

PBOT COMMUNITY SOUNDING BOARD #3

MEETING SUMMARY

Date and Time: September 18, 2023 | 4:00-5:30pm

Location: Zoom Webinar

[Street Plazas Program Website](#)

Attachments/Links: presentation slides, [Jamboard](#), [Street Plaza website](#)

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	Timur Holove, Slavic Community Center NW
Nic Cota, Overlook Neighborhood Association	
Teala Smith, City Repair	
Consultant staff	
Fabiola Casas, Espousal Strategies	Katie Mangle, Alta
Jake Warr, Espousal Strategies	Katie Atkins, Alta
Derek Abe, Alta	Shannon Simms, Mayer/Reed
PBOT staff	
Nick Falbo, Transportation Planning	Sarah Figliozzi, Transportation Planning

Key takeaways:

- Sounding Board members expressed strong interest in seeing PBOT invest in permanent street plazas and maintenance programs for existing street plazas.
- Sounding Board members expressed enthusiasm for the low-barrier opportunities that pop-up plazas offer.
- Sounding Board members would like to see PBOT continue to build and nurture community partnerships, especially around street plaza design and activation.
- Sounding Board members are interested in learning more about PBOT's approach to integrating equity in its Street Plaza program.

KEY JAMBOARD THEMES & COMMENTS

Plaza types: key themes

- When asked if the type of plaza affects level of interest in engaging in those spaces, sentiments included strong preference for permanent plazas and a strong interest in supporting all three types of plazas.
- Related to pop up plazas, several Sounding Board members identified them as low-barrier opportunities for the community to organize and activate public space.
- Temporary plazas received the most criticism, given a perception of higher cost relative to community benefits.
- Permanent plazas were largely perceived as the ideal type to strive for, given adequate resources are available for thoughtful planning and sustainable maintenance.

Comments:

- If it is a permanent plaza, be more willing to put more effort into activating the plaza and keeping it clean and fixing it up.
- Permanent plazas require no scheduling for visitors to know what to expect when.
- Permanent plazas often feel easier to interact in, as they are passive spaces: simply occupying feels ok.
- I would think of temporary as potentially not as invested or secure, thought through. Permanent feels like it's more official, I can plan around it. Seasonal also works.
- It seems like there will be too much work and expenses to do a pop-up plaza. A temporary or permanent would be more appealing to work on and to promote.
- All plaza types serve important roles. I imagine a temporary or pop-up phase could be a good way to discover the best way to implement a permanent plaza.
- Each plaza type has its place. Seasonal / permanent could work very well for Portland.
- I agree that having multiple options allows for diverse entry points, as well as for organizers to evolve their space.
- I am excited that it presents opportunities for different types of Street Plaza activations.
- There is a varied level of work involved in implementing and maintaining plazas. I am interested in the site which I have been involved in over the past 3 years.

Comments related to pop-up plazas:

- They're temporary, so don't really want to put a lot of effort into it.
- Allows forming or lower resourced groups to participate, to practice their placemaking skills and develop their practice.
- Quick and fun way to bring community members together. Low barrier and low commitment.
- I think of expanding the 'park(ing) day' concept to be more than just one day a year to allow a low barrier opportunity for CBOs and businesses to utilize street space.
- Quick way to "give it a try" and also to experiment with different ideas. Barrier should be lower than other types. Allow more spontaneity.

Comments related to temporary plazas:

- Makes sense for medium scale plazas that don't offer weather protection for say May - Oct. Storage can be a challenge.
- Great way to activate a space for short term events or to work on formalizing a structure for permanent plaza. Barrier should be lower than permanent.
- Temporary could be reframed as 'pilot' to maybe ask how this could become permanent and to prioritize tracking changes/lessons learned along the way.
- Easier to appeal to community members that don't embrace change quickly.
- Challenge: can be resource heavy over time. What is the difference between repainting a plaza every year vs. a permanent place?
- Temporary seems to be the worst of both worlds. Unreliable existence for the community, and lack of permanence that provides an expectation of how the space is now used.

