



**PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION**

Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

# South Park Blocks Master Plan

Draft Design Concepts

Community Comment Report

**February 2020**



# Contents

Introduction	page 2
Survey Respondent Demographics	page 3
Survey Results – What We Heard	page 5
Focus Group Summaries	page 19
Comments Submitted by Email	page 23
Design Concepts	page 31



## South Park Blocks Master Plan Project

[www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/spb](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/spb)

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# Introduction

As part of Portland Parks & Recreation's efforts to shape the future of the South Park Blocks, community comments were invited on three draft design concepts between November 23, 2019, and December 30, 2019. This report presents the information gathered during this community review and comment period. The feedback on the design concepts will guide the development of a preferred design that will be presented to the community for review and comment later in the spring.

A written survey was used to gather feedback on design elements and park features shown in three concepts. Fourteen paper surveys and 124 online surveys were submitted for a total of 138 responses. Paper copies of the survey were made available at a Community Gathering on November 23 and at stakeholder meetings and events. An online version of the survey was available on the South Park Blocks Master Plan project web page. The same nine questions were asked in both versions of the survey.

In addition to the survey, two focus group discussions engaged high school and university students to understand their level of support for design elements and park features. Finally, five comment letters were submitted via email. This report presents the data and information from all these sources.

The community engagement for this stage of the project was designed to:

- Enlist community participation in the design review process with a special focus on students, PSU communities of color, the Native American Community Advisory Council and Parks Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Explain how community feedback and ideas during the visioning phase influenced the development of draft concepts;
- Gather and understand community feedback on the design concepts to develop a community-supported preferred design;
- Build community relationships and support for the South Park Blocks and PP&R.

This second stage of engagement included two meetings of the Community Advisory Committee, stakeholder discussions, focus groups with students at Portland State University and St Mary's Academy, consultations with the Parks Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Native American Community Advisory Council. Portland Parks & Recreation partnered with the PSU Farmers Market to engage market vendors and visitors to launch a month-long comment period.

- PP&R partnered with the Portland Farmer's Market to promote the project with a Community Booth at the 11/23 PSU Market and outreach through their vendor networks and social media posts.
- More than 250 people were contacted at a Farmers Market Booth and Gathering held inside Smith Memorial Student Center on 11/23/2019. A Spanish interpreter provided language assistance to participants. Surveys were distributed at both locations during the event.
- 139 people submitted written and online surveys with detailed comments on the three design concepts between November 23 and December 30, 2019. Three additional comments were sent as letters.
- Two focus groups were held with students at Portland State University and St Mary's Academy.

- Multiple email notifications were sent to promote the design concepts, community gathering event and survey to neighbors, stakeholders, project advisors and community organizations.
- Social media posts encouraged the review of design concepts, attendance at the Community Gathering in November and invited comments using a survey.
- A total of 500 flyers in Spanish and English were distributed to residents, businesses, organizations, park visitors, PSU students and staff, and Portland Farmers Market visitors.
- An announcement about the Community Gathering and comment survey was posted on the PP&R main web page, the project web page and featured in the City of Portland online citywide events calendar.
- 35 lawn signs in Spanish and English promoting the project and Community Gathering were posted in the park for ten days prior and one week after the event.

# Survey Respondent Demographics

## Who did we hear from?

### Where do you live?

Answer Choice	Percentage	Responses
Southwest Portland	48.21%	54
Southeast Portland	15.18%	17
Portland Metropolitan Area	12.50%	14
Northeast Portland	8.93%	10
Northwest Portland	6.25%	7
Prefer Not to Answer	2.68%	3
East Portland	0.00%	0
Outside Portland Metro Area	0.00%	0

### What year were you born?

Answer Choice	Percentage	Responses
After 2000	0.00%	0
1990-1999	8.11%	9
1980-1989	21.62%	24
1970-1979	18.02%	20
1960-1969	16.22%	18
1950-1959	13.51%	15
1940-1949	14.41%	16
Before 1940	3.60%	4
Prefer not to answer	4.50%	5

### When asked to identify your racial or ethnic identity, how do you identify? (Pick all that apply)

Answer Choice	Percentage	Responses
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.89%	2
Asian or Asian American	1.89%	2
Black or African American	0.94%	1
Hispanic or Latino/A/X	7.55%	8
Middle Eastern/North African	0.00%	0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
White	79.25%	84
Unknown/Don't Know	0.00%	0
Prefer not to answer	11.32%	12
Not listed above (please specify)	2.83%	3*

*\*Responses to "not listed above": Persian, "White" is not a racial or ethnic identity, Slavic*

### How do you identify your gender?

Answer Choice	Percentage	Responses
Female	48.60%	52
Male	42.99%	46
Transmasculine	0.00%	0
Transfeminine	0.00%	0
Genderqueer/Androgynous	0.93%	1
Prefer not to answer	6.54%	7
Not listed above (please specify)	0.93%	1

### Do you or a family member live with a disability or identify as a disabled person?

Answer Choice	Percentage	Responses
Yes	20.75%	22
No	79.25%	84

**If yes, please described the nature of you and/or your family member's disability.**  
(Please check all that apply)

Answer Choice	Percentage	Responses
Mobility (e.g., walking, climbing stairs)	41.67%	10
Visual (e.g., blind, low vision)	20.83%	5
Deaf or hard-of-hearing	25.00%	6
Cognitive (e.g., traumatic brain injury, learning disability)	20.83%	5
Mental Health (e.g., anxiety, PTSD)	45.83%	11
Intellectual or developmental (e.g., Down syndrome, fragile X syndrome)	12.50%	3
Invisible (e.g., diabetes, HIV, cancer)	25.00%	6
Prefer not to disclose	8.33%	2
Prefer to describe	4.17%	1*

*\* Responses to "prefer to describe": I live downtown. The Park Blocks are my yard.*

# Survey Results – What We Heard

## Key Findings

- Among the most favored improvements and new elements are social seating, connected gathering and event spaces, art representing more diverse histories and identities, renovation of Smith Amphitheater, gateways at the north and south entrances and a renovated playground.
- Among the least favored improvements and new elements are diagonal paths in Blocks 10-12, a new event plaza outside the Viking Pavilion (Block 2), a new performance plaza outside Lincoln Hall, and three gateways at Blocks 1, 6 and 12.
- To mark entrances and create gateways, respondents prefer the use of iconic landscaping, sculptural features, signage and art installations. Several respondents commented gateways and entrances were not needed in the park.
- To sustain the park’s historic tree canopy, respondents want to increase the range of tree species, decrease the percentage of elms over time, retain the healthy elms along the central promenade and plant small groups of trees to balance sun/shade areas in the University District.
- There is strong support to add native plantings in Block 1 to enhance connections to the Native American Student and Community Center, maintain open lawn in the University District, and add lower maintenance native plantings in Blocks 7-9. Reconfiguring raised planting beds to form diagonal “X” pathways in the Cultural District was the least favored planting option.
- Two pedestrian pathway improvements received similar strong support: a wider, enhanced central pedestrian promenade in the Cultural District, and short diagonal paths to connect pedestrians from pathways in center to corner street crossings in Cultural District.
- Safety and movement improvements with the greatest support are removing regular car traffic from one block of SW Main and one block of SW Madison between Park Avenues, and a signalized crossing at SW Market and Park Avenue West.
- The most favored Green Loop approach was to direct bicyclists to follow a two-way separated bikeway along Park Avenue West in both the University and Cultural Districts.
- The topic themes raised most often in response to Question 9 are: design priorities and features, traffic and cars, paths for pedestrians and wheels, pedestrians, people on wheels, trees, the planning process, plantings, the Green Loop and parking.
- There were thirteen comments about the difficulty using the survey tool and understanding the design concepts.

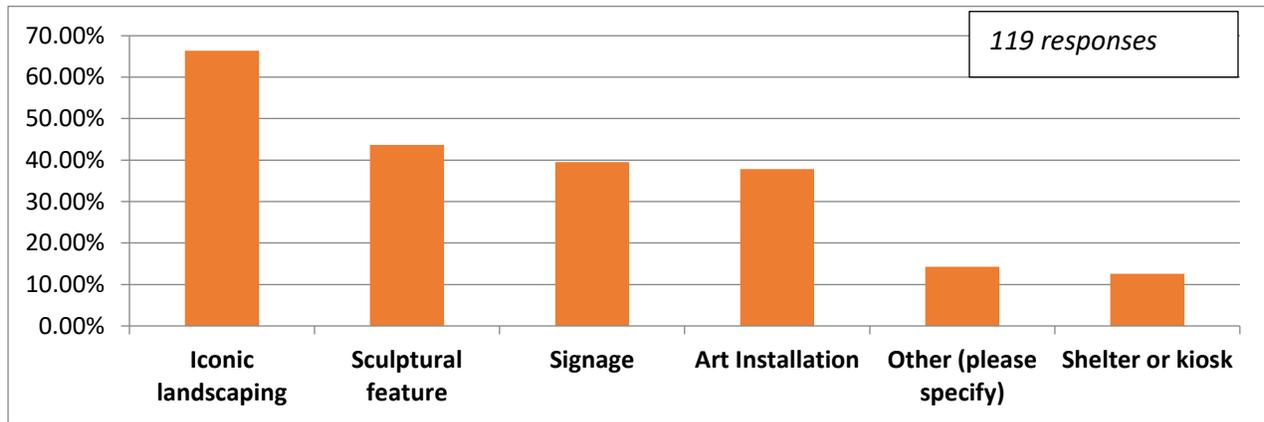
**1. Which major improvements or new elements do you think will help the South Park Blocks better serve the diverse needs of Portlanders now and into the future?**

(rank up to 16 features with 1 representing your favorite and 16 your least preferred)

*114 responses*

Ranking	Answer Choice	Score
1	Addition of new types of social seating in the neighborhood blocks (Blocks 7-9) in the Cultural District	11.49
2	Connected spaces for gathering and events in Blocks 10-12 in the Cultural District	10.94
3	Additional art throughout representing more diverse histories and identities	10.71
4	Renovated Smith Amphitheater at Block 4 in the University District	10.45
5	Gateways/marked entrances at Blocks 1 and 12 (north and south ends)	9.59
6	Playground renovation and social seating at Block 1 of the University District	9.59
7	Renovated plaza by Millar Library (Block 3) for outdoor study space in University District	9.45
8	Focus on creating a community spaces with interactive elements and social seating in Blocks 7-9	9.35
9	Greater connectivity to the Native American Student and Community Center at Block 1	9.30
10	Interactive play features throughout	9.17
11	Extension of Shemanski Plaza to connect Blocks 11 and 12	9.04
12	Play and interactive/musical art at neighborhood blocks in the Cultural District	7.43
13	Gateways at Blocks 1 and 12 (north and south ends) and at Block 6 (entrance to University District)	6.73
14	New performance plaza outside Lincoln Hall (Block 6) in the University District	6.63
15	New event plaza outside the Viking Pavilion (Block 2) in the University District	6.57
16	Connected spaces for gathering and events with diagonal paths at Blocks 10-12	6.54

**2. Gateways: What form do you think the gateways/entrances should take?**  
(select all that apply)



**Responses to “other”**

- Nature-scaping (Native Natural Habitat)
- Interpretive materials that share the history & future of the South Park Blocks.
- Arch.
- More trees. Native plants. Diverse native vegetation.
- Open space to gather/linger with iconic feature to serve as its own way-finder and indicator of place.
- Water feature.
- Something that is interactive and playful.
- Lighting!
- Visual connections deeper into the park blocks to draw you in.
- Elements of all of the above.
- None. Not needed.
- Not needed.
- I don't think gateways are necessary at all. It's apparent visually what you're experiencing. I think gateways to divide it into sections takes away from the impact of what it is and how many neighborhoods or different parts of the city it ties together.
- No gateways, that would be a waste of money, add seating and gathering places and lighting
- No gateways are necessary.
- Very complicated and not user friendly.
- None of the Above! Let it be! Today the SPB remains unique to Portland, generally intact and true to its origin as it continues to serve the city as originally conceived, 167 years ago. The Park is fundamentally open-space, benefitting all who seek relief from our increasingly-dense urban habitat. This Masterplan is in its conception an aberration and biased. It demonstrates that good design can be thwarted by money. As a design exercise it was flawed since its funding derives from the \$375,000 developer premium required by the city for planning approval for constructing an outsized project in our neighborhood. Funding was further appended with a developer constraint to program new use for the project-adjacent Park Block 8, this appears to have prompted predictable adverse consequences for the entire park. The Masterplan Plan documents exhibit an overwhelming fixation on programming new uses for the remaining open spaces in the park sequence (this is carried through in every Masterplan scheme shown and promoted in the survey without offer of a low-impact option). These schemes will result in adverse physical and visual effects to a critical and historic public resource in our central city. The SPB's should remain largely un-programmed, un-cluttered and unfettered by the influence of this singular developer and an apparently similarly inclined Masterplan program. If such a horse-trading scheme was reasonable and equitable, the funds would have been better spent restoring the open expression of the original park in its visually confused southernmost blocks. Certainly, the funding windfall

would have been more wisely spent in needed renovations of the park's existing features (ie: repairs to period lighting and park benches) and improving policing by City Parks Ranger program. Let it be!

**3. What additional ideas shown in the concepts do you prefer to assist tree succession planning in the South Park Blocks?**

(rank the ideas 1-7 with 1 representing your favorite and 7 your least preferred) *110 responses*

Ranking	Answer Choice	Score
1	Increase the range of tree species to add visual character and improve ecological health	5.21
2	Facilitate greater biodiversity by increasing range of species, while decreasing percentage of elms over time	4.36
3	Retain the healthy, mature elms alongside the central pedestrian promenade path by removing trees in the center of Blocks 7-12	4.31
4	Plant small groups of trees to balance sun/shade areas in Blocks 1-6 of University District	4.15
5	Limited removal of some trees to support new native plantings between Blocks 7-9 and increased sun access for other trees and park improvements	3.74
6	Explore the strategic addition of evergreens (conifers)	3.73
7	Limited removal of trees to support new features in neighborhood blocks and to increase access to sunlight in the Cultural District	3.56

**4. In addition to trees, what other plants and shrubs would you like to see in the South Park Blocks? (rank the ideas 1-10 with 1 representing your favorite and 10 your least preferred)**

*103 responses*

Ranking	Answer Choice	Score
1	Add native plantings to Block 1 to provide connection to the Native American Student and Community Center	7.69
2	Maintain open lawn spaces in the University District	6.9
3	Add lower-maintenance, native plantings to Blocks 7-9	6.57
4	Retain raised beds in the Blocks 9-12	5.78
5	Expand and simplify native mix planting areas in the University District	5.74
6	Simplify native planting palette near the Farewell to Orpheus fountain (Block 5)	5.65
7	Add new rose and/or flower beds by SW Market Street (Blocks 6-7)	5.65
8	Retain Cultural District planters and add new planting beds in the streets with limited vehicle traffic between Blocks 9-12	5.53
9	Redistribute raised planters and beds in Blocks 7-9 from north-south to east-west orientations	4.84
10	Reconfigure raised planting beds in Cultural District to frame diagonal "X" pathways	2.95

**5. Please rank the pedestrian pathway improvement ideas from 1-3 with 1 representing your favorite and 3 your least preferred. 101 responses**

Ranking	Answer Choice	Score
1	Wider, enhanced central pedestrian promenade in the Cultural District (Blocks 7-12).	2.35
2	Short diagonal paths to connect pedestrians from pathways in center to corner street crossings in Cultural District (Blocks 7-9) aligning them with corner street crossings and to reflect diagonal paths that were present during the early years of the park's history.	2.13
3	Diagonal "X" pathways in the Cultural District (Blocks 7-12) to connect with corner crossings and to reflect "X" pathways that were present during the early years of the park's history.	1.63

**6. Please rank the ideas for improving movement and safety from 1 to 11 with 1 representing your favorite and 11 your least preferred. 105 responses**

Ranking	Answer Choice	Score
1	Regular car traffic removed from one block of SW Main in between Park Avenues	7.68
2	Regular car traffic removed from one block of SW Madison in between Park Avenues	7.29
3	Signalized crossing at SW Market Street and Park Avenue West	7.05
4	Regular car traffic removed from one block of Park Avenue West at Block 5	6.6
5	Tabled Intersections in the Cultural District	6.43
6	Signalized crossing at SW Clay Street and Park Avenue East	6.34
7	Narrowed road widths in the Cultural District	5.98
8	Regular car traffic removed from one block of Park Avenue East at Block 1	5.75
9	Woonerf street treatment	5.6
10	Regular car traffic removed from one block at SW College in between Park Avenues	5.49
11	Median islands in the Cultural District	4.72

**7. Please rank the Green Loop approaches for the University District (Blocks 1-6) 1-3, with 1 being your favorite and 3 being your least preferred. 91 responses**

Ranking	Answer Choice	Score
1	Bicyclists on the Green Loop directed to two-way bikeway on Park Avenue West from Blocks 2-7.	2.51
2	Bicyclists on the Green Loop directed to follow the shared path for pedestrians and wheeled users along Park Avenue West in Blocks 1-6.	2
3	Bicyclists on the Green Loop directed to follow a shared path moving diagonally through Park Block 2, along Park Avenue West between Blocks 3-5 and then diagonally through Park Block 6.	1.49

**8. Please rank the Green Loop approaches for the University District (Blocks 1-6) 1-3, with 1 being your favorite and 3 being your least preferred. 84 responses**

Ranking	Answer Choice	Score
1	Bicyclists on the Green Loop directed to follow a two-way separated bikeway along Park Avenue West in Blocks 7-12.	2.29
2	Bicyclists on the Green Loop directed to one-way bikeways on both Park Avenues alongside Blocks 9-12. Northbound bikeway crosses from Park Avenue West to Park Avenue East through Park Block 8.	2.05
3	Bicyclists on the Green Loop directed to follow one-way bikeways on both Park Avenues alongside Blocks 7-11, then cross from Park Avenue East to Park Avenue West at SW Main Street.	1.72

**9. Do you have anything else you want to tell us to help reach a preferred park design?**

This question gave participants the opportunity to comment on any topic. The responses were sorted by themes, and the number shown after the heading indicates how many times the topic was mentioned. Some people addressed more than one topic in their responses to this question. Comments that addressed multiple topics were divided and appear as separate responses under the most relevant theme headings.

**Comment Themes**

- Design Priorities and Features (17)
- Traffic and Cars (17)
- Paths for Pedestrians and Wheels (15)
- Pedestrians (13)
- People on Wheels (12)
- Trees (12)
- Planning Process (11)
- Plantings (9)
- Green Loop (8)
- Parking (8)
- Safety, Security and Maintenance (6)
- Seating (3)
- Play Areas (3)
- Programming and Events (2)
- Loos / Toilets (2)
- Comment Survey
- Miscellaneous

**Design Priorities and Features (17)**

- More emphasis on public art, block landmarks and creative way-finding markers!
- There should be signing showing streetcar linkages to other parks along the entire route.
- Consider the aging population that are and will reside on the Park Blocks.
- The park blocks are already designed for engagement and study spaces.
- I like the idea of a promenade down the center of the park.
- Wide, tree and plant-lined walkways.
- Street crossings need to be improved.
- The table idea is awesome.
- Don't forget about direction for future Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines update -- what direction does the preferred open space design direction for the South Park Blocks/Green Loop give to future private development and their frontage improvements and/or relationship to open space?
- Respect the calming effect of the blocks for people without homes to relax in.

- Try to simplify the ideas. The space does not have to be filled up with stuff. We need open space not new art, gateways and plantings. The continuity of the string of blocks makes it a special experience, please do not lose that continuity.
- For the Cultural District in particular: Introduce small area changes one by one as pilots. Don't add so much stuff that the parks disappear under a mass of pavement, art, and play structures.
- I'd prefer to enhance rather than alter the appearance of the Park Blocks. I think the historic design is important to respect.
- The legacy of the South Park Blocks is: a Simple Design of 12 Narrow Blocks with Open Space, an Allée of Trees creating an axial focus with a Canopy to shade in Summer, to allow sun in Winter, and beautiful color in Fall and Spring. For the health of downtown residents, we need a refuge of open space that is pedestrian friendly without the noise and clutter of programmed spaces. We have a wonderful park now where one may sit in quiet and contemplate Lincoln, Roosevelt and roses. Step up Portland and spend our money on keeping this great legacy simply exceptional as originally planned.
- Outsiders do not respect this area as a neighborhood. Anything we can do to slow traffic, reduce noise (more trees, enforcing noise ordinances) and increase downtown citizens confidence in walkability should be the primary aim.
- This city needs more green space in the city itself. With losing trees around the museum and now the plaza at the museum turning this green space into more paving with multiple tasks for each square foot - loses what is now a beautiful space.
- The impact of climate change should be integrated into every aspect of the design. This includes obvious things, such as the species chosen, as well as more opaque calculations regarding carbon sequestration calculations and retention of rainwater in the Park Blocks instead of running off into storm sewers. Removing cars from the downtown area is a positive from a climate standpoint and an air quality standpoint. Please use materials that have lower carbon footprints and investigate water-permeable hardscapes and rain gardens to increase water retention. The plants will appreciate that in our hotter summers.

### **Traffic and Cars (17)**

- Slow down traffic on Market/Clay/Jefferson
- The calming and removal of private car use of the Park blocks should be #1 priority for this project.
- Get rid of the cars for people walking, biking or scooting.
- This design has the opportunity to be a big draw for getting people on foot and on bikes and cars don't belong in this mix.
- The park should be family friendly with limited car access.
- Minimize auto traffic and make pedestrian and bike traffic safe.
- Cars are an eyesore to the Park Blocks and the Green loop. Eliminate cars.
- You should close as many streets as possible to cars. Park West in front of the PAM should be closed to cars. It should be an extension of the museum to create a public plaza (hard surface) for events, art exhibits, etc. All drop offs can be moved to 10th Ave as part of the new Rothko pavilion. This new plaza can become the new sculpture park that will be lost with the new pavilion.
- Close as many streets as possible to expand parks.
- No cars on Park Ave West.
- Please make all this area car-free.

- Car free as much as possible.
- Close all sections of the Park Blocks to cars, remove all car parking, create separated bikeways.
- Reduce car traffic and increase cost of parking. Make neighborhood less reliant on cars. People drive too fast and aren't paying attention. This point in time represents an opportunity to implement world class pedestrian and bicycle focused streets - with zero and/or limited automobile access - on two of the most beautiful streets in the city. Please prioritize "human-scale" modes of mobility over the car.
- Vehicle traffic lanes and vehicle parking should NOT be removed as it will negatively impact tourism to the city if travel around the city is made more difficult.
- I would be careful not to restrict vehicle access too much on either side of Park Avenue. There is a lot of coming and going and need for direct access among the many residents, businesses, and cultural institutions that line the park. For example, apartment dwellers with mobility problems, and people needing to be dropped off at the many cultural buildings.
- Leave the blocks themselves mostly intact; instead focus on traffic calming of cross streets, especially Madison, Jefferson, and Columbia. Remake Madison Street: Narrow it to one lane by making one lane into parking for 2-3 cars, add a wide raised crossing in the middle, and have a bulb-out or two including near the south side fire hydrant.

### **Paths for Pedestrians and Wheels (15)**

- Separate path for wheels and peds.
- Keep pedestrians and wheeled travelers in different areas.
- A two-way bikeway would go a long way towards creating important bicycling infrastructure that also doesn't interfere with pedestrian movement.
- Giving more access to bikes will increase safety for pedestrians by limiting car and human interactions.
- Safe biking means dedicated lanes, not shared pathways. Please ignore the DNA suggestions; they are last century opinions and have no place in our future.
- I would like to increase pedestrian access and safety as well as increasing bicycle friendly access.
- Please take lessons from Copenhagen as far as designing space for bikers to safely ride with children and old people.
- I also am very much in favor of whatever improvements can be made to give walking and biking priority over cars.
- I don't mind sharing walking the central paths amid cyclists.
- NO "shared" bicycle spaces with pedestrians. Pedestrians always lose.
- Please don't let the developer/PBA stooges at the downtown neighborhood association kibosh the excellent plan for separated bike ways.
- Emphasize bike and pedestrian separation in shared use paths as part of the Green Loop - Peds on park paths; Bikes on shared/bikeway.
- Pedestrian, auto and bikes need to be the priority.
- There should be more focus on improving bike and pedestrian options. To me they are still too confusing, and the options seem to remove existing pedestrian and sidewalk space for bike infrastructure. In particular the inner sidewalks next to the street seem to be removed to provide bike lanes which is unsettling. The goal should be to add bike infrastructure without reducing pedestrian space, especially on blocks 7 and up.

- You state that pedestrian safety is a top priority - if so, please understand that bicyclists WILL NOT bike at walking speeds no matter what you do. Skateboarders and e-scooters will be there too. They will all move FAST and pay no attention to pedestrians. Check out the bike use along the Waterfront.

### **Pedestrians (13)**

- Park area should be extended by as much as possible and be strictly kept for pedestrians.
- Preserving the pedestrian emphasis, quiet rest spaces, and the central Pedestrian corridor are all key priorities
- Ultimately a park is all about pedestrians, as everyone traveling there will eventually be.
- Pedestrianize the space.
- Make more pedestrian plazas, sculpture parks, etc.
- Prioritize pedestrians.
- Moving the traffic patterns in this area to give more space, safety and appropriate pacing for pedestrians is key.
- I am an elderly woman pedestrian that walks through the park blocks. I do not like being forced to walk in the center of the blocks in the 2nd and 3rd options. There are times that I feel safer and do not have to interact with certain people if I can walk on the street side rather than down the center. Also a straight line is faster than crisscrossing.
- Community feedback did not seem to focus on bicyclists' needs; rather, on pedestrians. Listen to that.
- I walk through the park blocks almost daily and would love to feel safer from traffic.
- Safe crossings between each block.
- Installing dedicated bike lanes in a high pedestrian traffic zone that the Cultural District is would pose potential dangers to walkers in that area.
- As a pedestrian, I constantly need to avoid bikes and scooters while walking through the South Park Blocks.

### **People on Wheels (12)**

- Keep bikes as part of the plan.
- Provide excellent bike/scooter facilities.
- Prioritize safe non-motorized travel of all kinds!
- Bikes and motorized equipment must be prohibited.
- Scooter access should be kept as limited as possible.
- Make the park blocks scooter and bicycle free.

#### Bike Lanes

- BIKES AND CARS CAN SHARE THE ROAD. (Why make it more difficult for pedestrians and drivers? Traffic is slow here.)
- Each one-way narrow lane is safe enough for shared bikes and the slow cars.
- I would prefer the SPBs have no designated bikeways.
- While I'm in favor of bicycle amenities I don't think the Park Blocks themselves are the place to try and add bike lanes.
- I ride my bike south on the South Park Blocks most days of the week. This is an excellent bike route and much better for bikes than Broadway (which is steeper, busier, narrower, and more dangerous, especially because of right hooks).

- Shared bikeway on Mirrored Chain concept would be better without diagonal in block 6, although Mirrored Chain bikeway is preferred.

### Trees (12)

- Prioritize trees.
- Keep the trees.
- Keep the elms.
- Please don't remove any of the trees.
- Keep as many trees of all kinds as possible.
- Please don't remove the beautiful mature trees that are already present. They provide beautiful canopy that both helps with rain shelter but are also beautiful to look at down the boulevard of the park. It's so rare to see such big beautiful mature trees in the heart of the city. It's what makes it special and unique to Portland. It takes so long to get trees of that stature. Let them be. Buildings are what is blocking light. Not trees.
- I would go very slowly in removing existing trees, replacing only as needed.
- Let the blocks be a natural green space. Good tree canopy needed. No evergreens.
- Please retain as many deciduous trees as possible for summer shade and winter light. Coniferous trees are readily available in nearby forests.
- Keep conifers out - they shade during our gloomy winters. Keep deciduous trees and native plantings.
- I like the shade provided by the park blocks. There are plenty of other sunny places in downtown (Director Park, Pioneer Square, and McCall Waterfront Park all come to mind). I hope that as many trees as possible can be kept with new trees being added rather than cutting down existing trees solely for the purpose of admitting more sun. We need more trees, not fewer. Having shade in the summer is what makes the Park Blocks special and a great and comfortable place to be.
- Talk with Bob Salinger, Audubon Society, concerning air quality and trees.

### Planning Process (11)

- This is an exciting redesign of an iconic area of Portland.
- I do not see this as priority given the homelessness situation we are experiencing.
- Please do focus groups with disabled students and citizens before choosing a plan as so much of this affects accessibility/inclusion.
- The appropriate priority for the South Park blocks is historic preservation designation.
- The concepts are hard to follow what is different & not.
- Please don't cave in to the DNA.
- Connect with BikeLoud and Street Trust also.
- There are so many other parks that are unsuccessful. Please put money into those instead. Make those the playgrounds and covered spaces needed.
- DON'T SPEND MONEY DOING ANY OF THESE THINGS comes to mind. Please note I have lived in and loved the SPBs since 2005 and would very much appreciate improvements to the park.
- Further planning should be put on hold until the historic designation is completed for the south Park Blocks - so we will all know what needs to be kept pretty much "as is."
- This park is critical for the nearby residents and downtown workers, so their responses should be prioritized. That would require bottom up planning, which always results in a much better product. This top-down product ignores the results of the first survey. I suggest you go back to the drawing

board. It occurs to me that this master plan process is being done only because developer money was available not because it was a high priority. That money perhaps should have gone to a review and research towards getting a historic designation for the park instead.

### Plantings (9)

- Increase of Native plants and cultural information in the park and decrease lawn space (which takes more water and is less eco-friendly).
- Lots of native, low maintenance, plants - No lawn (sorry) - Mulch - leave leaves on ground - Make it like nature
- Prioritize native vegetation.
- Rugged plants!
- Maybe more non-toxic native planting would be good to integrate.
- More foraged plants to get people out of offices. Biodiversity of microbes makes allergies, asthma, multiple sclerosis less likely. See "Never Home Alone" by Rob Dunn. Examples - American Chestnut, Huckleberry, Salmonberry, Thimbleberry, Salal, Oregon Grape. Also, let more diverse plants grow in lawn for insect health - clover, dandelion, chickweed, lamb's quarters, nettles, dead nettle, amaranth.
- Less grass in general, it doesn't do well under so many trees and so much traffic.
- Keep much of the lawns. Place little importance on native plantings. The parks are in downtown; they're meant to have arranged and introduced plants. If I want swaths of native plants, I could go to a Metro park or wilderness for that.
- Replace grass with crushed rock.

### Green Loop (8)

- Please keep the green loop in the Park Blocks! Broadway is not a good option.
- I'm looking forward to someday riding the Green Loop with family and friends. Giving cyclists a safe place to ride will enhance the city.
- Please keep the green loop in the park blocks where it belongs and has been planned. A commuter bikeway should also be provided on Broadway. The neighborhood association's arguments against people riding bikes in the park blocks are at best not-factual, and at worst, spurious and fear-mongering.
- Green Loop should be routed to Broadway and not through Park - they endanger pedestrians and children.
- Keep it simple and don't get too cute with the options. You'll turn the green loop into the green maze. Bike and pedestrian routes should provide simple and linear north to south access with other routes as secondary.
- The Green Loop should restrict bike traffic to another street owing to dangers with pedestrians in the park blocks.
- Why include bicycles in the Park Blocks in the Green Loop?
- Bicycles should use Broadway as this part of the "Green Loop", or the South Park Blocks will never be peaceful and safe again for handicapped, children, and pedestrians. The LAST thing bicycles should do is be put on a diagonal path through the Park Blocks.

## Parking (8)

- It also seems like it'd be a lot cheaper to just restore the way it used to be and remove the parking on the inner side of the blocks on each side and turn that space into a bike lane.
- Please do not eliminate any parking on Park Avenue, as parking is already at a premium.
- Do not remove any but the most token amount of parking from the Park Avenues.
- Remove more parking (direct motorists to garages). Park Blocks should be about enjoying the park more than finding a place to park.
- I really hope as much parking on Park can be removed as possible to improve the pedestrian experience and make the Park about people, not cars!
- Remove parking, remove cars.
- I live next to the South park blocks (Columbia and 11th) and am incredibly disappointed with these options. By far the best thing you could do to improve the South Park blocks is to remove car access along the streets next to them. Right now, the park blocks mainly serve as a parking lot, and this is a terrible use for one of the best public spaces in the city. Remove the car and parking lanes, put in super wide bike lanes instead, expand the park onto the newly available space, and the area would be fabulously nicer to spend time in and visit. I can't believe there's not a single option to remove car access along the blocks here, in a city that supposedly prioritizes pedestrian and bike movement. Rethink these designs with that option please, who knows how many decades it'll be until the park blocks get another redesign look, and I don't want to be stuck with a stupid parking lot next to my house for decades when we could be easily putting together a world class human space. Parks not parking lots please!
- The best part of all of the concepts involved removing cars/parking from the park blocks. I would encourage the team to look at thinking bigger. Remove ALL parking on the park blocks, make all of Park a woonerf, turn the park blocks in to a car-lite Las Ramblas.

## Safety, Security and Maintenance (6)

- With safety/security as the number one concern, and Ranger staffing limited, please consider how the design will encourage or discourage houseless camping and vagrant drug usage as is currently common.
- Meanwhile, the best thing that could be done for the Park Blocks is to increase patrols so people will understand that it's not okay to shoot up, sell drugs, smoke anything or throw all their garbage on the ground.
- I pass people using needle in the South Park Blocks at least 3 times a week. A vagrant was caught camping in my storage room along Park Ave. Theft is rampant. Our HOA has tripled its security funding. Why doesn't your "Master Plan for context and the future" take into consideration of security and safety. None of this architectural BS means anything if the majority of people enjoying your "improvements" are cridders. Portland keeps ignoring this issue and it's splitting the Dems, which is exactly what Trump wants. Not everyone who loves Portland is an SJW. Ramp up enforcement. Wake up.
- Enforce no smoking
- Keep cleaner
- Of primary importance to making the park blocks useful to the citizens is maintaining a clean environment and not allowing smoking, camping, marijuana and drug use.

### Seating (3)

- Better seating opportunities.
- Seating with tables!
- If you observe how the park is being used now, you will realize that on many occasions people are EATING in the park, with very little to make that a comfortable experience. Many, many school groups come on field trips to the museum, the historical society and to the theaters. They sit on the grass to eat their lunches. When the farmers market is open in Shemanski in the summer, multitudes of office workers buy lunch at the market and have no comfortable surface to eat on.

### Play Areas (3)

- Pre-school children are frequent users of the park but there are no facilities designed for play (except for the playground at the very far end, a long, long way from block 12.) The day care centers that serve downtown workers need open outdoor spaces for play. Westmoreland Park Nature Playground is a good model: No plastic, all-natural elements.
- Interactive/play features that are part play area, part informal gathering space, part sculpture and part landscaping are the best. They can be enjoyed by many different groups and tend to avoid looking deserted during the off-season.
- Park and natural areas should not be made into a playground for adults or children.

### Programming and Events (2)

- I'm excited that this project has the potential to create some really wonderful community spaces that can be activated with events, performance, and play.
- Design can facilitate community building. Having educational and cultural events scheduled throughout the blocks helps connect people to the space. Could there be a combination of formal events (concerts, etc.) and informal (contra dancing in the plaza)? I'd like the parks to be used as community resources for addressing thorny issues. One example might be explaining our increasingly complicated recycling system, sharing resources for reducing & reusing, and organizing collection of hard to recycle kinds of stuff.

### Loos / Toilets (2)

- A second loo would be great.
- I just think the Loo needs to go. And no others brought in. The constant door slamming is one thing. But mainly it is just a drug house. Most people won't use it because of all the drug use and it is a biohazard. If we want to clean up the Park Blocks, we should get rid of the Loo. Last summer it was shut down for a few days for maintenance, and all the noise, litter and drug use was gone until they reopened the Loo.

### Miscellaneous

- Thank you for listening.
- Thank you.
- Sorry to be so negative, but this is my backyard and I use it nearly every day.
- Block the building of tall buildings on Park Avenue.
- Is anyone reading these comments?!

- Save Sylvester Sycamore from the ravages of a downtown surface parking lot that allows parking far too close and pours pollutants into its tree space. Sycamores can live 850 years if well-treated.

### Comment Survey

- Terrible survey.
- Your design options are very confusing and don't meet my expectations!
- Survey is extremely difficult to complete on a phone.
- This survey offers only channeled comments.
- This has been a difficult survey to follow and fill out.
- The reason I didn't fill in all the "numbered choices" is that most of them were only "least bad" - there were very few that I could support at all.
- This survey is flawed. There is no ability to say "poor idea" to more than one item, so the result is top down planning.
- Your survey is very hard to follow, and the choices are poor.
- Some of the later options around vehicular and ped circulation got too complicated for me, so I skipped those questions. Maybe a diagram with each one?
- Woah, this was a lot of stuff, good luck with this poll. Looks like you can make the data say whatever you want.
- I'm frustrated with this survey: 1) If I dislike an idea, I cannot tell if I should leave the ranking blank or rank it last. 2) Many questions had no correct answer for me.
- "Portland the City that Works". Not one of your Master Plan Concepts works!

# Focus Groups

## St Mary's Academy Students

Tate White, Barbara Hart and CAC member Maya Sykes met with members of the St Mary's Academy Student Review Board on February 25. The Student Review Board consists of a broad range of students to engage multiple perspectives and serves as a decision-making board for the approval of student-led initiatives, proposals and clubs. St. Mary's Academy is a Catholic high school for young women in downtown Portland with an enrollment of 680 students.

The purpose of the focus group was to gather feedback from high school students on the draft design concepts. The 45-minute focus group was held during the group's regular meeting at the beginning of the school day. Participants included 10 students and McKenzie D'Ambrosio, SMA Student Activities Coordinator.

### How do you use the South Park Blocks now?

- I live nearby, the park is my front yard.
- I go to the park to visit the Farmers Market.
- I go on my way to an event, to attend a concert or movie.
- I like to eat lunch there on school days when the weather is warm.
- I pass through the park on my way to other places.
- My family visits to attend events
- I don't really visit the park; I have no reason to go.
- I don't use the park now as it doesn't seem super safe.
- I like to sit in the shade on hot summer days.
- I walk through PSU campus on my way to the library.

After a presentation on the South Park Blocks and draft design concepts the students discussed their level of support for design elements and park features.

### Feedback on the Emerald Arrow and Braided Districts Concepts:

- Add more plantings, native plants, not just lawn and grass. (5)
- Add play spaces throughout the park to support families. These will improve the 'feel' of the park. (4)
- Group seating is better than old style benches. Provide space for families and gatherings. (4)
- The Smith Plaza renovation ideas are good. This would make the area more usable. (3)
- Change the muddy places / lawn into better play spaces, especially near the museum where kids often play. Make these spaces usable. (2)
- I like the central promenade of the Emerald Arrow concept. (2)
- Make the street crossings safer.
- The park is not a super safe place. (3)
- Walking surfaces are uneven and inaccessible for some people.
- The sidewalks on the edges don't seem safe. I like the idea of the larger walkway through the center.

- Add coffee carts or food trucks to bring people in and make the spaces more vibrant.
- Add another Portland Loo or toilet.
- Consider adding a Community Garden in the Neighborhood Blocks, perhaps in raised planters.
- Bike lanes separated from pedestrians -- the Green Loop -- is a good idea.
- Add more art throughout the park.
- Sustain the shaded greenspace – this is so rare in downtown.
- Create spaces for students doing homework with seating at small tables.
- Make the park a destination for families living and visiting downtown.
- Consider a location for Biketown rentals near the park to encourage cycling.

## **Follow Up**

The group was very interested to participate in the next steps of the planning process. They requested a follow up meeting to review and discuss the preferred design in the late spring. Barbara and Tate will be in touch to arrange a second focus group during the next comment period.

## **Portland State University Students**

Tate White, Barbara Hart and Eder Katembwe met with 14 Portland State Students at the Karl Miller Center for a two-hour focus group on February 28. The group included student leaders from the My Africa Business Club, Financial Management Association, Green Council and Student Sustainability Center. The purpose of the focus group was to engage students with diverse perspectives including students of color, immigrants and refugees and students living with disabilities in a discussion of the draft design concepts for the South Park Blocks Master Plan.

We began with an overview of community engagement and focus groups, followed by a presentation and discussion of the South Park Blocks draft design concepts.

### **Reflect on a recent visit to the park - what did you notice?**

- Not enough tables, clean spaces to work (10)
- Smoother pavement needed – surfaces are uneven, bumpy and not safe for wheelchair users.
- Scooters and bicycles are mixed with pedestrians
- Trees – big ones, historic
- Beautiful tree canopy with clean walkways through the greenspace. Very special place in downtown.
- Green, sunny spaces
- Smoking
- Intimidating behavior
- Lack of recycling and composting bins
- Not enough toilets - need personal hygiene supplies
- Park is dark and uninviting at times
- People walking, families

- Historic preservation
- Street crossings are difficult, especially at night
- Bench seating - need space for groups and families
- Homeless people
- Some places are visually uninteresting, need more variety
- Gathering spaces need updating

### **Ideas to Improve the South Park Blocks**

- Sustain the tree canopy with a strategy for tree succession
- Add picnic tables with umbrellas
- More seating for groups – design seating as art features
- Create outdoor education spaces to learn about park, history and native plants
- Create volunteer opportunities for students to help build and maintain the park
- Expand native plantings and make these contiguous so they function as habitat
- Add community garden spaces, put functional plants in raised-bed food gardens
- Add plants to attract bees and pollinators
- Add more diverse art in the park to reflect local artists
- Create rotating, changing, temporary art installations in the park
- Engage local artist community to create / select art in park and medians
- Separate pedestrians and bicycles/scooters/boards
- Install smooth pavements and surfaces to increase accessibility
- Increase park ranger patrols and enforcement
- Add more toilets / Portland Loos
- More and better lighting throughout the park
- Participatory gardens and plantings to connect Native American Community and Student Center
- Interpretive signage and art to acknowledge diverse cultures, sites and communities
- Earlier involvement of PSU students in the planning process
- Hire more diverse, community-based planning consultants and sub consultants
- Add interactive play spaces and games for all ages (small tennis courts, game pieces, programming)
- Acknowledge PSU Salmon-Safe designation
- Name each block in honor / recognition of a different cultural leader
- Recycling and compost collection
- Add dog bags to support clean up

Participants shared their feedback on two of the design concepts with a focus on design elements and park features shown in each concept.

### **What proposed improvements do you like / support?**

- **Emerald Arrow**
  - Native plants - add these to the Cultural District, expand and diversify plant mix
  - Open space and open lawn
  - Street closures between the park blocks
  - Smith Plaza Renovation (10)
    - Large canopy for year-round use
  - Traffic calming – extend car free area across Market Street
  - Safer pedestrian crossings – ped-activated signals
  
- **Braided Districts**
  - Native plants
  - Street closures with planters
  - More green space
  - Traffic changes - street calming
  - Separated bikeways throughout the park

### **What proposed improvements do you not like / not support?**

- **Emerald Arrow**
  - Large group seating may not last or hold up – maintenance challenge. Use durable, sustainable materials.
  
- **Braided Districts**
  - Narrow streets without adding concrete / paving – think green, sustainability

### **Follow Up**

The group was very interested to stay involved in the planning process and review the preferred design in the late spring. Two students offered to help coordinate a second focus group with PP&R:

- Isatou S. Barry, Chair, My African Business Club and President of the Financial Management Association
  
- Warren Gunn, Volunteer Coordinator, Student Sustainability Center

Barbara and Eder will be in touch to arrange a second focus group during the next comment period.

# Comments Submitted by Email

## Food Carts

Thank you for your effort for making South Park Blocks a better place for all! :)

Our little food carts are a part of day to day lives of people on SPB and after being here for 7 years, it feels like a we are a big family. Basha's food cart has been here for over 25 years. We have hung in here as small business owners and survived many conditions and obstacles we have faced here throughout the years. Our electricity (generator) usage was denied 1.5 years ago, after operating with generators for several years, but no other solution has been put forth. Losing electricity has cost us thousands of dollars in trying to changing appliances and using solar panels, inverters, and deep cycle heavy batteries, which still does not get us through the whole day. Having to bring in all the heavy stuff several times a day, everyday, has also come with physical restraints. Many carts have given up this location and even us who are left here, consider if we are going to survive.

I use to open my cart for breakfast at 7am-7pm, to accommodate to PSU library staff and early traffic and stayed after all others were closed; So, not only we have had to pay for new equipment and processes to provide power, we are losing many hours of sales and business opportunities to grow. All of us carts on Park blocks had to close down the three months of summer, due to the brutal experiences we had for the first year without power. I almost had a heat stroke last year because my batteries died in the middle of lunch rush and inside of my cart turned 173 degrees which I took pictures and shared with PSU and the City for hopes to get some help. I have also shared the email of pictures with Portland Business Alliance and they have been active in finding us a solution.

Due to our closure this summer, we have lost many of our regulars that came from pioneer square and waterfront areas because we were not there for three months of summer, that they could walk up to south park blocks during the sunny days. I've also lost many good employees because of the conditions and lack of schedule stability due to lack of our amenities.

We have been advocating and begging for at least electricity for our carts, or yet even a better solution such as a small stand alone shack that we can operate inside which can also provide water and power for farmers market or any other PSU or public activities that happen in our area while we are not in operation. This will also allow us to keep everything inside of our carts and eliminate coolers sitting outside and around our little 6x6 carts.

Sorry for all the little details, but I wanted to give you an idea and a good picture of what is happening, and of our needs. It was very nice to meet you and glad to see that there is someone in charge that is actively trying to help improve conditions on South Park Blocks.

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## Play Piece

Since the meeting at 1500 SW. 8<sup>th</sup> where we discussed the upcoming 25-year plan for the S Park Blocks, I've been doing some more thinking about the gateway at the Southern end by the indigenous student center on PSU campus.

I think we could do an effective new play piece as an open-sided quarter-size model of a long house for climbing and imaginary play. A long house would have its door facing the water (east to the Willamette River) It could be made of jungle gym type climbing material, some wood plank material fabricated of a synthetics that would avoid any splinters, molded shelves with reliefs of typical hand goods used at a long house.

It might be approximately 12 feet by 20 feet. With 5 cubicles on each side of an open center corridor. Most cubicles but not all would have 'shelves' about one foot off the ground with reliefs of objects typically used. One of bows and arrows, another of stone/wood working tools, another of fishing tools (nets, hooks and stone weights) another of kitchen and sewing goods. Being reliefs allows engagement by

1. Paper and chalk rubbing.
2. Imaginatory play of outdoor large muscle activity and not just housekeeping activity as might be typical for a traditional 'house'
3. Representation of typical equipment developed and used on this land.

A traditional longhouse in the area would have movable roof planks to let out smoke, let in light and air. However I think this trait is doubtful with respect to children safety. It goes without saying (although I just have) Such a piece should be designed for children's safety as well as authenticity. Pits for acorn leaching, fire, cooking are tempting but implementation may be problematic.

I would be delighted to participate in future planning. thanks

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## **Dog Park**

Around Thanksgiving I saw signs up along the South Park Blocks soliciting public comments to help inform the South Park Blocks Master Plan. While I was unable to attend the public meeting at that time, I would like to offer my input.

I think one of the best, most feasible, and affordable things that the City of Portland could do with the South Park Blocks would be to convert a block (or half block) into a public dog park. There are several reasons why I think this is a good idea:

- Clear and demonstrated demand: Based on the current population in the South Park Blocks, there is clearly a need for a space for dogs and their humans to play and socialize. Visit the South Park Blocks any time of day, any day of the week, and you will see people walking their dogs. Many people already use the informal dog park on PSU campus, but this is not fenced or maintained as an official dog park, and thereby does not create the dedicated space that would so benefit the local community.
- Reduce impact to other parts of the park: Providing a dedicated space for dog-walkers would improve their quality of life while also concentrating dogs in a single, dedicated space, thereby reducing the impact of dogs to other parts of the park (and the local business community). Moreover, given urban lifestyle trends and new developments in the neighborhood, we can only expect to see more residents - and dogs - in the neighborhood in the coming years.
- Fits the vision of the Master Plan: The vision of the the South Parks Master Plan includes: gathering spaces for community and connect[ing] neighbors. A dog park clearly achieves these goals. Visit any other dog park in the city and you will see neighbors socializing, getting to know each other, and enjoying time outside. It would be great to offer this same benefit to the South Park Blocks community.
- Limited impact to the tree canopy: Portland Parks could create a dog park in the South Park Blocks without impacting the tree canopy. Only the ground would be impacted (with the addition of fencing and perhaps bark chips or other ground cover). Indeed, a dog park would help many residents enjoy the existing tree canopy without a negative impact.



