



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

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Briefing

DISCUSSION MEMO

Date: February 5, 2024
To: Portland Design Commission
From: Benjamin Nielsen, Design & Historic Review Team
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Re: Darcelle XV Interim Plaza
Briefing Cover Memo – February 12, 2024

This memo is regarding the upcoming Briefing on February 12, 2024, for the Darcelle XV Interim Plaza plans by Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R). A copy of PP&R's PDF packet, which you will also see on February 12, and a briefing memo from them are available for review online:

- <https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/record/16542429>

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Portland Parks & Recreation staff, along with their consultant team, have been working on developing interim designs for the new Darcelle XV Plaza, which will replace the former O'Bryant Square (now demolished) in Downtown. Although the plaza is not subject to Historic Resource Review as it has no Historic Resource Overlay, the interim plaza design may incorporate cast iron from the City's cast iron collection (note that the attached memo from PP&R states the specific cast iron proposed to be used comes from the Smith & Watson Building, which stood at SW 1st & Main), and future catenary lights may connect from the park across SW 9th Ave to the landmark Pittock Block Building.

The new plaza and its programming represent a significant development in a challenging area of the Central City and an opportunity to bring additional vibrancy to the city and help to activate the adjacent Green Loop. Therefore, the Historic Landmarks Commission is invited to provide advice to the project team. The Design Commission has also received a briefing and provided advice to the project team on February 1st. A copy of the summary notes from that briefing will be provided later this week, once they are finalized. Copies of letters received from the public ahead of the Design Commission briefing are also available for your review.

II. SOME THOUGHTS FOR DISCUSSION

- The memo from PP&R notes that cast iron proposed to be used at specific locations along the edges of the new plaza come from the demolished Smith & Watson Building, and the material was chosen because of its ties to the National Register landmark Demas Tavern / Darcelle XV Building in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, and its ties to Jerry Bosco and Ben

Milligan. Commissioners may wish to comment on the use, placement, and structural support of these historic materials in the interim plaza design.

- The plaza lies near the eastern edge of the former “Burnside Triangle” area that was a focal point of LGBTQ+ life in Portland during the latter half of the 20th century. How can LGBTQ+ history be best incorporated into the design and functioning of the new plaza? Do proposed uses support and honor this history?
- It may be beneficial to discuss materials proposed for interim use. It is possible that some may end up becoming more permanent features in the final iteration of the plaza.
- Future catenary light connections may be made from the park across SW 9th Ave, which forms a segment of the Green Loop, with connections into the landmark Pittock Block Building. While a similar situation exists one block to the south at the Ritz Carlton Building, which has catenary lights connecting into two landmark structures. City staff and the development team took great care on that project to ensure that those structures would be minimally impacted. Are there any special considerations staff and the development team for PP&R should be aware of for similar connections into the Pittock Block?