Comments related to permanent plazas:

- Creates reliable, safe gathering spaces that communities feel invested in.
- Prioritizing permanent will help PBOT plan the next generation of street infrastructure work like actual curb work/bollards to declare the plaza space permanent.
- I think ultimately there should only be pop-up and permanent plazas. IF, the temporary program is making a case for sites to be transitioned to permanent.
- Ideal plaza type. More expensive and requires weather protection. Maintenance could be a challenge.
- This is an investment, so want to make sure to put more effort into it, but also, where does the money and time come from to do it properly.
- How do future generations have power over space? Values and needs change over time. Like how monuments are being scrutinized.

Initiation of new plazas: key themes

- Opinions among Sounding Board members were split when asked if they are most interested in initiating new plaza spaces or being brought into a process that has been initiated.
- Sounding Board members felt most interested in initiating to feel personally included in decision-making, being part of a community process, and centering equity.
- Sounding Board members with less interest in initiating felt this should be part of larger planning efforts or feel lack of capacity due to work needed to maintain existing plazas.

Comments:

- Initiating. Feels like I have more of a say so. If there's something I don't like, I at least was a part of the process.
- I would like to help facilitate community involvement in the process and to encourage communities to initiate new plaza spaces where they live, work, and play.

- Initiating new plaza spaces should be part of a larger street and traffic re-design program.
- St. Johns already has a permanent Plaza that needs a lot of work and upkeep, so just interested in focusing on what is in front of us on this.
- Creating a new space with equity in mind. Making sure that it represents the neighborhood it is in.

Roles and responsibilities: key themes

- Sounding Board members understand community partner role(s) to include:
 - Community organizer/liaison to collect input and get local community members involved in planning and activation.
 - Design consultant; including decisions around furniture and painting or traffic impacts.
 - Space activators; event planning, fundraising, and implementation.
 - Maintenance support including picking up trash, power washing, and refreshing paintings.
- In the future, Sounding Board members are interested in:
 - Playing a larger role in space activation
 - Coordinating more community member support for maintenance and/or design updates for greater access and inclusion.
- In the future, Sounding Board members would like PBOT to:
 - Build stronger partnerships with business and community groups for input on design and activation.
 - Provide supporting funding and other resources for design, maintenance and activation.
 - Be strong advocates to keep existing plaza spaces and make them permanent.
- Overall, Sounding Board members would like to see PBOT allocate more resources for maintaining plaza spaces and build stronger partnerships with community groups around design and activation.

Comments related to perception of current role:

- As a plaza installer, we are consulted on design.
- I have been involved in the design to the extent that we initiated the Montavilla plaza with PBOT's help and made decisions together about furniture and painting, etc.
- Thinking about engineering and traffic impacts. Also in the future how to create civil/permanent toolset to create permanent changes.
- Engaging with community members to make sure their voices and values are heard and incorporated into plazas that impact their lives.
- Gathering feedback and bringing in artists and ideas for installations.
- Supported/funded some plaza design/build and activation.
- With a well-designed plaza we would be able to work on producing events.
- I am also involved in programming, funding, managing, events, and other activities.

- activation with events, this is a huge role for the district. However, we are still paying for permitting when we are doing a lot of work to upkeep the Plaza, which does not seem equitable.
- I have been involved in maintenance, tending to trash, power washing, building furniture, etc.
- As a plaza installer, we also refresh paintings to maintain over time.
- For Clean Up and activation, see a huge role.

Comments related to desired future community partner roles:

- Design to the extent that our community wants a say in things like paint, furniture, and other amenities.
- A large role in deciding what happens to keep the plaza valid and current to today's needs.
- Possible funding for construction or programming. Would like to see education for (bigger) businesses on how plazas/foot traffic can enhance business.
- Possibly managing a plaza and bringing in community members to maintain it.
- Would like to see the maintenance more balanced with the role of PBOT putting more time and money into it, rather than depending on the district to do it all.
- Quarterly concerts and events.
- All activations, putting them on and deciding who will be there.
- Creating neighborhood-specific spaces that can help re-integrate identity and have shared space for all community members to program and help maintain.

