

**From:** [THOMAS RAY](#)  
**To:** [Wheeler, Mayor](#); [Commissioner Mapps](#); [Commissioner Rubio](#); [Commissioner Hardesty](#); [Commissioner Ryan Office](#); [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)  
**Cc:** [Wendy Rahm](#)  
**Subject:** South Park Blocks Master Plan  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 8, 2021 7:04:35 PM

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Dear Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners Hardesty, Mapps, Ryan and Rubio,

Soon the City Council will consider a South Park Blocks Master Plan, proposed by Portland Parks & Recreation.

This \$46 million proposal is gravely flawed in design and timing, and proposes to “fix” something that is not broken. This park was a gift to the city which for over 100 years has tirelessly provided a respite, a refuge and a retreat from an already hard, paved, built and clamorous city. This solemn cathedral of arching tree boughs with a grassy floor is the emerald gemstone of the city.

The proposed Master Plan would irreparably dismantle the historic and treasured qualities of The Park, which citizens, downtown residents and visitors value as the ‘best of Portland’. Please keep this unique park intact, green, and healthy. It does not need “activation”. We already have those nearby, (Director’s Park and Pioneer Square). The South Park Blocks need to be preserved from the folly of Parks and Recreation.

Preserve:

- the existing size of the park blocks (200’ x 124’) from curb to curb, to maintain the already healthy tree canopy, and the existing pedestrian access. The Green Loop carves out excessive space from the park, and directs wheeled vehicles (electric and otherwise) diagonally across the tranquility of the park.
- the 4 existing sidewalks for pedestrian use, which provide alternative routes around groups of people, which enhances privacy and safety.
- the trees, 97% of which are healthy with another 100 years or more of life expectancy, as determined by an arborist hired by the city. Prioritize a tree maintenance plan of trimming, adequate root exposure and spraying for optimal health.

Assure:

- there will be no loss of trees due to additional hardscape construction (e.g. a central walkway) or ‘demolition due to negligence’. The proposal would remove 25 - 30% of existing healthy trees, (despite Parks stating no trees would be removed). The proposed central walkway will ‘remove’ up to 9 mature trees in a block.
- that when trees do die, they be replaced with a like variety. Maintain deciduous trees that provide shade in summer, color in autumn and light in winter.
- that no conifers/evergreens be introduced (as they create excessive shade, height, and monotony - no seasonal color changes, no skylight in winter).
- that pedestrians continue to be protected from vehicles of all kinds in this park. as explicitly prioritized for pedestrians in the Center City 2035 Plan. People on foot feel particularly vulnerable to bikes, electric bikes, and e-scooters that already jeopardize pedestrian safety on existing sidewalks in this city.

Recommend:

- The Green Loop approval process be separated from the Master Plan. Make it

a separate process for evaluating its impact if routed on “existing” streets ROWs.

- The Master Plan be delayed until the South Park Blocks Historic Registry Nomination is completed.

- Table this proposal so that the spurious claims of “unhealthy trees” can be fact checked, and a proper, unbiased, survey (that includes local residents and minorities) can be conducted.

The South Park Blocks are not broken. Please, do not destroy The Park. Use the \$46 million for far more worthy and pressing needs in the city.

Respectfully,

Thomas Ray

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