



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

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## Briefing

# SUMMARY MEMO

**Date:** October 11, 2021  
**To:** Historic Landmarks Commission  
**From:** Hillary Adam, Design / Historic Review Team  
[Hillary.Adam@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:Hillary.Adam@portlandoregon.gov) / 503-823-8953  
**Re:** Thompson Elk Fountain  
Summary Memo – September 27, 2021

Thank you for taking advantage of the opportunity to brief the Historic Landmarks Commission regarding this important project. I hope you find it informative and valuable as you continue with your planning. Following is a summary of the comments provided by the Historic Landmarks Commission at the September 27, 2021 Briefing. 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/14653152>.

**Executive Summary.** The Commission believed it was important to not separate the elk and the fountain but to treat them as one entity; there was a strong preference for complete restoration of the fountain. There was also a strong preference for returning it to its original location, which the Commission acknowledged would require additional study related to transportation needs including consideration of possible relocation of cars and busses. The Commission suggested there should be additional study on the pros and cons and costs of alternate locations to SW Main for the fountain. The Commission stated that any possible alternate location should be in a highly visible location with lots of (non-vehicle) traffic.

**Commissioners Present:** *Minor, Foty, Roman, Moreland, Smith, Fuenmayor, Bronson*

**Summary of Comments.** Following is a general summary of Commission comments.

- **Questions.**
  - Commissioner Roman asked if there is any information that points to why this site was selected for the location of the fountain.
  - Commissioner Moreland asked if PBOT has considered closing the street to create a plaza at this location.
    - Jeff Hawthorne (OMF) indicated that there hasn't been an appetite for that as this street is fed by the Hawthorne Bridge. Wendy Cawley (PBOT) stated that PBOT has not looked at that but it could be investigated.
- **Features of the Landmark.**

- Commissioners agreed that the Elk and the Fountain base should be considered a single art piece as it's the totality that of the piece that comprises the landmark. Commissioners expressed a desire to see the fountain restored, particularly since most of the pieces were able to be salvaged.
- One Commissioner noted that the conservation of the base can be done; we have the majority of the fountain's historic material and matching material can be obtained. Restoration should be paramount.
- **Historic Location.**
  - The majority of Commissioners preferred an option that would keep the fountain in its historic location, recognizing that there are challenges if the fountain retains its historic dimensions and the roadway is to accommodate bicycles, cars, and busses.
  - One Commissioner wondered if the street could be widened.
  - One Commissioner, following up on public comments, noted that the fountain's historic relationship with the street and the fountain's reference to nature requires that we (those using the roadway) have to shift our path and make way for nature, which is a nice sentiment to carry forward. He noted the location in our pathway has a relationship with procession and that the fountain should be accessible to the public. Other Commissioners agreed.
  - One Commissioner noted that it would be ideal to restore the fountain in its original location and to close the street because that would preserve the landmark and remove the safety issues. Another Commissioner noted that he was not entirely behind the concept of closing the street and converting it to a pedestrian area but it is an option that can be explored.
  - One Commissioner noted an understanding of the conflicts between busses and bicycles but noted the fountain is an important symbol of the City.
  - Another Commissioner noted that its location, in the middle of the street, is an important part of the landmark's history.
- **Relocation.**
  - While the majority of the Commissioners stated a strong preference for restoring the fountain to its historic location, some indicated openness to relocation, if necessary.
  - One Commissioner stated that if the fountain is relocated it must be restored in its entirety.
  - One Commissioner stated that if the fountain is to be relocated, it must be in a visible location.
  - One Commissioner suggested that perhaps the fountain could be shifted to one side of the street, near to its historic location. She noted that relocating the fountain to a vacated street between two Park Blocks could be an option, but she would not want to see the fountain located in the middle of a park.
- **Additional Comments.**
  - One Commissioner noted that we need to come to a collective understanding of what the Elk Fountain means to the City as it is difficult to understand why the Elk Fountain, specifically, was subjected to the level of vandalism that it suffered. He noted that we should be able to have nice things. In response another Commissioner noted that a lot of the violence of the 2020 protests was not in response to oppression but was taking advantage of the situation.

- One Commissioner noted appreciation for the positive comments about the fountain, noting that this is an important landmark. He noted that there are a lot of people whose thoughts weren't included at the briefing, such as cyclists. He noted that there are other issues that that are worth discussing and need to seriously be considered. He noted that we can venerate history and solve for complex issues at the same time.
- One Commissioner expressed appreciation for City bureaus coming to speak with the Landmarks Commission. She noted concerns with the process being drawn out which could diminish public will to restore the fountain, but stated that there are a lot of options to be considered and studied, including the real costs related to restoring the fountain to its historic location vs. relocating the fountain to a new location which may need to be plumbed.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns.