

Portland Open Space Vision and Implementation Plan
Stakeholder Meeting No. 4
Wednesday, June 24, 2015
6pm – 8pm
Room: Portland City Hall, Room 24

In attendance:

Sally Deluca, Amy Segal, Chris Cantwell, Anne Pringle, Rick Nowland, Kristin (?), Troy Moon, Nat May, Phyllis (?), Michael Mertaugh, Bobbi Keppel, Tom Jewel, Colleen Tucker, Bryan Wentzell, Laura Mailander

From The Trust for Public Land: Wolfe Tone, Kelley Hart, Chrissy Pepino, and Sarah Stickney

1. Introduction/welcome

Wolfe welcomed all participants. He noted that our Trust for Public Land colleagues have been out in the field, evaluating 60 parks this week. He also mentioned that he recently attended a TPL national event -- lots of wonderful work going on across the US in our urban centers; The Trust for Public Land is working hard to partner and lead on the effort of creating open space within 10 minutes of all Americans in urban areas.

2. Review of work completed and underway

Our next meeting is Wednesday, August 5.

Kelley reviewed the method and key outcomes of the work that The Trust for Public Land has been doing in partnership with the city and with guidance from this Stakeholder Group. We have been reviewing what our current open space inventory looks like; asking what Portland residents want; working to prioritize opportunities; reviewing funding mechanisms; and examining opportunities.

Our deliverables: Portland Open Space Vision and Implementation Plan. It will include this type of information:

- Vision Statement (complete)
- A very brief description of the current open space system, with a base map (in progress) and analysis of needs assessment from 2007 and more recent community survey results.
- The list of shared goals for the open space system (This is in draft form.)
- Provision of services that can be measured (table is in progress) and report on how we are doing for some of those services.
- A recommended annual protocol for project selection.
- Ideas for projects with rough estimate of the funding needed for this work.

- A discussion around funding - what are sources for funding (Existing and potential); what are the protocols for choosing projects/allocating available money.

Anne suggested that, as part of the effort to develop a project list, we use the master plan that exists – go back to review them. It was suggested that we ask the Friends groups for progress around master plans, though that may cause an equity problem (for parks represented by a Friends group).

Kelley explained that the park evaluation is taking place during the week. The Trust for Public Land colleagues are evaluating 60+ public parks across Portland. This is a rapid assessment, but still a significant investment of time. We are also confirming public access points for these 60+ parks, which will help us determine gaps in provision of open space.

- Michael M. noted that that we should make sure we identify any biases that come up during the evaluation process and define what it is we want to do with the overall score.

3. Background and Discussion: Portland’s park/open space investment prioritization and funding approval process.

Kelley explained the background work that TPL undertook to prepare for this discussion. We interviewed 3 staff members regarding budgeting. We reviewed the budgets that feed into parks and recreation and looked at Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs) and how they are created. We reviewed how other cities prioritize/fund capital projects. Kelley then showed slides with the current protocol for project selection and common criteria for scoring systems (from Portland and from other cities). See powerpoint slides for more information. She also mentioned some best practices gleaned from ICMA. For more information, see also two memos that TPL has authored on these topics. (Both were distributed by email to all Stakeholders on the list-serve within a few days of this Stakeholder Meeting.)

Comments:

- Question: how do we incorporate Land Bank properties into the planning process?
- Anne mentioned there is a city-wide master plan that ought to be updated so that budget choices can be made more effectively/in a more informed manner.
- There is a clear need to figure out how to prioritize projects and plan for the future.
- Once we have a system for prioritizing, we should make sure that this process is kept in place over time.

Then meeting participants broke into two groups. Group A discussed criteria for project selection (both criteria for all city projects and criteria specifically for our Open Space Vision

plan). Group B discussed the annual protocol for developing project ideas and shepherding them through the budget process. All participants had a chance to weigh-in on both topics, as we switched places (group A participants switched to Group B and vice versa) mid-way through the discussion.