November 27, 2019

TO: Mayor Ted Wheeler – mayorwheeler@portlandoregon.gov  
Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, City Commissioner for Transportation – chloe@portlandoregon.gov  
Commissioner Nick Fish, City Commissioner for Parks – nick@portlandoregon.gov

Subject: South Park Blocks Master Plan/Green Loop/Pedestrian Safety

The Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) writes to warn of potential pedestrian-bicycle conflicts that need addressing at an early stage of the South Park Master Planning process, which at this point includes three concept options<sup>1</sup> of running the Green Loop along the two north-south parallel streets (Park Avenue East and West) bordering the South Park Blocks.

The DNA supports dedicated bike lanes as an important part of the City's transportation planning. However, the DNA currently questions the concept of having dedicated lanes of the Green Loop run along the South Park Blocks for a number of reasons.

Given that:

- Hundreds of children come each week to the Cultural District (northern 3 blocks) by school buses to attend free arts programming offered by the Portland Art Museum, the Oregon Historical Society and the Portland5.
  - To accommodate all needs of these critical Portland institutions, the DNA recommends reaching out to the leadership all of these organizations to understand potential impacts on school bus parking, deliveries of children, and child safety with children assembling in the park blocks.
  - Portland5 indicates to the DNA that they serve 1,400 Title I children each week in their enrichment programming.
- Kindergartens/preschools in the area bring children to the park blocks during the day to play, usually crossing the Park Avenues with a couple of teachers guiding them.
- This is the only green space available to West End residents. Per city statistics<sup>2</sup>, there are no (0.00) open spaces currently in the West End, which holds one of the highest densities of affordable and “missing middle” housing and in the area. Given no alternative West End green space, the Park Blocks are heavily used and are a crucial green space for all downtown residents. As you are doubtless aware, the health benefits of green spaces and trees are well documented. The highest priority in the popular park blocks and adjacent Park Avenue(s) should be pedestrian safety.
  - Please keep in mind, there is no alternative green space for this population<sup>3</sup>, but there are plenty of other streets where bicycles can ride. Would the Green Loop be more appropriate on Broadway? We understand the “commuter” bike lanes are planned to be on Broadway, so combining the Green Loop with that is a possibility.
  - Cyclists could still take a side trip from a Broadway Green Loop to any destination within the park blocks. They just would not have a dedicated lane.



- Madison Street pedestrian-only walkways join the streetcar stops on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> with the Park Blocks at Madison/Park. Hundreds of commuters/residents heading to downtown offices or shops or to the Cultural District organizations use the passageways day and night, resulting in heavy east-west pedestrian traffic crossing both (east and west) Park Avenues. Because current on-street parking reduces the single car lane to one *narrow* lane, cars go very slowly; parked cars on both sides of the street currently act to protect pedestrians on sidewalks. Pedestrians can easily and safely cross a narrow, single lane of slow-moving cars.
- Auto drivers are licensed and cars registered, so tracking and enforcement of violations is possible. Because cyclists are neither trained nor licensed and because bicycles are not registered so not traceable, it is not possible to report violations. This lack of enforcement likely contributes to the many violations and “encounters” nearby residents witness/experience already today, without an increase of more cyclists the Green Loop would bring.
- The Wednesday Farmer’s Market draws hundreds of people<sup>4</sup> including school children, most on foot from nearby residential and office buildings. Heavy east-west street/park block crossings by pedestrians are common.
  - Vendors also need temporary parking to be able to deliver their produce and set up their temporary stands in Shemanski Park which would be complicated by a bike lane in place of parking spaces.
  - To reduce conflicts between distracted shoppers and cyclists, at least on market-day, closing down these bike lanes would also seem advisable.
- Hundreds of people attend the churches that line the South Park Blocks certainly on Sundays, which is also a popular day for cycling. Worshippers come by foot, by public transportation or car from the suburbs (needing parking), but they all end up on the sidewalks and the park blocks as pedestrians. In addition, these churches host a lot of other programming during the week.
  - We suggest it will be important to contact all these churches directly to hear their assessment of the impact of an increase in bicycles and a loss of parking.
  - The churches to be contacted are First Congregational United Church of Christ, St James Lutheran Church, Sixth Church of Christ Scientist, and First Christian Church.
- When asked in the Parks survey how people usually travel to the South Park Blocks, the overwhelming majority come by foot (nearly 90%). Cyclists weren’t even close (less than 10%).<sup>5</sup>

As a result, the following recommendations are presented for consideration:

1. Consider moving the Green Loop to Broadway to keep the park a pedestrian-priority area to minimize cycle and e-scooter conflicts with pedestrians. Prioritize pedestrian safety.
2. If Broadway is not possible, make any bike lanes on the 3 northern Cultural District blocks walk-only for bicycles. Along the three other (so-called) “orphan-residential” blocks north of Market, install bike lane street lights/stop signs at each north-south bike lane intersection with Market, Clay, Columbia, and Jefferson. All four of these major streets are high traffic volume



commuter/evacuation/emergency streets. Add pedestrian midblock, raised crosswalks with stop signs for bicycle lanes only. Cars already stop at any sign of pedestrians midblock or at crosswalks but cyclists do not, so pedestrian-priority signage would be important.

3. Create new design features that effectively force cyclists to slow down along the park blocks. Options might be rumble strips or raised tables at cross walks, etc. (Emergency vehicles also need to be accommodated as design features are created.)
4. Make violation enforcement possible by a cyclist licensing and bicycle registration program. Fees might help support bicycle lane maintenance. Bicycle violation enforcement is today a safety concern often cited.<sup>6</sup>

The DNA appreciates the City and both Commissions giving a close and critical look at the placement of the Green Loop in this dense residential, urban, largely hardscaped neighborhood whose residents walk much of the time and are heavy users of this particular city park.

At this early stage of the South Park Blocks Master Plan, the DNA is opposed to the Green Loop being placed along the South Park Block, preferring it be on Broadway. However, the DNA is open to discussions and to working with the City. Pedestrian safety remains our top priority.

Finally, it would be useful to know who has final authority on where the Green Loop will be located. We were advised that the Green Loop is part of the South Park Blocks Master Plan, but that neither the Design Commission nor the Historic Landmarks Commission have the final authority over this particular master plan. This seems at odds with CC2035 master plan guidelines (33.510.255 E.) Clarification of this process and the final approving authority would be useful.

Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Walter E. Weyler".

Walter Weyler  
Chair, Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy Rahm".

Wendy Rahm  
Chair, DNA Land Use Transportation Committee

Cc: Todd Lofgren, Senior Policy Director office of Nick Fish— [todd.lofgren@portlandoregon.gov]  
Historic Landmarks Commission (c/o Hillary Adam [Hillary.Adam@portlandoregon.gov])  
Design Commission (c/o Art Graves [arthur.graves@portlandoregon.gov])  
PBOT Director, Chris Warner – PBOTDirector@portlandoregon.gov  
Portland Parks, Brett Horner – Brett.Horner@portlandoregon.gov  
Portland Parks, Tate White – Tate.White@portlandoregon.gov  
PPS, Rachael Hoy – Rachael.Hoy@portlandoregon.gov  
PPS, Brandon Spencer-Hartle – brandon.spencer@portlandoregon.gov



**NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> "South Park Blocks Master Plan, Master Plan Concepts"/elements/Movement and Experience, October 2019 (presentation documents)

<sup>2</sup> CC2035 Vol5A p.59, adopted by City Council June 2018, effective July 9 2018.

<sup>3</sup> "South Park Blocks Master Plan, Visioning Survey Results," September 2019, [<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/746830>] p. 5. Graph 4 shows reasons people visit the South Park Blocks: From top of the list in descending order are: "Shop at Portland Farmers Market"(75%); "enjoy nature and be outdoors" (68%); "on way to cultural events, performances, concerts, church" (65%); and "it's the closest greenspace to my home (55%)." All other reasons were well below 50%.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. P4. Question 3. "How do you usually travel to the South Park Blocks on a weekday and weekend day.?"

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Some relevant excerpted comments: "Main safety issue is unlawful and reckless thoroughfare of e-scooters and bicycles;" "...just several occasions where I have seen people almost get hit by people riding their bikes;" "Concerned about danger from bicycles, scooters, skateboarders running into pedestrians – esp. senior citizens;" " Bikers walking their bikes would be great. Scooters should 'scoot' elsewhere;" "No scooters/bicycles;" "Bicycles and scooters should not be on the sidewalks."



December 16, 2019

Commissioner Nick Fish  
City of Portland  
1221 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Portland, OR 97204

RE: South Park Blocks Master Plan

Dear Commissioner Fish,

As Greater Portland's Chamber of Commerce, the Portland Business Alliance (Alliance) represents more than 1,900 small, medium and large businesses throughout the seven county region. Alliance members and members of our Central City Standing Committee value the opportunity to comment on the three proposed South Park Blocks master plans.

First, we would like to thank the staff of Portland Parks & Recreation for taking the time to develop a master plan that guides the improvement of the South Park blocks. We applaud the process for the development and refinement of the master plan concepts. We also appreciate the inclusion of members of the Downtown Portland Clean & Safe district on the year-long advisory committee.

We are supportive of the process the parks department went through in order to deliver these master concepts and will be supportive of the outcomes from this process.

The Alliance would like to reiterate the value of safety in the park blocks, highlighted in the community survey, encouraging safety improvements. We are also supportive of transportation improvements for all modes and would discourage the closure or narrowing of any streets within this section of the blocks, except where noted below. Activity along the South Park Blocks is essential to positive activation to park and to discourage unwanted behavior.

