

MEMORIAL PARK TOMORROW

PUBLIC UPDATE MTG #2 Q&A
November 10, 2014

Spanish translation was provided at the meeting, and will continue to be provided at future meetings, to allow Spanish-speaking Houstonians to participate in the Master Planning Process. Videos of the presentations are posted online to reach a broader audience.

Questions/comments containing personal contact information were also not included. All questions are recorded exactly as written.

PUBLIC UPDATE MEETINGS

1. **Since this meeting does not afford an opportunity for dialogue regarding design features, what mechanism is available to citizens to provide comments on the design and to get more specific details on current design elements?**

Each public meeting is followed by a question and answer session. Questions regarding design features are welcome during this time. Additionally, as the plan continues to develop, updated design documents will be added to the www.memorialparktomorrow.org website.

2. **Why don't you have the meetings closer to the park and where most of us live?**

During the public input process and the master planning process, many meetings have been held near the park. However, the master planning team recognizes that Memorial Park is a city park, serving all Houstonians. The team is committed to offering multiple opportunities to hear more about the park's future throughout the city.

3. **Why not meet at Memorial Park?**

At the moment, there are not facilities large enough to accommodate the anticipated audiences that attend the public meetings. Additionally, the master planning team recognizes that Memorial Park is a city park, serving all Houstonians. The team is committed to offering multiple opportunities to hear more about the park's future throughout the city.

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FUNDING/FINANCIALS

4. Why can't TIRZ money be used for Park maintenance instead of capital improvement projects?

The Uptown TIRZ Fourth Amended Project Plan, which was approved in a COH Ordinance by City Council in May, 2013, states specifically that the goals for Memorial Park call for TIRZ commitment to “redevelopment and upgrades...including pedestrian bridges and hike and bike trails”. There is nothing in the original Project Plan or any of the subsequent amendments authorizing the TIRZ to fund maintenance for the Park. The final master plan documents will include cost assessments and recommendations for enhanced maintenance for the park. The funding strategy for this is still being developed.

5. Where is the funding coming from to make all these changes? Will there be a tax increase on the surrounding homes?

There are no plans to levy additional taxes on the adjacent residential community for park improvements. The Uptown TIRZ is funding the master plan, and subsequent project implementation will come from both public and private dollars. Public funds will come largely from the Uptown TIRZ while private funding will come through a capital campaign conducted by the Memorial Park Conservancy.

LAND BRIDGE/ROADS

6. Land bridge would provide access across Memorial Drive but I have concerns about safety for road users. Will lighting in tunnels be consistent with outside sunlight so drivers won't be blinded by the sun when exiting or unable to see when entering? — I am a cyclist who rides through the park on Memorial Drive. This worries me because I don't see an alternative.

The Land Bridge will meet any applicable city, state and federal regulations for bridges and tunnels. There will also be alternative, paved paths for bikes to use to travel through Memorial Park from east to west.

7. Will a land bridge attract “tunnel people”? (Homeless people are often desperate for dwelling space.)

While the provision of sidewalks within the tunnels will be required for user safety, they will not be conducive as dwelling space.

8. Do you foresee safety issues by placing lighting/roads/very public spaces in more condensed area?

By grouping like activities, the aim is to limit user conflict and improve safety. For example, by moving the ball fields to the north side of the park and adding lighting and sufficient parking, conflict between ballfield users and trail users will be minimized.

9. The connection of the North and South sound very expensive. How much will it cost?

At this time, the cost of the Land Bridge has not been established. The final master plan will include cost estimates for the proposed improvements.

10. Woodway and Memorial Drive will be into the park?

Yes, both Woodway and Memorial Drive will continue to provide vehicular circulation through the park. While the plan currently proposes realignment of the western segment of Memorial Drive (between railroad and 610), there is no intention to reduce or limit current vehicular circulation, and all proposed changes to existing roadways are currently being reviewed by COH traffic engineers.

11. What type of fill material is to be used to construct the living bridges and what plantings are to cover it?

The general character and quality of the landscape proposed for the bridge is shown in the rendering that was shared at Public Update Meeting 1 (see presentation slides from the public meetings). Actual plant selections and fill material specifications are beyond the scope of the master plan and will be determined when that portion of the plan is developed for implementation.

