



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

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Briefing

DISCUSSION MEMO

Date: December 4, 2023
To: Historic Landmarks Commission
From: Hillary Adam, Design & Historic Review Team, BDS
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Re: Briefing – Thompson Elk Fountain
December 11, 2023

This memo provides background related to the upcoming Briefing on December 11, 2023, regarding restoration of the Thompson Elk Fountain to its original location within the SW Main Street right-of-way between SW 3rd and SW 4th Avenues.

The following supporting documents are available as follows:

- Presentation by Portland Parks Foundation, Architectural Resources Group, and the Portland Water Bureau – attached
- September 27, 2021 Briefing Summary

INTRODUCTION

The presentation on December 11th will be a joint effort by the Portland Parks Foundation, Architectural Resources Group, and the Portland Water Bureau to introduce the City's proposal and respond to Commission questions. Representatives from Portland Bureau of Transportation and the City Arts Program will also be available to answer questions at the Briefing.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Thompson Elk Fountain was constructed in 1900 for the purposes of providing refreshment for people and animals alike. It was designed by H.G. Wright (fountain) and Roland Hinton Perry (Elk) and was donated to the City by David P. Thompson.

Many City Bureaus have an interest in the Fountain. Because the fountain holds (and will circulate) water, it is managed by the Water Bureau. The Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC) has maintained the Elk statue portion of the fountain as a work of art. And because the fountain is located in the middle of the roadway, the Bureau of Transportation also has a vested interest in its siting and protection.

In the Summer of 2020, the fountain was significantly damaged by vandalism and fire and was subsequently removed from its historic location and stored for safekeeping until a resolution of its fate could be determined.

On September 27, 2021, at BDS's request, the City Arts Manager, Jeff Hawthorne, visited the Historic Landmarks Commission in the form of a Briefing to seek input on any proposed future treatment of this Historic Landmark, recognizing that this designated Historic Landmark is subject to the regulations of the Historic Resource overlay zone. The Commission resolutely confirmed that the fountain and the Elk should be considered as a single work of art which should be fully restored and reinstalled at its original location. A summary of Commission comments at that Briefing is attached.

A Design Advice Request (DAR) was later held on November 7, 2022. At that meeting, the City Arts Manager presented a proposal to restore the fountain in full and reinstall the fountain at its original location. The Commission also supported the idea of separating restoration of the fountain from any other potential improvements related to its restoration but outside the footprint of the fountain. A summary of Commission comments at that DAR is attached.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

Because the fountain is proposed to be restored to its original condition, the formal land use process to consider this action is a Type I Historic Resource Review. The proposal to add a circulating pump will not impact the physical aspects of the fountain as it will not be visible to the public. Some mechanical equipment related to the circulation may be located in the right-of-way or within one of the adjacent parks and can be considered separately or as part of the fountain review, though will also likely trigger a Type I Historic Resource Review for review of this mechanical equipment. This equipment includes a meter likely to be attached to the bathroom building in Chapman Square and an above-ground backflow preventer to be located near the Main Street sidewalk within Lownsdale Square. Changes in light fixtures on poles within these parks, and shining on the fountain for added security, will also likely trigger a Type I Historic Resource Review.

Because all of these aspects only amount to a Type I Historic Resource Review, which has a limited reach for the public notice, staff suggested this Briefing so that the public would have an additional opportunity to provide their input on the proposal.

REQUESTED COMMISSION ACTION

The Commission will be asked to provide comments on the proposal in anticipation of future staff reviews which have no local appeal process.