

May 31, 2021

Mayor Ted Wheeler  
1221 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Room 340  
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mayor Wheeler:

I know you are working hard for our city after our year of pandemic, protests and destructive riots. However, I hope you will take a few moments to read my letter about something that is crucial to Portland remaining a viable city.

Portland Parks and Recreation has recently made available a South Park Blocks Master Plan which is a drastic design change to our beloved South Park blocks. Their master plan would substantially alter the only grass and deciduous tree park in our area of downtown. Breezily stating its intention of making the space work for all, the parks department plans to take a space that already works beautifully for all and intends to reduce our trees by 25%, reduce grass and increase the hardscape, remove separated pedestrian paths, and most outrageously, reduce the size of our park. It reduces the boundary of the park area by over fourteen feet for the Green Loop. There are other options for the Green Loop and we must preserve and protect the existing curb-to-curb original size of the South Park Blocks. The park blocks were developed in 1879 and are a valued part of Portland's history. Today it is the center of a residential, cultural, and university area – and it provides a crucial escape from urban life. The green grass and long views, the cathedral effect of the deciduous trees, the divided paths with privacy built into the design are all vital to that respite. As a city leader I think you would be very pleased that these blocks function exactly as our founders planned; here you find Portlanders and tourists to our city walking, visiting, meditating, children playing, enjoy sun filtering through the deciduous trees, students studying on the grass, nearby residents, many seniors, visiting or reading, crowds milling through Farmer's markets and so on, When a space works-and works beautifully and to the benefit of its citizenry, why take away trees and land and grass and pour more concrete? It seems even more of an outrage with the current imperative to fight global warming. More trees, not more hardscape! The proposed budget would be better used to maintain the park, replacing lost deciduous trees with like-trees because they purify the air at a far greater rate than conifers, and using technology that promotes water preservation. Please do not support the plan to irrevocably change the nature of Portland's historic "Central" Park.

Sincerely,

Judy Bell  
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