



City of Portland Design Commission

Work Session

SUMMARY MEMO

Date: June 13, 2024

To: Cassie Ballew, BPS
Barry Manning, BPS

From: Benjamin Nielsen, Design / Historic Review
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Re: Montgomery Park Area Plan & Character Statement Work Session
Summary of June 6, 2024, Design Commission hearing

Attached is a brief summary of the comments and deliberations of the Design Commission at the June 6, 2024, work session. This summary was generated from notes taken at the public meeting and a subsequent review of the public meeting recordings. To review those recordings, please visit: <https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/Record/16901286/>.

These Design Commission comments are intended to guide you in further revisions of the Montgomery Park Area Plan & Character Statement. It should be understood that these comments address the project as presented on June 6, 2024. As the project evolves, the comments, too, may evolve or may no longer be pertinent.

Please continue to coordinate with Benjamin Nielsen, as necessary, as you prepare revisions to the Montgomery Park Area Plan & Character Statement.

Encl:
Summary Memo

Cc: Design Commission

This memo summarizes **Design Commission** comments provided on June 6, 2024.

Commissioners in attendance on June 6, 2024, include: Brian McCarter, Zari Santner, Joe Swank, Sarah Vaz

General Comments

- The Commission was dismayed to learn that, for all the guidance that will be in the Character Statement, there will be no equivalent standards added to the Design Overlay Standards.
- One commissioner noted that the urban framework graphic in the Character Statement section did not match the urban framework graphic in the plan.

Community Character

- Regarding the opportunity to commemorate York as part of new development, commissioners questioned how they (or staff) would be able to make a determination as to whether the proposed design response is a good response. They were concerned that it would be very difficult to enforce or engage in the authentic kind of community-based commemoration that is needed.
 - One commissioner noted that similar issues arise in evaluating the response to public art and water features guidelines that are found in guidelines for various subdistricts in the Central City and said the character statement needs to include language that specifies which entity or organization that developers will need to work with.
 - Another commissioner pointed out that, as a developer, he would be looking to find the most cost-effective way to meet the context statement. If the commemoration of York is of high importance, the character statement needs to be clear and explicit that development abutting NW York St needs to commemorate York and be explicit in what needs to happen and what the process is.
 - Commissioners were concerned that loading requirements for new development would be shifted onto NW York St since NW Roosevelt St will have a streetcar line and questioned if it is fair to shift this type of function to a street that is supposed to be commemorating York.
- The Commission noted that most of the bullets under “Community Character” reference the neighborhood’s industrial character and noted that there aren’t bullets that talk about other histories of the area. Commissioners requested that additional bullets be added that speak to the full history of the area. The idea of creating a bullet that refers back to the first page of the Character Statement where the greater history of the area was discussed.
- The Commission noted that the bullet point for the provision of open space is too generic and should be more explicit in the types of open space features that are needed for use by the community.
 - Commissioners also said that open spaces are good opportunities to provide culturally significant features and locations to commemorate historic narratives.

Architecture & Urban Design Character

- The Commission found that Montgomery Park and the American Can complex provide good examples of industrial character for tall or large-scale buildings and that it is difficult to translate the low-slung, gabled warehouse style architecture to mid-rise and high-rise architecture.

- The Red Fox project provides a good example of how to translate low-scale warehouse character into new single- and two-story development.
- One commissioner noted that the Red Fox project works so well because it is broken up with human scale interventions and references industrial architecture without mimicking it. Other commissioners agreed that it was important to make this distinction between referencing and mimicking or emulating.

Natural & Scenic Resources

- One commissioner noted that BPS’s proposed revision to bullet point 2 has more specificity and found that to be helpful.
- Commissioners discussed reinforcing a connection from the Willamette River to Lower Mackay Park/Forest Park along NW Wilson St to NW 17th Ave and that development along that route should strengthen that connection.
 - The Commission thought it would also be beneficial to revise the urban design framework in the overall plan to support this connection.
- One commissioner found bullet point 4 to be compelling as a reference to the plan area’s history as a marshland and proximity to Guild’s Lake and noted that this would be a good place to use the word “celebrating”.
- One commissioner brought up the character of NW Vaughn St, noting that it “always felt like the Berlin Wall” and stated that since truck traffic is shifting to NW Nicolai St, this is a good opportunity to have Vaughn tie this plan area together with the Northwest Neighborhood. He noted that there were varying street sections and right-of-way width and said it would be good to work to get consistency in the modes of transportation and street widths along Vaughn St and get the same type of street design and cross sections into the plan that are proposed for other streets.

Files related to this Briefing can be found here: <https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/Record/16889279/>.

Please contact me with any questions.