

PBOT COMMUNITY SOUNDING BOARD #2

MEETING SUMMARY

Date and Time: July 27, 2023 | 3:30PM-5:00PM

Next meeting: Tentatively in September; a doodle poll to identify exact time/date will be sent out

Location: Zoom

Attachments/Links: presentation slides, [Miro board](#), [Street Plaza website](#), [Travel Oregon grants](#)

Attendees	
Community participants	
Henry Miller, Street Trust	Ralen Jones, PDX Black Excellence
Keith Jones, Friends of Green Loop	Scott Bricker, Travel Oregon
Kirk Green Rea, Symbiop	Laura Tkachuk, Slavic Community Center NW
Nic Cota, Overlook Neighborhood Association	Izzy Armeta, City of Portland (formerly Oregon Walks)
Teala Smith, City Repair	
Consultant staff	
Fabiola Casas, Espousal Strategies	Katie Atkins, Alta
Derek Abe, Alta	Shannon Simms, Mayer/Reed
Katie Mangle, Alta	
PBOT staff	
Nick Falbo, Transportation Planning	Sarah Figliozzi, Transportation Planning

Key takeaways:

- Positive sentiments expressed and no additional comments or questions provided related to draft program goals.
- Design standards are being developed, input collected on what is working well and challenges that exist related to road barriers, planters, signage, art, furniture, and other amenities. Input was captured on Miro Board and verbally. Key themes below.
- Stakeholder analysis exercise conducted on Miro Board, upcoming engagement opportunities shared, sounding board collaboration on recruitment, and shaping engagement approach was solicited. Detailed summary below.

Key themes & comments by design element:

Road Barriers:

- Road barriers are seen as an attempt to communicate the intended use of space.
- Strong interest in making signage more welcoming, clearly defined, and permanent.
- Some concern over parking limitations and traffic flow due to road closures.

Comments:

- Road barriers have long feet to keep them from falling over, and these can be tripping hazards or get pushed around by people passing by and moved to where they weren't meant to be. Large items like barriers or planters can erode the street painting if they're moved.
- Ankeny Alley creates a separate and protected bicycle facility; protects the experience of people who will be walking, dining, or other uses. It seems like a good design to accomplish multiple objectives.
- We have people who drive through the barriers or park inside the plaza. You have to report this to a PBOT voicemail or email, and by the time it's responded to, the person has moved on, so there's no follow through.

Planters:

- Strong support for greenery in plaza spaces; interest in seeing more street trees and some planters.
- Strong interest in de-paving and greenery built into the space itself.
- Challenges centered on maintenance roles/cost, vandalism, and stolen plants.

Comments:

- Can pavement be removed and greenspace built in, rather than standalone planters? More integrated greenery, deeper rooted vegetation.
 - Project team response: De-paving/permanent planting is something we're interested in exploring.
- Would love to see more street trees, which would provide more safety and shade for hot summers.
- Would prefer de-paving, but having planters at eye level makes the plazas more interesting and inviting.
- Maintenance/vandalism concerns.
 - Project team response: PBOT is working to improve plaza maintenance. There is an existing program to hire homeless individuals to clean public spaces and PBOT is exploring other options to address maintenance issues.

Signage:

- Diverse opinions around what should be included on signs around plazas and what information should be shared as a QR code or online link.
- Some interest in seeing plaza rules on sign, some concern around signs instructing people how to behave.
- Opportunities identified included using signage for a variety of purposes, such as factoids to explain the value of plazas, links for community members to contribute financially to the maintenance of the space, or media branding by blending signage with art/painting.

Comments:

- Would like to see rules included on signage, rather than just QR codes.
 - Some basic rules for Pedestrian Plazas should be listed on signage, not just a link to rules.
- Avoid the new tall signs that instruct people how to behave.
- Consider using factoids to explain the value of plazas (e.g., that people shop more at businesses near plazas). Re signage: Just a factoid about the ROI on these plazas like, “the parking space that was here served 5 people a day. Now 25 people use the picnic bench that replaced the parking space.”
 - Data or some report that backs up the benefit of plaza space over parking for surrounding businesses.
 - The signs should be more plentiful and bigger. Great opportunity to explain how these plazas have a bigger ROI than parking spaces.
- More signage with QR codes to donate to the programs and nonprofits that help maintain respective plazas. There’s a lot of support for these spaces, and folks may be willing to help support financially as they enjoy the space.
- Large vertical paintings, like the one at the Cart Blocks, allows for easy selfie and social media branding.
- Is there any standard for signage?
 - PBOT response: We do have basic signage covering rules and purpose of plazas, but we recognize we can expand/improve on these.

Art/Décor:

- Interest in opportunities to engage local artists and community members.
- Lighting as décor identified as important.
- Challenges identified include how to finance art/décor, establishing partnerships to implement, and possible conflicting priorities related to business access.

Comments:

- Have heard a lot of positive feedback on street art from folks that live, work and play around plazas.
- Good opportunity for community artists to be engaged.
- Continue to provide paint for community members to refresh street art.
- Lighting is very important.
- Murals should include graffiti removal coating.
- Installing art in business zones can be tricky to take up space to install while allowing access to the business.
- Who gets to decide what the art and décor is?
 - PBOT shared the process for community art.

Furniture:

- Strong support for furniture in plaza spaces.
- Interest in making seating movable and weather resistant.
- Challenges identified around maintenance, safety, bike racks and anchored seats.

Comments:

- Have had issues with furniture being wet and not being able to sit but can't put out umbrellas because they get taken. Have had furniture get tagged, but they've been able to remove it. Would like consideration of whether an object can be used for vandalism purposes. Safety design best practices that people could look from and learn from each other.
 - PBOT response: we have not conducted a specific safety assessment. But we have members of the team that are very focused on that, and it's a great idea.
 - A related link was shared:
<https://www.portland.gov/civic/news/2021/8/13/designing-spaces-safety>
- Ideally street seats would be moveable.
- The sturdier picnic benches do such a great job at communicating that this is now a space for people. You forget that this was a driving lane not long ago.
- Furniture needs to be weather resistant (water collection on solid services) and provide graffiti removal kits for furniture or periodic painting.
- Bike racks and anchored seats can impact activations.
- Questions about the consistency of the furniture and who the vendors are.

Other Amenities:

- Strong support for PBOT to explore a variety of amenities.
- Considerations for future plazas should include bathroom access and ADA accessibility.

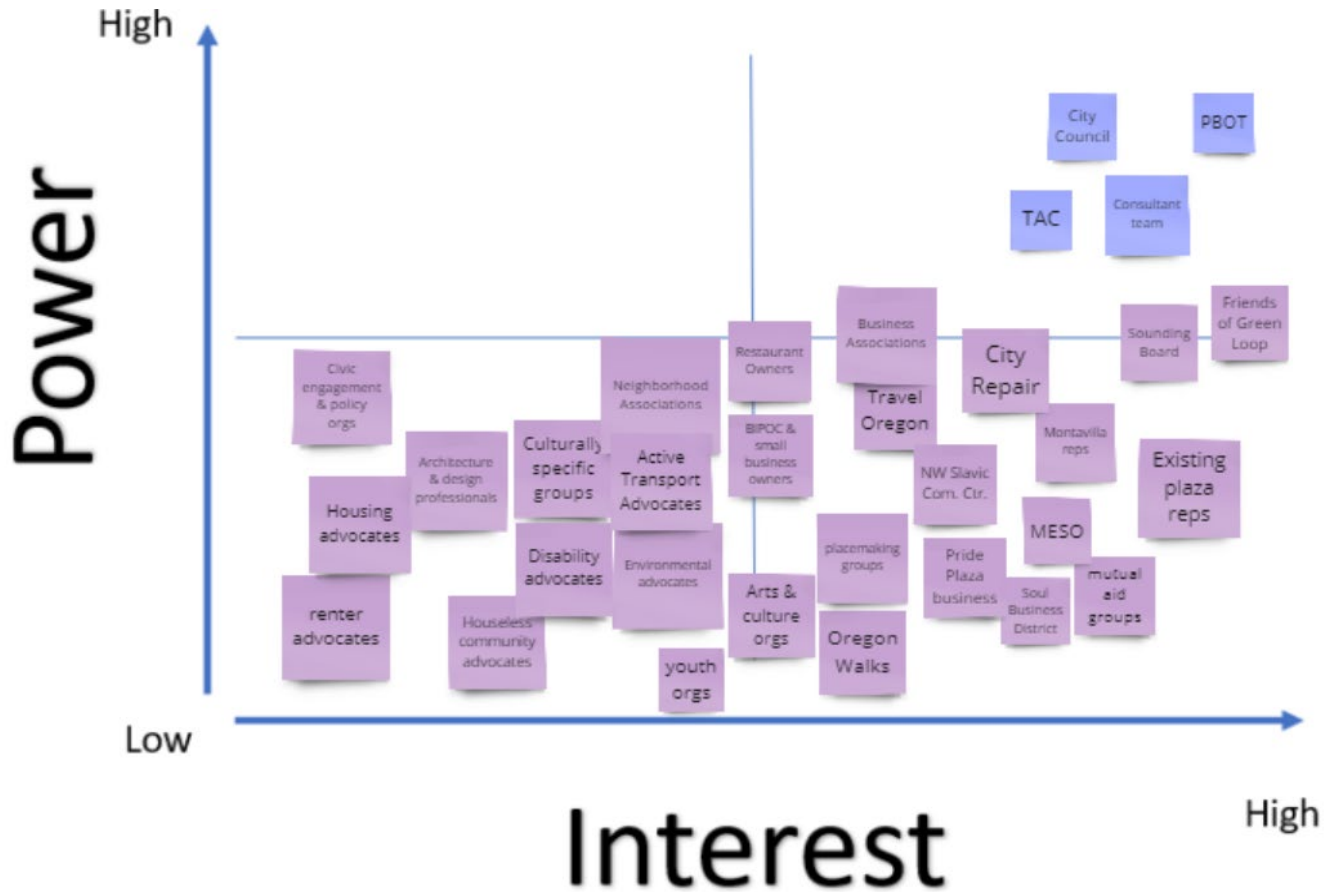
Comments:

