

From: [Kate Dickson](#)
To: [White, Tate](#); [Wheeler, Mayor](#); [Commissioner Rubio](#); [Commissioner Ryan Office](#); [Commissioner Hardesty](#); [Commissioner Mapps](#); [Adams, Sam](#); [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
Subject: Another Very Good Reason to Reject the SPBMP
Date: Tuesday, June 8, 2021 4:50:35 PM

Hello Tate,

Your response to a colleagues email below is highly irresponsible. You did not address his thoughtful questions, your response obfuscates and misrepresents what is detailed in the SPBMP. Your response is filled with platitudes, condescending information, and misinformation. For example: Your carefully crafted sentence is **terribly misleading** " PP&R does not propose that ANY trees on the Blocks be removed **at this time**, and the Green Loop concepts do not require any tree removal."
—how do you define "at this time".

For a publicly funded Parks department it is astounding that so little input is listened to by you and your colleagues about what citizens want for the SPB.

A question: Why did it take a highly skilled professional in our community to accurately measure and identify the trees to be removed for the bike loop and the diminishing of the park boundaries? Why isn't PP&R open and honest about the impact on pedestrians regarding the bike loop and the reduction of park boundaries?

A starting point for this master plan could and should be a clear and specific tree strategy plan for the SPB—we do NOT need a grandiose 46 million dollar plan that removes trees, creates more hard space, and a bike loop in the SPB. We need grass and trees in the SPB. The 46 million dollars needs to be allocated to areas in our city that desperately need park space for families and children—this is an equity issue.

Mayor and Commissioners, I urge you to read the letter below from a community member—most of his issues were ignored in Tate's response. Please become informed and consult outside experts before approving this plan.

Reject this plan.....Do NOT destroy Portland's Peoples Park.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions.

A Portland Citizen who cares deeply about the equitable access to

Parks in our city!
Kate Dickson, PhD
503-317-5920

From: "White, Tate" <Tate.White@portlandoregon.gov>
Subject: RE: Master Plan for South Park Blocks
Date: June 8, 2021 at 9:55:43 AM PDT

Cc: "Wheeler, Mayor" <MayorWheeler@portlandoregon.gov>, Commissioner Rubio <Comm.Rubio@portlandoregon.gov>, Commissioner Ryan Office <CommissionerRyanOffice@portlandoregon.gov>, Commissioner Hardesty <joann@portlandoregon.gov>, Commissioner Mapps <MappsOffice@portlandoregon.gov>

Good Morning,

Thank you for your concerns around South Park Blocks and the venerable trees in the area. We at Portland Parks & Recreation know that trees are part of the very fabric of our community. We take protecting them and caring for them seriously. The South Park Blocks Master Plan is a guiding document to help plan for the future of the park. PP&R does not propose that ANY trees on the Blocks be removed at this time, and the Green Loop concepts do not require any tree removal.

All the trees in the South Park Blocks are living and appear healthy, and will certainly be left alone for the benefit of the community and wildlife. Many of the oldest trees in the South Park Blocks are nearing the end of their lives and Portland Parks & Recreation must plan for their future replacement. But certainly not before their time. As such, the South Park Blocks Master Plan Tree Succession Strategy provides a long-term guide for replacing trees when they naturally reach the end of their life spans. It balances goals for improving the growing conditions and resiliency of the urban forest while maintaining the historic character and form of the trees and canopy.

We also want to be clear that Portland Parks & Recreation staff did not place yellow caution tape on any trees in the area.

PP&R wishes to assure the public that more detailed design and construction practices will work towards preventing unnecessary removal from park improvements and optimizing planting locations. Your Parks Bureau is aiming to be strategic by giving mature trees more time to reach the end of their life spans - and to not replant every single location over time. Per our Urban Forestry experts, this will enhance the growing conditions for surviving and new trees. The long-term vision is laid out to still promote an overlapping canopy.