12. How will the roads run through the picnic areas?

Roads will not run through the picnic areas since they will be dispersed in different areas throughout the park. However, there will be vehicular access to parking areas adjacent to the new picnic venues.

13. Currently speed limit on Memorial increases to 40 mph within the park – it is 35 mph both ways outside of the park. With all of the cycling, running, walking park users, can speed be reduced?

The speed limit on Memorial Drive is being examined and the Master Planning team will make recommendations. However, measures are being taken to move paths away from Memorial Drive for the safety of trail users. The Land Bridge is also a measure that is being taken to discourage crossing Memorial Drive at street level.

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PARKING

14. Is parking and clubhouse for golf course moved?

No.

15. Where is parking for athletic fields?

Parking for athletic fields will be adjacent to the athletic fields.

16. General parking for visitors?

Parking will be dispersed throughout the park, with lots adjacent to amenities.

TRAILS

17. What is going to happen with the new Running Trails Center on Picnic Lane?

The Running Trails Center is going to stay in its current location and will continue to be open to the public.

18. AEDs on Lieberman Trail running where do they come into the trail?

Location and spacing of the AED's will be decided when the team is further along in the design process. That level of detail has not been specified yet.

19. What type of security measures are foreseen for the various trails?

The trails will be one-directional and uses will be separated out (cycling and hiking/running will be done on different natural surface trails) for safety. Way finding will be improved with signage and information so that trail users will be able to identify their location in case of an emergency.

20. What is the proposed surface of the circular multi-use trail in the southern part of the park?

The proposed surface is a combination of wooden boardwalks and bridges, and a crushed stone surface (like decomposed granite).

21. Won't doubling the number of trails be even more disruptive than the trails we have now?

There will be an increase in the overall linear feet of trails, but it will not double. The new trails are proposed for areas where they will be the least disruptive to wildlife and drainage as supported by the recommendations and findings local consultants. They are also located in areas that will discourage "trail blazing" and will replace the current use of the non-recognized trails that are in ecologically fragile areas of the park.

22. What plans are there in place for keeping bikes off the new trail across from the Tennis Center?

The Seymour-Lieberman Trail will continue to be a foot-traffic only trail. The Outer Loop trail will continue to be a multi-use trail, open to walkers and cyclists.

23. What is the timetable for rebuilding the 3-mile track and the golf course?

(see section re: "Golf" for answer re: 3-mile track)

Following the 2015 marathon-training season, refurbishment of the Seymour Lieberman Trail will begin. This refurbishment will provide a new 4" layer of decomposed granite 16' wide over the entire length of the trail in its current alignment. This will provide improved and safer trail conditions until the SLT is reconstructed as part of the master plan improvements.

24. How far do you have to walk to get walking trails on the south side from nearest parking?

There is parking for the south side trails at the proposed Family Recreation Area and Trail Head near the current Picnic Loop lot. Access to trails will be directly adjacent to this lot.

25. Is there a plan to lengthen the running trail (Seymour-Lieberman) beyond current 3 miles?

The current Seymour Lieberman Trail is currently 2.93 miles and will be lengthened to a full three miles in the proposed plan. Connections will be made to other trails that will allow for runners to lengthen their run if desired.

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CONNECTIVITY

26. Non-motorized access to the park- Trail along railroad/utility right of way across bayou to San Felipe and beyond? Improved trail access towards Shepherd and downtown
27. How do the trails which now end at Shepherd Dr. connect to Memorial Park?
28. Does the plan account for connections to the Bayou Greenways?
29. How will MP connect to Shepherd what is planned?

*Answer
26-29*

Current discussions indicate that the Houston Parks Board is the preferred entity to take ownership of any project to connect Memorial Park to Buffalo Bayou Park. It is important, however, to understand that there is no formal project at this point in time. HPB is enthusiastic about the idea of connecting Memorial Park to Buffalo Bayou Park and is working with several interested parties to define a fundable project that is embraced by stakeholders. Once there is a project that is embraced by stakeholders (including landowners), which is fundable through public and private dollars, the project will become active.