- Love that some other things have been tried and would encourage PBOT to continue to try new things, especially amenities for teens/young people (e.g., rock climbing wall) and seniors (e.g., bocce ball).
- When there's not a nearby restroom, it makes use of the plaza harder. Consider access to restrooms as plaza locations are considered.
- It doesn't seem like bike parking has been considered very much in existing plazas. Would like to see it considered more intentionally in future plazas.
- Who is maintaining plazas? How's it going?
 - PBOT response: There are a lot of challenges. Items in plazas are constantly taken, damaged, moved, and we rely a lot on our partners to let us know when things need attention.

- An existing manual about how to handle incidents and maintenance was offered.

Summary of stakeholder analysis exercise:

- Definitions of stakeholder power and interest was shared (see slides).
- Community members were invited to inform the team’s understanding of existing relationships and their perceived level of power and interest in the project. Results below. **Note** the mapping of stakeholders is not intended to be static.



Comments/Questions:

- What about just community members? Can someone who wants to make their neighborhood better make one of these spaces? Do we enable them to do that?
 - PBOT response: We absolutely do get requests from unaffiliated community members. The whole premise of Plaza Program has come out of Portland in the Streets program; often it is businesses that are interested, but there is a platform for letting individuals do that. Streets are contested space, and it is hard for people to create something different in a space. It requires immediate neighbors to have an interest. It’s messy, but we want a process that allows this and is fair.

- Could an artist who has an idea and gets buy in from neighboring businesses go directly to PBOT?
 - PBOT response: Yes, they can. The big issue is funding/resources. There are external funding sources, and we would enthusiastically support that.
 - Strong interest may exist by Neighborhood Coalitions, e.g., Central Eastside.
- I also was thinking about funding, which is not power per se but can make these happen.
 - Currently there is a Travel Oregon grant program open that could provide funding for these.

Other questions asked:

- On a plaza-by-plaza basis, how much consideration/involvement of the community happens?
 - PBOT response: Immediate residents/businesses are always informed and invited to participate and provide feedback. Everything is very flexible right now. We also want broader community feedback and currently conducting an annual summer survey.

Agenda Item	Description	Notes
Welcome & Public Comment	Public Comment Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No public comment provided.
Review objectives, SB & staff check in	Meeting Objectives Review group norms Staff and Sounding Board check in (what is your favorite summer activity?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fabiola shared meeting objectives and reminder attendees of group norms • Attendees introduced themselves, their affiliations, and their favorite summer activities
What we heard & project roles	Review of what we heard on April 5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public space desired characteristics - Project interest - SB engagement needs Project roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fabiola reviewed key takeaways from meeting #1 • Derek introduced program team
Program goals, & street plaza design framework	Presentations: Project roles, goals for a new street plaza program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Derek discussed development of program goal for Street Plaza Program and briefly covered the goals

	Street plaza design elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shannon presented overview of existing plaza activities and elements • Fabiola shared the Miro board and invited attendees to add their comments or share their comments verbally • After 5 minutes to add comments to Miro board, Fabiola led participants through a discussion highlighting and expanding on the comments provided in Miro board re: design elements
Stakeholder analysis exercise	Power-Interest Grid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fabiola introduced key terms for stakeholder analysis exercise and invited attendees to interact with the power/interest grid
Engagement updates	Outreach opportunities and strategic approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fabiola discussed upcoming engagement opportunities
Closing	Next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nick shared that Miro board will be open through 7/31 and encouraged attendees to add additional comments there, and shared what will be discussed at next sounding board meeting.