In the community survey, 86% of respondents listed safety as very important to the improvements made in the planning process, with 50% listing safety as an area in need of improvement. It is vital that safety is a component of these concepts, with activation and crime prevention techniques deployed in these public spaces. Increased lighting, well maintained park fixtures and landscaping, and clearly defined paths for pedestrians and bicycles should also be included in the final design. The installation of security or park rangers within the blocks to maintain safety and encourage community activation should also be explored.

In addition, we are supportive of safety infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists proposed in the three concepts, such as the introduction of crosswalks, signalized intersections, and dedicated bike and pedestrian paths. Creating a separated bicycle path from pedestrians along SW Park Ave, will encourage the safety of pedestrians in the park blocks.

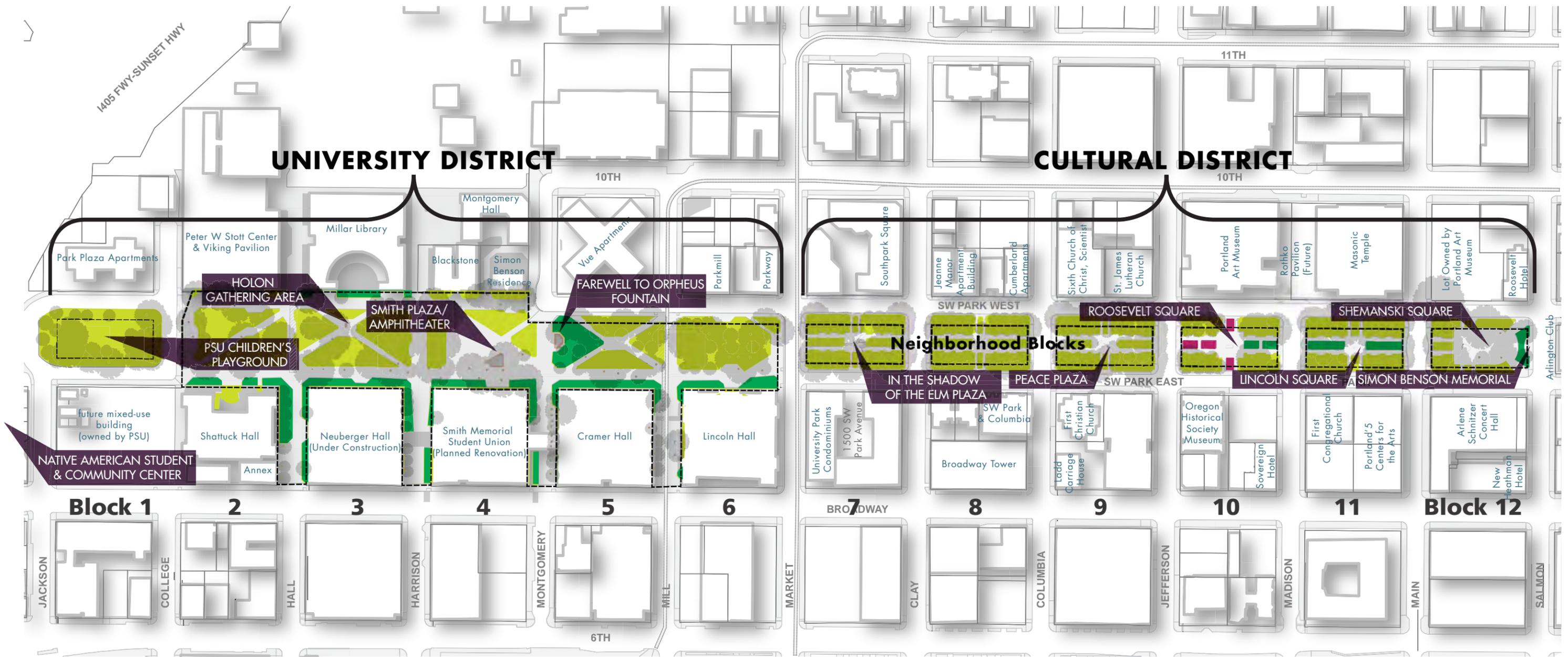
Furthermore, the streets near the South Park blocks are essential connections for commuters and restricting or removing access to these streets will exacerbate congestion within downtown. The Alliance opposes the closure or narrowing of any streets that provides through traffic, especially streets with transit service and freeway access. However, we support the considered closure of SW Madison Street as outlined on the Emerald Arrow and Braided District concepts, as it will not restrict commute patterns since it is already a dead-end street along SW Park Ave.

Lastly, to ensure the success of the South Park Blocks revitalization, a sustainable funding model should be developed to provide ongoing maintenance and operation of the park blocks. If programming is introduced, continual funding needs to be identified as a way to keep those programs running. Building community spaces is an excellent opportunity to encourage positive activation of the park blocks, but to ensure the use of maintenance of these important city assets as outlined in these master plan concepts is crucial.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AH' with a stylized flourish.

Andrew Hoan  
President & CEO  
Portland Business Alliance



### Existing Conditions Map

-  Full Existing Tree Canopy (approx.)
-  Lawn
-  Native / Ornamental Mix Plant Bed
-  Rose Bed

Source:  
 2019 Mayer/Reed Fieldwork and Site Documentation, Next Portland, PortlandMaps Open Data, COP GIS, 2019 MHA Tree Inventory, 2019 MIG, Inc. Fieldwork and Site Documentation, ESRI orthoimagery, South\_Park\_Blocks\_Base.dwg



# South Park Blocks Design Options

We are presenting three design concepts for your review and input. Please find an overview of the major elements of each concept on the next six pages.

The **Emerald Arrow Concept** emphasizes the pedestrian experience along a central promenade and two dominant character areas in the South Park Blocks, the Cultural District and the University District. New event spaces, crossing treatments, and closed streets improve pedestrian connections between blocks in the Cultural District, evoking an emerald arrow through the blocks.

## EMERALD ARROW CONCEPT

### Concept Elements

<b>Spatial Organization</b>	Historic character
<b>Pedestrian Experience</b>	Central promenade
<b>Trees</b>	Retain rows of elms
<b>Planting</b>	Retain/Redistribute Cultural District Planters
<b>Art</b>	Added periodically throughout
<b>Terminus</b>	Gateways at endpoints
<b>Street Treatments</b>	Tabled intersections and closed streets
<b>Focal Points</b>	Added/Existing art and fountains, renovated Smith Amphitheater
<b>Green Loop</b>	Perimeter along Park Ave West



Renovated Smith Plaza



Existing Shared Use Path at PSU



Central Promenade (Cultural District)



Expanded Play Opportunities at PSU Playground

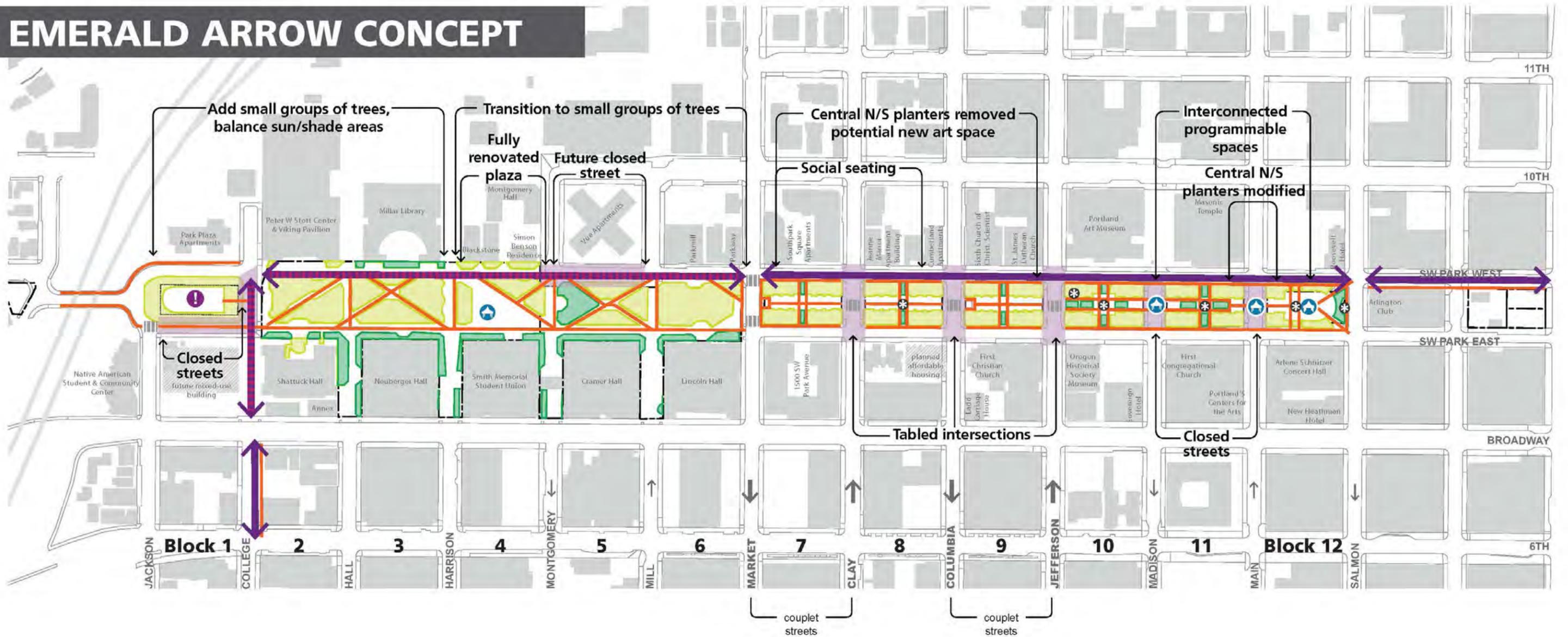


Circulation Around Art Focal Points



Raised (Tabled) Intersection (Cultural District)

# EMERALD ARROW CONCEPT



## MAP LEGEND

-  Park Tax Lot
-  Building Footprint
-  Historic Small-Scale Features *(in place prior to 1971)*

## VEGETATION

-  Lawn
-  Native / Ornamental / Flower Bed

## PROGRAMMING

-  Event Location / Gathering Space
-  Interactive / Play Feature

## CIRCULATION

-  Shared Use Path
-  Separated Bikeway
-  Pedestrian Path
-  Crosswalk
-  Potential Street Reconfiguration

# South Park Blocks Design Options *continued*

The **Braided Districts Concept** braids together three districts in the South Park Blocks: the campus, neighborhood blocks, and institutions. Enhanced corner crossings in the neighborhood blocks create opportunities for social interaction and also improve crossing safety and pedestrian visibility.