Comments related to future roles desired for PBOT to take on:

- Leadership - partner with econ dev agencies/groups to build support and push them out.
- PBOT should partner with community orgs on design.
- PBOT should get community orgs to take the lead in programming.
- Facilitating and implementing community ideas and feedback.
- Providing the resources to make the design happen. Be more proactive about how to make the Plaza work best for the community it is in.
- Providing supportive funding.
- take on the bigger ticket maintenance issues like fixing the electricity, lighting, etc.
- Offering grants that CBOs can use to produce events at specific plazas.
- Key role for PBOT or Parks.
- The community members that are "stewarding" the plaza should get free permits when they put on events.
- Would like to see PBOT take on more of the "Work" with fixing the Plaza and making it safe.
- It would be great to have the city take over maintenance so that METBA can focus on programming.
- Advocate to keep these spaces and prioritize making these spaces permanent and successful.

Equity and access: key themes

- Sounding Board members are in strong support of equity and access efforts related to street plazas.
- There is interest in learning more about PBOT’s current equity goals and how equity is being integrated in the street plaza program.

Comments:

- Plazas should be a place for everyone to feel safe and be able to physically access.
- I wonder what PBOT's current equity goals and principles are?
- I'd love to see case studies of plazas that have deep equity components from the other cities. Are there any current PBOT plazas that exemplify equity integration?
- I support prioritizing marginalized community voices and making sure that involvement is accessible.
- It is essential to use plazas as a tool for correcting inequity in our city. More access to safe, clean, public spaces.

Agenda Item		Notes
Welcome & Public Comment	Public Comment Period	<p>Mary Sipe: I’d like to reiterate that in the Use & Operations section I suggest more definitive wording to prohibit outdoor installations of speakers for plazas within 500 ft of residential dwellings, and that any amplified music require a noise permit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah will schedule a follow up meeting to discuss.
Review objectives, SB check in	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect what we heard from Sounding Board meeting #2 • Share and discuss peer city review summary • Share and discuss draft design elements <p>Share community engagement updates</p> <p>Reminder of group norms</p> <p>Sounding Board check in: if you were on a road trip which part of the trip would you be at right now?</p>	<p>Fabiola reviewed meeting objectives and facilitated a group check in.</p>

<p>What we heard</p>	<p>Review of what we heard in July</p>	<p>Members indicated that the summary reflected their input, no additional comments or questions.</p>
<p>Peer City Review Summary & Discussion</p>	<p>Presentation with overview Jamboard for input collection (1-7)</p>	<p>Derek Abe provided a summary of programs studied in New York City, Los Angeles, and Vancouver, BC.</p> <p>Q: How did peers incorporate equity into their site selection process? A: Distribution across the city, evaluation of various areas' needs, lowering barriers to entry</p> <p>Q: Are there figures on the % of streets or proportion of drivable miles in each of the surveyed cities are removing from use with the plaza program? I am curious about how LA and NY compare to PDX in this regard. A: We don't have that kind of data, but will see if we can find some.</p> <p>Q: What types of plazas observed (pop-up, temporary, permanent) is PBOT going to be implementing? A: We want to adapt to what makes sense. Typologies will give us a structure for how they're developed and managed.</p> <p>Comment: I have some concerns about complexity of pop-up plazas.</p> <p>Q: How long have these cities' programs existed? A: All 3 have examples of these types of plazas from before the pandemic, but they gained a lot of momentum during the pandemic.</p> <p>Q: What have you found related to large businesses or real estate owners' involvement? A: A lot of larger corporations/institutions have been involved in developing some of</p>

		<p>these spaces, and will be connected. There are some very robust business districts in places like London and NYC, but our approach differs.</p> <p>Q: What insurance requirements did other cities have and how is that informing our city's approach? A: Will be explored further as part of the governance and stewardship framework.</p>
Design Elements Summary & Discussion	<p>Presentation with overview Jamboard for input collection (8-10)</p>	<p>Shannon Simms provided an overview of the draft Design Toolkit, covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential PBOT's plaza toolkit and partnership opportunities for program implementation - Plaza themes/identities - Potential design layouts and physical components (e.g., signage, surfacing, planters, seating) <p>Q: With so many resources potentially available, how do you prevent camping? A: Code prohibits camping in plazas, but we recognize it will require a concerted effort/partnerships to manage these spaces.</p> <p>Comment: Important to consider safety of users when determining elements to include for each plaza.</p>
Engagement updates	<p>Engagement to date Highlights Upcoming engagement</p>	<p>No additional comments or questions.</p>
Next steps & Closing	<p>Scheduling the next meeting Focus group & interview involvement Closing thoughts</p>	