Full details about the South Park Blocks master plan effort are here:
<https://www.portland.gov/parks/construction/south-park-blocks-master-plan>

And the Master Plan itself is here:
https://issuu.com/portlandparks/docs/spbmp_2021-final-rec-draft

Attached is a Frequently Asked Questions sheet.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any more questions.

Thank you,
Tate

Tate White, AICP ([she/her/they](#))

Senior Planner

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-----Original Message-----

From:

Sent: Monday, May 31, 2021 3:03 PM

To: Wheeler, Mayor <MayorWheeler@portlandoregon.gov>;

Commissioner Rubio <Comm.Rubio@portlandoregon.gov>;

Commissioner Ryan Office

<CommissionerRyanOffice@portlandoregon.gov>; Commissioner

Hardesty <joann@portlandoregon.gov>; Commissioner Mapps

<MappsOffice@portlandoregon.gov>

Cc: Council Clerk – Testimony <CCTestimony@portlandoregon.gov>

Subject: Master Plan for South Park Blocks

Mayor Wheeler and City Commissioners —

Please reject the draft Master Plan for the South Park Blocks.

The South Park Blocks are a refuge of nature, providing an escape from the noise and bustle of the city. I live downtown and, when walking, I always detour through the Park Blocks. As soon as I enter, my breath slows and I relax. There is something about the deep green provided by the trees and plantings that acts as an antidote for stress. There is a feeling of being restored. (Do a Google-search for “the need for nature” and you’ll find scores of articles on the physical and mental benefits of exposure to the natural world, even how it can lower murder rates in our cities.)

The South Park Blocks now offer two parallel paths down the whole length of the blocks. Although you can see the other path as you walk, the two paths feel like separate nature walks. We do not need a wide central sidewalk that would take away greenery and replace it with more paving and a concentration pedestrians. If you want a “promenade,” you can go to the Waterfront and walk along the river, watching other people as you weave between pedestrians. But that is not what the South Park Blocks should be; these blocks should continue to be about nature (not hardscapes), meandering (not promenading), finding solace (not crowds) in the midst of the greenery.

The South Park Blocks provide calm, offering tranquility undisturbed by the activity of city-life that surrounds them. If you want to be among people or where there is planned activity, you can go to Director Park or Pioneer Courthouse Square. But that’s not what the South Park Blocks should be; these blocks should offer the opportunity for repose (not activity), solitude (not gatherings of people), quiet (not community events). Although large gathering places could be appropriate in the University District, the Cultural District should be a place for more reflection and relaxation.

We need a place downtown where people can feel like they are in a nature reserve. We need a sanctuary. The draft Master Plan is a vision of an urban park that claims to keep the tree canopy while making the park itself more “contemporary” by increasing the hardscape and putting in large seating areas. This would be a horrible mistake. The increased residential densities of the University and Cultural Districts only increase the importance of preserving the maximum amount of greenspace in the South Park Blocks as a refuge from sidewalks and city-life. To take away any amount of the natural landscape from the South Park Blocks is a disservice to downtown residents, as well as tourists who come to Portland to see an oasis of towering trees and quiet in the heart of a city.

Lastly, the Green Loop should not be part of the South Park Blocks Master Plan. Creating a multi-modal transportation space by shrinking the park’s area and removing trees and plantings is perverse. Although the Plan would separate the Green Loop by an understory of plants, those plantings would do nothing to preserve the tranquility of the park from the

distraction and noise of bikes, scooters, joggers and skate-boarders streaming past. The South Park Blocks should remain a park, not be turned into a North-South route for multi-modal traffic.

The South Park Blocks are a unique and remarkable nature preserve in downtown Portland. They should not be transformed into something that is more about “contemporary urban” and less about a natural environment. Please reject any Master Plan for the South Park Blocks that would:

1. add more hardscape (pavers or sidewalk),
2. replace the two existing paths with a wide central promenade, or
3. include a multi-modal Green Loop or bike path.

Thank you.