

MEMORIAL PARK TOMORROW

PUBLIC UPDATE MTG #1. Q&A
September 17, 2014

GENERAL PARK/HISTORY

1. Is Memorial Park the largest in the country within city limits?

At 1503 acres, Memorial Park is not the largest park in the country within city limits. According to the Trust for Public Land records of the largest parks within limits of a U.S. city, Memorial Park is 80th.

See: <http://cloud.tpl.org/pubs/ccpe-largest-oldest-most-visited-Parks-4-2011-update.pdf>

2. How long was Camp Logan active? Riots of 1918? Memorialized?

Camp Logan was active from 1917 to 1919. The camp, along with events that took place there, will be respectfully honored in the future plan.

See: <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jch04#content>

PARK MAINTENANCE

1. What are the current resources for maintaining the Park?

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department maintains the Park and Memorial Park Conservancy supplements with volunteers and financial resources.

2. Relocate the maintenance area to a less important place?

The locations of all amenities in the Park are being closely examined. Some of them may be moved, others will remain in their current location.

FIELDS

1. Will the current rugby pitch be turned into a soccer field?

There are no plans to change fields from one type of field to another.

2. I heard that the last time Master Planning was done, there was discussion of eliminating ball fields. Is that the case this time around?

The ball fields will not be removed, rather the plan proposes relocating them to where they can share amenities such as parking, water, and restrooms and can be more efficiently maintained.

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CONNECTIVITY

1. How will we connect Memorial Park to the rest of the Parks in Houston?
2. Have SWA (LA firm responsible for Buffalo Bayou Park design) and NBW collaborated on this project or the connection that could be made between the two projects?
3. What is the plan to connect Memorial Park to Shepherd?

Answer 1 – 3

The Master Plan will look to make connections wherever possible to provide continuous trails between existing parks and city and regional trail networks. We have been and will continue to partner with the other organizations leading these efforts.

4. The West and South sections of the Park—where is the railroad track in your future picture?
5. How do you plan to tie the Park across the railroad?

Answer 4, 5

The existing railroad preceded the formation of Memorial Park and continues to be active today, but we are looking at opportunities to cross either under or over the tracks and will work with the appropriate authorities to determine what is possible.

4. When will the trails on the Centerpoint Easement be constructed?

In early June of this year, Houston City Council approved an agreement for hike and bike trails with Centerpoint Energy. This agreement enables the planning and construction of pedestrian and bicycle trails on Centerpoint's transmission corridors to move forward. The Memorial Park Master Plan will explore the possibility of trails along this easement within the Park boundaries.

PANEL EXPERTS

1. Can you tell us more about the types of experts on this team?

ETM Associates, LLC is a firm specializing in Public Space Management. They have worked on many local and national Parks including Discovery Green, the High Line in New York, and others. They will serve as consultants on a management strategy for Memorial Park.

Sherwood Design Engineers are specialists in sustainable infrastructure and engineering with offices in Houston, San Francisco and New York. At Memorial Park, they are studying strategies of water conservation and reuse, and ecological storm water management.

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The Lighting Practice is a nationally-renowned lighting design firm in Philadelphia, PA. Their previous work spans the country, but their experience in Texas includes lighting designs for the JFK Tribute in Fort Worth and White Rock Lake Park in Dallas. They will be formulating plans for the lighting in Memorial Park.

Suzanne Turner Associates is a landscape design and research firm in Baton Rouge, LA. Their prior work includes work in Houston, including extensive research and formulation of design guidelines for management of the Gardens at Bayou Bend, and a recent book, Houston's Silent Garden, Glenwood Cemetery, 1871-2009. They are undertaking cultural landscape research for Memorial Park to identify historical narratives worthy of interpretation, and are providing design input on how best to reveal the stories embedded in the land.

Hunt Design is a signage and wayfinding design firm in Pasadena, CA. They have designed signage systems for many prominent public Parks, including the National Mall in Washington DC. They will be formulating a signage master plan to aid in wayfinding and placemaking at Memorial Park.

Gravity Logic, LLC is a leading mountain biking trail design firm located in Whistler, British Columbia. They are aiding in site analysis of existing mountain bike trails, and helping the team formulate a strategy for a durable, sustainable, and exciting trails system for Memorial Park.

Advanced Ecology Ltd. is a Texas based firm of foresters, wildlife biologists and natural resource managers. They are performing hazard tree identification and an urban forest inventory within the Park.