## BRAIDED DISTRICTS CONCEPT

### Concept Elements

<b>Spatial Organization</b>	Sequential related woven spaces
<b>Pedestrian Experience</b>	Enhanced corners
<b>Trees</b>	Increased variety with aesthetic quality
<b>Planting</b>	Retain/Expand Cultural District Planters
<b>Art</b>	Added to Cultural District closed streets
<b>Terminus</b>	Transition to Native American Center
<b>Street Treatments</b>	Narrowed roads to shorten crossing distances; closed streets
<b>Focal Points</b>	Interactive play features, three district identities
<b>Green Loop</b>	Perimeter, diagonal connection



Larger Group Seating (University District)



Maintain Flexible Lawn Spaces (throughout)



Separated Bikeway with Vegetated Buffer (Cultural District)



Expanded Play Opportunities (throughout)

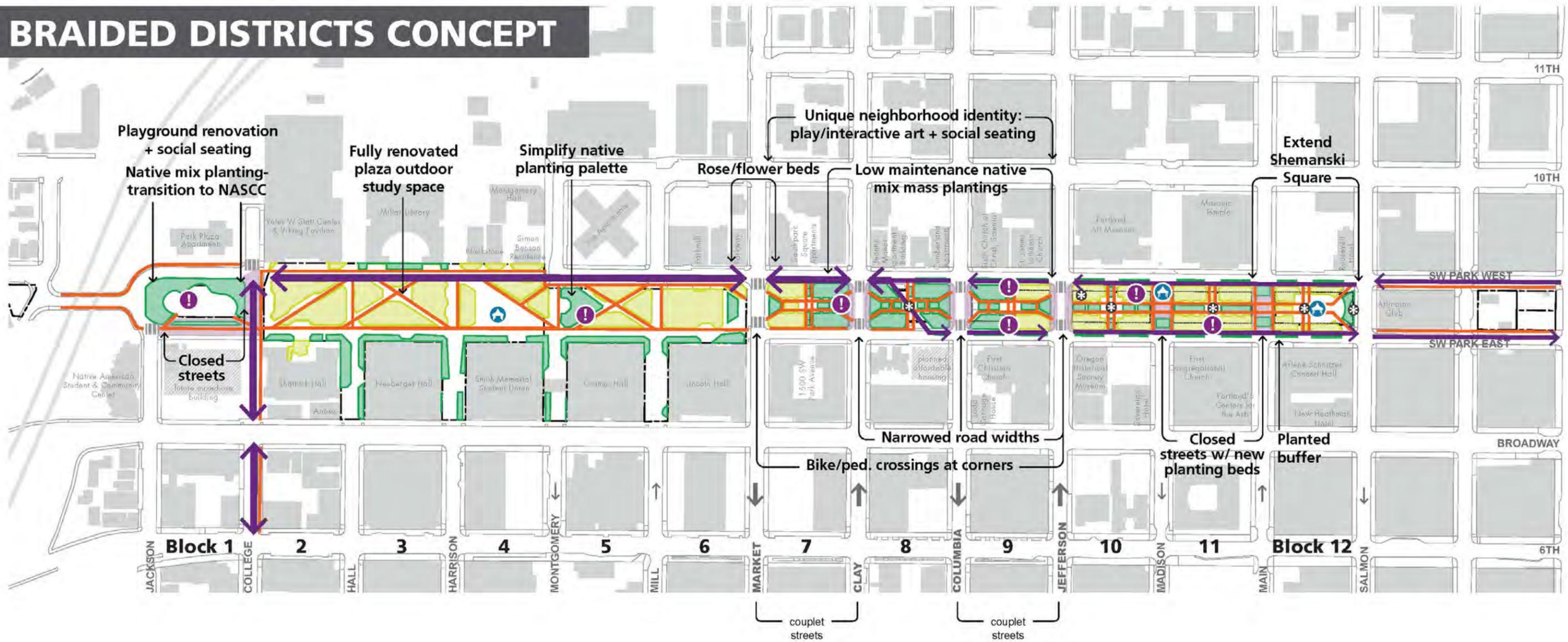


Expand Rose Beds (throughout)



Narrowed Road Widths (Cultural District)

# BRAIDED DISTRICTS CONCEPT



## MAP LEGEND

-  Park Tax Lot
-  Building Footprint
-  Historic Small-Scale Features *(in place prior to 1971)*

## VEGETATION

-  Lawn
-  Native / Ornamental / Flower Bed

## PROGRAMMING

-  Event Location / Gathering Space
-  Interactive / Play Feature

## CIRCULATION

-  Shared Use Path
-  Separated Bikeway
-  Pedestrian Path
-  Crosswalk
-  Potential Street Reconfiguration

# South Park Blocks Design Options *continued*

The **Mirrored Chain Concept** reflects needs of individual adjacent block uses whether they be educational, residential, religious, mixed-use commercial businesses, or cultural institutions. The South Park Blocks are linked together like a chain with added gateways, interactive art, and all ages play opportunities.

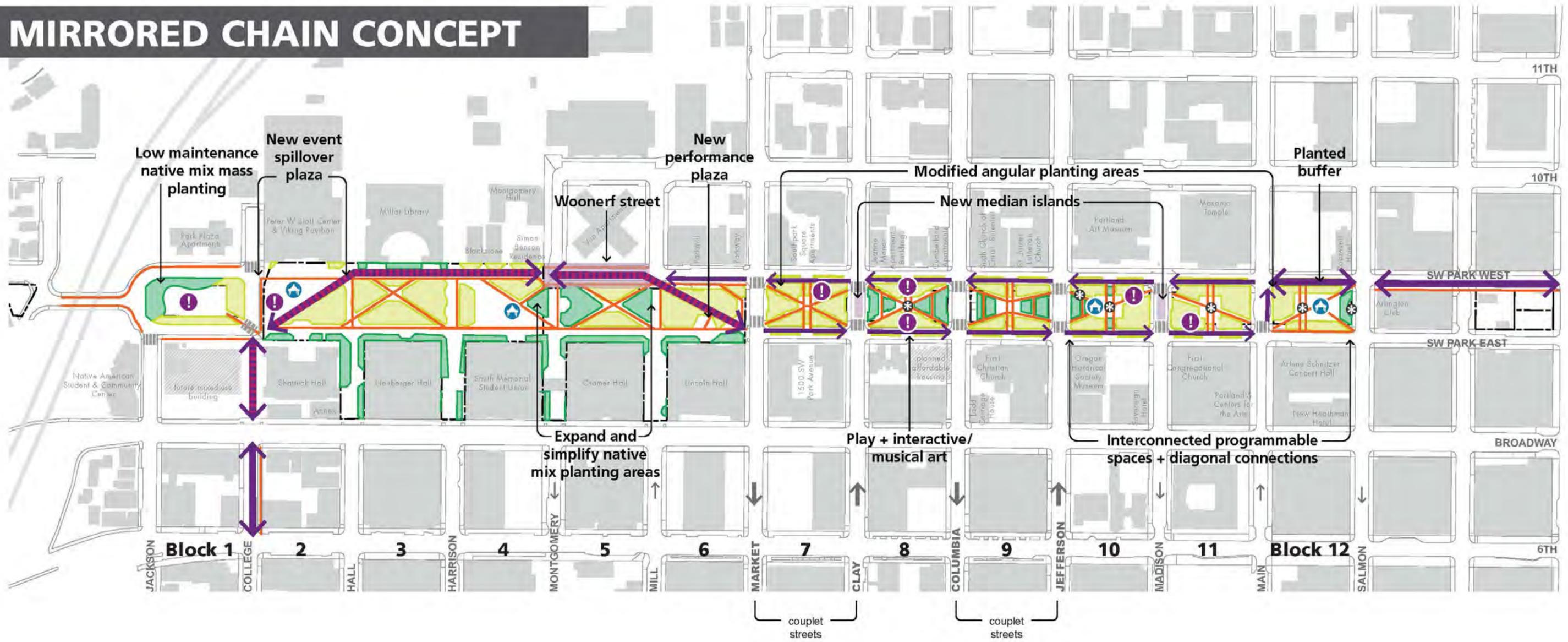
## MIRRORED CHAIN CONCEPT

### Concept Elements

<b>Spatial Organization</b>	Block by block, responsive to immediate context
<b>Pedestrian Experience</b>	Diagonal "X" pattern
<b>Trees</b>	Diverse canopy with conifers - biodiversity
<b>Planting</b>	Reconfigure to Diagonal Planters
<b>Art</b>	Added to Cultural District median islands
<b>Terminus</b>	Gateways at endpoints and midpoint
<b>Street Treatments</b>	Periodic street medians
<b>Focal Points</b>	Interactive art features, new plazas in University District
<b>Green Loop</b>	Perimeter along Park Ave East/West



# MIRRORED CHAIN CONCEPT



## MAP LEGEND

-  Park Tax Lot
-  Building Footprint
-  Historic Small-Scale Features *(in place prior to 1971)*

## VEGETATION

-  Lawn
-  Native / Ornamental / Flower Bed

## PROGRAMMING

-  Event Location / Gathering Space
-  Interactive / Play Feature

## CIRCULATION

-  Shared Use Path
-  Separated Bikeway
-  Pedestrian Path
-  Crosswalk
-  Potential Street Reconfiguration