

Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title: Riverfront Park Master Plan

Ward(s): All Wards
Councilor(s): All Councilors
Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

Sponsors:

Indexes:

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Attachments: 1. Riverfront MP_SPRAB Action, 2. DAB Letter of Support_Riverfront Park Master Plan

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
11/13/2018	1	City Council	approved	Pass

TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Steve Powers, City Manager

FROM: Peter Fernandez, Public Works Director

SUBJECT:

Riverfront Park Master Plan

Ward(s): All Wards
Councilor(s): All Councilors
Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

ISSUE:

Shall City Council adopt the proposed 2018 Riverfront Park Master Plan?

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt the 2018 Riverfront Park Master Plan.

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND:

The proposed update to the Riverfront Park master plan will provide additional amenities to the public while preserving and enhancing many of the existing features of the park. The total estimated cost for all improvements, excluding the performance area, is 5 to 7 million dollars. The new master plan will guide the park management and development for the next 20 years. Implementation of the master plan will occur over that timeframe and is dependent on availability of funding and public interest. The proposed Riverfront Park Master Plan is available online at

<https://www.cityofsalem.net/CityDocuments/riverfront-park-draft-master-plan-report.pdf>

The 26-acre Riverfront Park is the City's premier urban event park located in the heart of downtown Salem and adjacent to the Willamette River. As an urban park it is a regional draw to residents and visitors, and its proximity to downtown Salem enhances opportunities for connectivity to businesses, restaurants, entertainment, the river, and other trails and parks. With the Union Street pedestrian bridge to the north of the park and the Peter Courtney Minto Island Bridge to the south, Riverfront Park is connected to Wallace Marine Park and Minto Brown Island Park.

Riverfront Park is the location for a variety of community events and activities including the World Beat Festival, Cherry Fest NW, River Rock concert series, Fourth of July fireworks, summer movies and concerts, the Gilbert House Children's Museum, and the Riverfront Carousel. Each year the park is the site of numerous outdoor walking, running, and multisport events, as well as private events such as weddings, corporate functions, and birthday parties.

Individual park master plans are intended to guide park management and development for the next 20 years. The last master plan for Riverfront Park was completed in 2001. A park master plan update is necessary due to many changes that have taken place in the park over the past several years. These include the acquisition of a four-acre property located at the southeast corner of the park; the opening of the Peter Courtney Minto Island pedestrian bridge; the operation of a winter ice rink; and the proposed donation of a new covered stage and performance area.

The City acquired approximately four acres of vacant land in 2015. The site was formerly part of the Boise Cascade Mill bleach plant operation. This property provides new opportunities for Riverfront Park as it is located at a key southern terminus of Riverfront Park. The parcel borders Pringle Creek, the Eco Earth Globe, and the Peter Courtney Minto Island Bridge. Due to residual site contamination from past industrial uses, the property will need to be remediated to meet Oregon Department of Environmental Quality requirements prior to public access. Remediation will include capping the site with clean fill material and/or paving.

Another important development in Riverfront Park is a proposal by the Rotary Club of Salem (Rotary) to donate a covered stage (performance area). The performance area, including an associated grass amphitheater, will allow for an extended calendar of outdoor events as well as provide permanently installed and improved lighting and electrical systems. Rotary has completed an extensive public outreach process, selected a design, and chosen an architecture firm. Rotary is in the process of raising funds for the performance area and hopes to complete it as part of their 2020 centennial celebration. Through Council adoption of the 2018 Riverfront Park Master Plan the location of the

performance area within the newly acquired four-acre area will be confirmed.

Riverfront Carousel is proposing to construct an annex to their building that will encroach into the south meadow. Construction of the annex will require removal of existing vegetation and trees, regrading of the slope, and new landscaping, all in the area immediately west of the Carousel. The proposed addition is shown on the draft master plan to illustrate the potential future structure. A Council decision regarding the Carousel annex will occur at a later date. Prior to the Carousel proposal being considered by Council, the proponents of the Carousel annex must first conduct a thorough public review and comment process and receive an endorsement from the Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

Public Process

A landscape architecture firm, Greenworks, was hired through a Request for Proposals process to work with the City's Parks Planning staff in the master plan update. Greenworks is a consultant of record.

The Riverfront Park master plan effort included a significant public outreach process. The City website was updated throughout the project and people could sign up to receive email reminders and updates. All neighborhood associations were notified of public meetings and online surveys. The CANDO Neighborhood Association and the Downtown Advisory Board were given presentations about the master plan schedule and process. In addition, the Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was kept apprised throughout the process.

Three public planning meetings were held at Pringle Community Hall between January 2018 and September 2018. Approximately 30 to 50 people attended each of the meetings and participated in lively discussions focusing primarily on their vision for the future of the park, future park amenities, and general opinions about how the park should evolve over the next two decades. In addition, two online surveys were conducted to solicit public input and over 1,600 responses were received. Reports on each of the public meetings as well as a parking and transportation memo are included in the master plan.

Input was also gathered through three stakeholder meetings that focused on vision, park function, and master plan alternatives. Participants in the stakeholder meetings included event organizers, non-profits, trail and recreation enthusiasts, agencies, community activists, downtown business owners, and Tribal representatives. A list of stakeholders who were invited to attend is included in Appendix A of the master plan.

The first meeting and online survey focused on gathering initial input on existing and potential future park amenities. The main messages from the first public meeting were to keep the open space of Riverfront Park and not add too many amenities so that it becomes cluttered. People love to walk

and enjoy nature, while also attending public events, taking kids to the park, and being near the river. Many also desired more parking, more restrooms, and more shade.