Lord Cultural Resources is an international cultural planning firm with offices in New York, Toronto, Vancouver, Paris, Mumbai and Berlin. For Memorial Park, Lord has led the public input process, and will be facilitating public meetings as the plan is presented to the public.

Dancie Perugini Ware Public Relations is a PR agency based in Houston. DPWPR is coordinating media interface and public rollout of the master plan in the coming months.

2. What firm does John Jacob represent?

John Jacob is the Director of Texas Sea Grant Extension Program, Professor and Extension Specialist in the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism Sciences, and Coastal Community Development Specialist for Texas A&M University. His areas of interest include coastal communities and economies, wetland ecology, hydrology, nonpoint source pollution and abatement, watershed management, watersmart landscaping and soils and water quality.

Find out more about Dr. Jacob here: <http://texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu/WhoWeAre/AgentsSpecialist/JohnJacob.html>

Susan Alford is the president of Berg-Oliver, a Houston-area environmental consulting firm.

You can read more about Berg-Oliver here: <http://www.bergoliver.com/index.html>

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ARTS

1. Are there plans to include artistic components or improvements in the future plans? I'm talking about sculptures, murals, mosaics, installation art. Thank you.

Inclusion of the arts in Memorial Park is being considered as part of the Master Plan.

MEMORIAL PARK DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

1. How do you feel about the Memorial Park Demonstration Project?
Conceding the plan to reengineer the bayou and riparian buffer.
2. Build? Sustain? Why allow the Harris County Flood Control to threaten the riparian forest along the bayou? This is not building or sustaining.
3. The Meyer Park Restoration Project (Cypress Creek) being used as a model for the bayou in Memorial Park striped out the riparian buffer and destroyed the creek.
4. The Memorial Park Conservancy supports Harris County's Memorial Park Demonstration Project which would destroy the riparian forest along nearly 1.5 miles of the Buffalo Bayou banks. What is the position of the planners on the Memorial Park Demonstration Project?
5. Why is the riparian forest along the 1.5 mile Buffalo Bayou section along the River Oaks Country Club in danger of being destroyed? Isn't the plan about creating? Not destroying? Why try to tame a dynamic force?

The Memorial Park Demonstration Project (MPDP) is not a Memorial Park Conservancy project. After over 3 months of informational workshops and field trips involving local experts, interested parties and guest speakers, the Conservancy decided to support the MPDP based on all of the information reviewed, both in favor of and against the project. Any questions or comments about the MPDP should be directed to the Harris County Flood Control District

http://www.hcfcd.org/P_memorial/

Answer 1 – 5

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BUFFALO BAYOU

1. Any plans for Buffalo Bayou becoming Houston (like San Antonio) RiverWalk? Extent of the River Walk (length and width)?
2. So we want to “tend” the landscape for happy oaks. Any plans to “tend” that southern portion at the bayou—the part that is still relatively untouched? What are they? How about plans to channelize the bayou? Good idea or unnecessary abomination?

Answer 1 – 2

During and after the information gathering phase of the master planning process there has been continual research including public comments, historical archives, and scientific field studies conducted to inform the plan design. The master planning team, along with its team of nearly 70 local scientists and experts, has accumulated well documented evidence that the entire landscape, including Buffalo Bayou, is highly impacted. While the Park has not been uniformly disturbed across the entire landscape, all of the resources have been measurably impacted, mostly during the past 90 years. One of the intents of the Master Plan is to evoke more thoughtful stewardship and management of the biotic and abiotic features of the Park in the most ecologically sustainable way possible. Furthermore, there are no plans to channelize Buffalo Bayou nor any plans create a river walk along Buffalo Bayou.

WATER/IRRIGATION

1. Will there be any irrigation other than the Golf Course to help preserve the forest in future droughts?

A proposed new waterline in the Park would provide firefighting capability and establish irrigation for future plantings. This resource could also be considered for emergency irrigation in future droughts.

2. When you talk about storm water basins how do you see them fit into the natural ecology you are trying to return to?

Ponds will be used to collect storm water and will incorporate native plantings along the edges to allow for habitat. Many of the storm water ponds are within the boundary of the Golf Course. These ponds as well as any others outside of the Golf Course will be carefully designed to incorporate plant typologies used in the Park restoration efforts.

3. Is building a water supply pipeline still be considered?

Yes, there is a proposal to move forward on this being presented to the Uptown TIRZ board with an estimated completion date of the 2nd quarter of 2016.

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4. What steps are being taken to create water features to store water, create wetland habitat, etc.?

