ave West with a Traffic-Free Connector

SCHOOL BUSES & ACCESSIBLE PARKING



Up to 65 on-street parking spaces would be removed to establish the pedestrianized district.

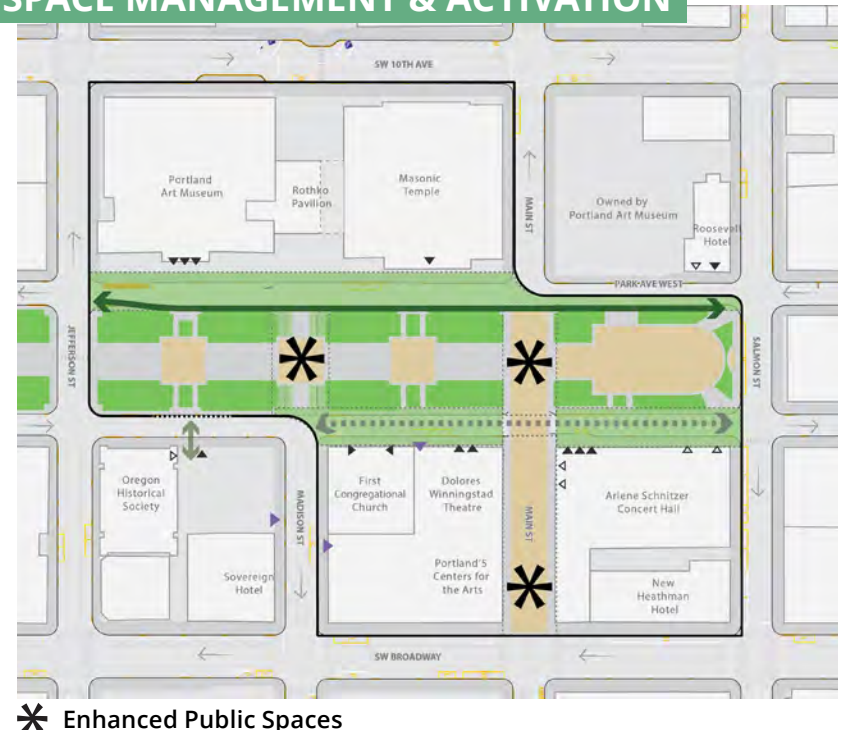
PRIORITIES

- Access to community institutions for priority patrons and critical operations.
- Accessible parking and loading zones.
- Group and chartered pickup/drop off locations.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Event loading, freight, and waste services.
- On-street parking supply/management
- Building access on Park Avenue West

SPACE MANAGEMENT & ACTIVATION



New and expanded open spaces bring opportunities for more community events and community activation.

PRIORITIES

- Equitable community access to the public space.
- Coordination between cultural institutions and City bureaus to streamline and manage activation process.
- Alignment with the South Park Blocks Master Plan

CONSIDERATIONS

- Management structure, permitting, and maintenance of new public spaces.
- Coordination of loading, access and active uses.

OWNERSHIP, FUNDING & MAINTENANCE



Major reconstruction comes with significant costs. Redefining the role, use and design of streets raises questions about ownership, management and maintenance responsibilities. Construction would require new funding sources, ongoing maintenance agreements and cost sharing.

PRIORITIES

- Establishing a sustainable program for ownership, funding, and maintenance among partners.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Funding sources and packages.
- Property ownership decisions, right-of-way maintenance agreements.
- Ongoing funding structures.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Connected Cultural District concept is an emerging idea. PBOT will work with stakeholders and the community to pursue these concepts further in partnership with Portland Parks & Recreation.

NEXT STEPS SHOULD INCLUDE:

- PBOT Traffic Engineering analysis on traffic circulation and access needs.
- PBOT Parking group review of on-street parking impacts and identification of parking management and mitigation strategies.
- Cost estimation of financing plan.
- Right of way ownership and maintenance agreements involving property owners and City.
- Commitments from Cultural District partners to program and activate the new public space.
- Design and Engineering process involving the Portland Design Commission and Portland Historic Landmarks Commission.
- Work with the City Attorney to consider implications of Oregon statutes related to pedestrianization.
- Public engagement with residents and businesses on Park Avenue West for potential Traffic-Free Green Loop.





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