Knowing that parking is an issue at the park, the first meeting was used as an opportunity to educate people about public parking options in close proximity to the park. The online survey also solicited input about people's parking preferences, uses, and knowledge of alternative public parking options.

Public input from the first meeting was used to develop three alternative plans presented at the second public meeting. Feedback was sought on individual park elements as well as the overall master plan alternative. People reacted favorably to a variety of ideas shown in the conceptual plans, including expanded access to the Willamette River through a broad river promenade, floating boardwalk, expanded dock, and restored river banks. The concern about parking led the project team to analyze parking opportunities within walking distance of the park. The second meeting emphasized parking and circulation and graphically displayed the analysis of walking distances between the park and the downtown parking garages. The second online survey also specifically queried respondents about their use and knowledge of public parking options outside of the park in nearby downtown.

The third public meeting was held September 18 at Pringle Community Hall. At this meeting the draft master plan was presented and public feedback was solicited both at the meeting and on the City website. Approximately 53 people attended this meeting. The draft master plan showed the proposed location of the new performance area in the 4-acre parcel rather than in the existing amphitheater location. Overall feedback was very positive.

A Council Work Session was held September 24 and the draft master plan was presented to council for preliminary review and feedback. All Councilors and Mayor Bennett were present. The draft master plan was well received with some comments focusing on the desire to keep open views and not block with too many new trees.

The draft master plan was presented to the Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board for recommendation on October 11, 2018. The public was invited to attend this meeting to provide their comments. The Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board endorsed the plan and recommended it for Council adoption. A copy of the Board's Action Report is attached, as well as copies of submitted and stated comments from the public (Attachment 1).

The Downtown Advisory Board provided a letter of support October 25, 2018 (Attachment 2).

A public review of the draft master plan has been open on the City website since early September 2018. All comments received are included in the appendices of the 2018 Riverfront Park Master Plan.

Proposed New Park Amenities

Taking into account public feedback, the master plan includes several new or improved amenities to

the park, including:

- Two new restrooms, one near the Rotary pavilion at Court Street and the other at the south end of the park near the performance area and the future Pringle Creek trail;
- Expanded parking in the south lot with approximately 55-60 new parking spots;
- A new performance area with covered stage and grassy sloped amphitheater;
- An elevated seating plaza behind the covered stage, overlooking the river and bridge;
- A floating boardwalk at the mouth of the Willamette Slough;
- An enhanced arrival plaza, suitable for temporary food carts or gathering area, and large vehicle access to the performance area;
- An enhanced playground with shaded seating area and nature play features of mound, slide, and boulders;
- Enhancements to the current amphitheater with scattered trees and covered picnic areas for use during rain and sun and a labyrinth paving pattern on the old stage. This area can continue to be used for smaller events;
- An expanded dock to provide additional space for river access along with a future rental vendor kiosk at the top of the slope;
- An entry plaza at Court Street;
- A “festival street” paving along end of Water Street for use as separate event area;
- A relocated and expanded Parks Operations maintenance yard;
- An enhanced riparian area along the Willamette River and Pringle Creek; and
- Four new park “gateways” at Union Street, Court Street, State Street, and Pringle Creek park entrances. These gateways will provide visual links between downtown and the park for increased visibility.

Willamette Greenway

The Willamette Greenway is regulated under Statewide Planning Goal 15 and *Salem Revised Code* Chapter 600. The goal of the regulations is to “protect and enhance the natural, scenic, recreational, historical, and economic resources of the Willamette River corridor.” The Willamette Greenway is composed of two boundaries: the Riparian Buffer boundary and the Compatibility Review Boundary. The Riparian Buffer extends 75 feet inland from the Ordinary High Water elevation, and the Compatibility Review Boundary extends 150 feet from the Ordinary Low Water. In order to protect the scenic value of the Willamette River, structures within the Greenway must be “water-dependent,

water-related, and river-oriented uses” (SRC 600.001(f)). Any structures within the boundary must also have compatible lighting and colors as defined in the Code.

Originally, the Rotary-proposed new performance area was to be located at the site of the current Riverfront Park Amphitheater. However, the existing amphitheater stage is fully within the Greenway Boundary. As such, developing a new covered stage would require meeting the Willamette Greenway code requirements which would be difficult given the design and lighting needs for a new performance area. Pursuing an exception or variance to Statewide Planning Goal 15 and City code would also be difficult and time consuming. It was also determined that moving the covered stage out of the Greenway but keeping it at this location would significantly reduce the seating capacity and impact the existing playground. There was also a strong desire expressed by the public to keep the views from the river promenade to the Peter Courtney Bridge and Minto Brown Island open and spacious.

To address all these issues, the master plan shows the future performance area in the 4-acre undeveloped park parcel. This ensures proposed non-river related amenities are located out of the Greenway boundary. In addition to meeting Willamette Greenway requirements, locating the covered stage and amphitheater in the 4-acre parcel also allows for a more expansive seating area, better circulation for event vehicles and support facilities, a continued use of the existing amphitheater for smaller events, and a new bridge/river overlook at the rear of the covered stage.

Locating the new performance area outside the Greenway Boundary and having only river dependent, water-related, and river-oriented uses within the Boundary meets the requirements of SRC Chapter 600 and Statewide Planning Goal 15.

All amenities located within the Greenway buffer or compatibility boundary will meet Willamette Greenway code requirements for color, screening, and lighting and may require Greenway Development permits prior to construction.

Robert Chandler. PhD, PE
Assistant Public Works Director

Attachments:

1. SPRAB Action Sheet and Public Comment
2. Downtown Advisory Board Letter of Support