We are working to determine watersheds within the Park where water can be collected and stored in either existing or proposed ponds. The edges of the ponds are imagined to have native plantings for habitat. Some of these areas may be wetlands to assist with water cleansing.

PICNIC LOOP

1. If you don't keep Picnic Loop where will the cyclist roadways move to with the old fashion asphalt? Where will the trail riders and art festival move to?

The locations of all amenities in the Park are being closely examined. Some of them may be moved, other will remain in their current location. The November 10th Public Update Meeting will address amenity locations more specifically.

2. Central picnic area now is used for biking and events like art shows vs distributed picnic spots need parking.

The team is aware of this and is considering how to handle the events and required parking.

OTHER

1. BMX course? Did you mean mountain biking? These are two totally different types of riding.

The Master Plan will consider whether and how different types of biking can be accommodated in the Park's trail system.

2. You mentioned the horseback riding trails – any plans to A) bring livery stables back? B) make the trails more accessible for trail riding in?

We are evaluating greater public access to this quadrant of the Park with an appropriate use, which could be horseback riding / training for the public.

3. Will plants be used for mosquito control?

Specific plants will be identified and considered at a later stage in the design.

4. Why can't we perform control burns as they do at Sam Houston Forest to control the undergrowth?

There are regulations that currently prevent controlled burns in Memorial Park.

5. Very little discussion of parking, might need less if you improve access to the Park.

We are certainly looking at improved access to the Park that does not require a car (and therefore parking). Parking will be addressed at the next Public Update Meeting, November 10th.

6. How will future plans enhance access and interface with the bayou?

The planning team is studying ways to create appropriate opportunities to provide greater visibility and access to the bayou for park users. Specifics will be shared as they are developed at the November and January public update meetings.

7. Is there a plan for more restrooms?

As with the other amenities, restroom improvement and construction of new restrooms is being considered.

8. Is there a plan for secure bike racks?

The plan is considering the many requested amenities by different users and seeks to encourage greater access to the Park via hike and bike, which require bike racks.

9. Please make mountain bike trails one way traffic-the direction could alternate on different days of the week.

We are looking at safety for mountain biking, and one-way traffic may be part of the solution.

10. When I lived across the street from the Park (on Crestwood) as a child, the Park was a savannah. We could play there before it became overgrown into the scary place it is today. I am excited to hear the proposals about how it could be maintained as a savannah – funding? Regime? Who in charge? Part of the master plan will be a proposed maintenance and operations regime. Specifically – who does what – who pays for what.

The final master plan will include a strategic management plan as well as a cost estimate that will take into account the operations and management costs of the proposed design. Currently, HPARD, with additional support from the Memorial Park Conservancy, maintains the Park. The funding and management for future maintenance will continue to be a public-private partnership the specifics of which will need to be worked out when a final plan has been approved.

11. What will happen to the piece of the Park on the Southwest corner of 610 and Woodway?

All portions of the Park are being addressed as part of the master plan.

12. Move NW Memorial Drive to merge with Woodway and 610 frontage?

The current layout of the Park, including roads, is being analyzed by the planning team. It is the goal of the plan to maximize Park usage, maintain or improve traffic flow, better manage the ecology and make use of creative solutions for these issues.

13. Why are the Golf Course and Arboretum not part of any study?

The Arboretum has embarked on a similar master plan specific to their mission and education programs and they have completed their own set of studies and analysis which they have shared with our master planning team. The planners recognize the importance of the Golf Course and identified it in their analysis as an important cultural asset with its own history. They also have undertaken studies to explore more sustainable ways to provide the water necessary for irrigation of the course. The final plan will certainly include the Golf Course and propose any recommendations seen as beneficial to both the Golf Course and the Park as a whole.

14. What is the anticipated fate of the network of trails used by mountain bikes, trail runners, and hikers?

The trail system of Memorial Park will be addressed and improved as part of the Master Plan.

15. Will the powerpoint slides shown tonight be available on a public site?

Yes, please visit www.memorialParktomorrow.org.

16. Removal of invasive species will require significant intervention. What steps can be contemplated?

Eradication of invasive species has been underway for many years at Memorial Park. Fundraising is done to ensure that the safest possible methods with the best possible outcomes are used so that the resilience of the urban wild in the Park can continue to improve.

COMMENTS

1. Please stand up if you have set foot in the “woods” in Memorial Park. The running loop does not count.
2. Beauty berries are in full glory right now August/September