Group A Notes regarding project selection criteria

(Participants were asked to respond to the strawman in the small group discussion handout):

- General: Simplify bullets. Too wordy.
- Under Essential, an edit: “Fulfills a legal mandate/compliance with local, state, and federal laws.”
- Under Articulated City Priorities, add: “Promotes sustainability and environmental health and livability.”
- People liked the first bullet under “Financial considerations” (“Prevents costly infrastructure...”)
- There was a general consensus to reduce the “Financial Considerations” bullet points down as key information gets lost.
- Last bullet” “Stimulate economic development...” – there was a question regarding whether or not to remove. How do we measure these factors, and can we tie results back to park system?
- Under “Timing and Efficiency” – these are very important. People generally liked these bullets.
- Additional prioritization criteria:
 - “Project is already under development” should be added to page 1 under Articulated City Priorities.
 - Generally, people like these bullet points (from the second list of optional criteria).
 - Delete last bullet: “Project can be tied to work of neighboring jurisdictions”.
 - #2: Include new bullet: “Prioritize weakest assets for repair and improvement.”
 - Include “livability” under “Promotes health, wellness, and active lifestyles.”
- Appendix A: Questions (Referring to handout for small group discussion):
 - Department priority: is this a problem? Do different departments have different priorities?
 - Does prioritization criteria get looked at/used? Or do politics wipe these out at the end of the day?
 - City council should have a set of criteria that they use that is consistent.

Group B Notes regarding protocol for budgeting process/project funding:

- 1) "Where's the Land Bank in this?" The budget process leaves out the Land Bank.
 - a. The LB needs two things:
 - i. It too needs priorities for improvements to Land Bank Priorities
 - ii. It needs a budget for those priorities
 - b. There is a provision allowing 10% of the LB budget, the source of which is bonds, for "improvements".
 - c. The LB needs a review and additional education about how to activate this fund, a/o how to use for "capital improvements" on lands it owns, which are primarily left as open spaces. It has not been used in the recent past for any "improvement" purpose.
 - d. "More" help from someone is needed to reconcile the roles and relationships of and between the Land Bank and the Park Commission.

- 2) The second major category of input was the need to start the project input process sooner. The fall may be too late, often rushed with very little notification or guidance. Leads to inequity.
 - a. It was suggested to start the process as early as January of that budget year.
 - i. Currently there is a fall "Friends" meeting, but some feel that is too late.

 - b. Strong desire for a clear "process road-map", including:
 - i. An announcement goes out early in the calendar year
 - ii. Who?
 1. Park Commission
 2. Land Bank
 3. City Manager
 4. Friends Groups
 5. Neighborhood Associations
 - iii. Take advantage of existing Friends Groups infrastructure, neighborhood association contacts, NGO contacts to both disseminate process related information and intake project ideas. Therefore, each subgroup here may need its own intake process.
 - iv. Shape the process to enable a more equitable method for seeking input. Not just the best organized Friends Group, for instance.

 - c. The Park Commission "hosts" the public meeting(s) to which the above groups bring their initial candidate projects.

- d. Emphasis on the need for early education and information. Sally expressed a priority to make sure the process does not set false expectations of what can be accomplished. Constrained budgets are a reality. Therefore, to help avoid -
 - 1. What was the total budget in the last year/ three years, and what were the allotments for parks and related?
 - 2. Educate on the source of funding and impact on taxes and debt service
 - 3. Explain roles, responsibilities and relationships between Park Commission, Land Bank, City Departments, etc.
 - 4. Consider having groups use a three year moving project list. Some projects in year one are funded/completed, those not are captured next year in the moving window.
- e. Early project meeting creates “Champions” who “own” a project idea, cultivate support through the year, and advocate for the project as it moves through the year. This encourages equity

3) Additional Suggestions

- a. Would be very helpful to have a dedicated percentage of the Capital Budget for park related investments. It adds predictability.
- b. Given current state, small adjustments in the park process can have big impacts in citizens’ trust in the public process.
 - i. Predictability
 - ii. Transparency
 - iii. Reliability
- c. Given that “Recreation” needs and opportunities are going to be vetted through the Park Commission, is important that the Park Commission include “recreation” people.
 - i. Consider changing the name from Park Commission to Park and Recreation Commission

After report-backs from each group, Kelley and Wolfe discussed subcommittee work. These people volunteered to be on a subcommittee to further examine project prioritization criteria and budget process ideas: Anne P, Michael M, Troy and Sally. These people were nominated for the park funding subcommittee: Brendan O'Connell and David LaCase.

The meeting adjourned around 8:10.