

**From:** [Janet Van Wess](#)  
**To:** [Wheeler, Mayor](#); [Commissioner Ryan Office](#); [Commissioner Hardesty](#); [Commissioner Mapps](#); [Commissioner Rubio](#); [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** South Park Blocks "master" plan  
**Date:** Thursday, June 24, 2021 3:29:41 PM

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Dear Mr. Mayor and Commissioners,

I have been working with a group of citizens who are concerned regarding the Portland Parks Bureau's Master Plan to "activate" the South Parks Blocks. (BTW – my industry is changing its vernacular, perhaps another term for "master" plan might be in the interest of the city and its inhabitants as well?)

A major feature of this plan will result in the cutting down of many the magnificent trees (at least 25%, but likely more), increasing hardscape, adding a wide promenade through the middle of the blocks (which requires removal of trees), and placing a bike path inside the western edge of the park, which will damage the fragile roots of these trees. The deciduous trees must be kept and not replaced with conifers. Deciduous trees sequester more carbon, and they provide shade in the summer, color in the fall; they mark the change of seasons.

The South Park Blocks do not need to be "activated." The Park Blocks provide respite for those of us living and visiting downtown. Evidence of "activation" includes the playground at the south end, the two weekly farmer's markets, one at the south end at PSU, and the other in Shemansky Park, where, in addition to the market, people also gather to connect and obtain social services. Pre- and post-events at the Portland 5 can find people "using" the park. The South Park blocks serve a myriad of socioeconomic residents and non-residents alike. We have other beautiful "activated" parks nearby. As a taxpayer, who regularly votes for Portland Parks bonds, perhaps more activation work could occur in North and outer East Portland, where green spaces are farther apart.

I am appalled that the council is considering acquiescing to a certain real estate developer whose idea of improving a public space is replacing deciduous trees (and consider *THAT* price tag – because it costs A LOT to cut down and grind out a large tree) with conifers which takes years to grow and offer no shade. Additionally, removing green space for hardscape is folly in a time of increased atmospheric temperature increases.  
(<https://www.oregonmetro.gov/news/global-change-local-effects>)

I love the South Park Blocks just as they are. Those big ol' trees (The arborist's report says less than 3% of the trees need serious attention) are the heart, soul and lungs of the South Park Blocks. These trees should be maintained and not allowed to become unhealthy. Separate from the Master Plan both 1) the Tree Succession Plan (so a maintenance plan can be included!) and 2) the Green Loop to allow separate processes for those major projects. They are too important to be buried in this Master Plan.

***Please vote 'no' on the SPB Master Plan when it comes to City Council.***

*Thank you for your time and consideration,*

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