CYCLING/BIKING

30. Will you put in new amenity before you take out existing one?
31. Will there be a street bike trail- Picnic Loop now used for CRITS- where will it go now?
32. By dispersing the Picnic Area (Loops) south of Memorial Drive, will there be a surface provided for those cyclists, rollerbladers and strollers that currently use this facility?
33. If not, why not- Is this the Cycle Track? Would it be a fairly flat surface for blading?
34. In how many years is it expected before Picnic Loop is eliminated? Will the cycle track be operational before it is closed?
35. What is the width of the cycle track? I know the length is 1.5 miles
36. The Picnic Loop Road is used heavily by bicyclists for serious training. Is there a place in the new plan for that to continue?

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37. If you eliminate Picnic Loop where will cyclists who train hard go? Will you build elsewhere?

38. What plans are there for bicycle use? Could the one mile section of the existing jogging trail, slated to be abandoned, be turned into a bicycle lane?

39. Where will the cyclists race if picnic loop is dispersed?

Answer
30 – 39

A new bike loop, of comparable length and width, will be constructed in the northwest corner of the park. New amenities will be opened before old amenities are removed.

POOL

40. What will be done to improve the pool facilities and shower/toilet area for the pool?

Recommendations are being made to improve the shower and locker room facilities at the Memorial Park Pool and Fitness Center.

41. Size of pool?

The size of the pool has not been determined yet.

RUGBY

42. Will the rugby field be moved to the north end of the park along with the baseball fields?

43. The new rugby pitch is situated in the far north of the park. Will there be changing + bathrooms in close proximity to the pitch and equestrian center?

44. What's the timeline on moving the rugby pitch?

45. Where will the 'RUGBY PITCH' be relocated to?

46. What is the likelihood of keeping a rugby pitch at Memorial?

Answer
42 – 46

The rugby pitch will be moved to the North side of the park, along with the rest of the fields and active recreation. Proper parking, lighting, water, and restroom facilities will be provided. As with all amenities, new ones will be open prior to old ones being removed.

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GOLF

47. Will the golf course design be more open like Hermann Park's? They have a central and perimeter trail, protected in spots, so pedestrians can enjoy green space. As is, it appears walled off like a private club.

The current plan does not introduce pedestrian trails through the golf course or at the perimeter (other than the Seymour Lieberman Trail); however, the plan will provide plenty of trails for pedestrians to enjoy a variety of green spaces throughout the park.

48. What becomes of the existing golf club house?

Right now there are no plans for remodeling the Golf Club House. But the course overall will be evaluated, and the Club House may be considered in the future.

49. Will the driving range be away from the clubhouse?

The location of the driving range will not fundamentally change and will still be near the clubhouse. The size and orientation of the range may shift to provide more stations.

50. What is the timetable for rebuilding the 3-mile track and the golf course?

(see section "Trails" for answer re: 3-mile track)

A formal assessment of the golf course will be included in the proposed master plan. There is no plan to "rebuild" the historic course, which was renovated in 1995, but the assessment will identify any recommended improvements. The timing for implementing any recommendations has not been determined.

CAMP LOGAN/HISTORIC PRESERVATION

51. Will the foundational features of Camp Logan be preserved? Will any of them be compromised by parking between the regiment areas?

52. Preserve protect (the archeological) the site of Camp Logan 1917-1922?

The existing Camp Logan features will be preserved and any new amenities, such as parking, will be located where they will not damage or disturb the Camp Logan remnants.

Answer

51 – 52

53. Explain again why Memorial needs to go over drainage? How does it drain now?

The storm water from the northern half of Memorial Park drains under Memorial Drive through one large culvert. The intention of the master plan is to remove the culvert and bridge the existing ravine. This will allow for a more natural drainage corridor and easier park user access from the north to the south side of the park below Memorial Drive.

54. How will the ecological restoration efforts be monitored/measured?

There are 300 permanent locations where the park's ecology has been surveyed and will continue to be periodically surveyed as restoration efforts move forward.

55. Is there any plan to include neighbors with restoration/restore backyards?

There are no plans to include neighbor's backyards in restoration work.

56. The idea of destroying 30 acres of natural area in order to create a monoculture as a memorial seems excessive. Couldn't a memorial be done that uses only one acre?

The area for the proposed Camp Logan Memorial coincides with the 30 acres where the barracks that housed the soldiers were originally located. The mature and significant trees in this area would not be removed; rather the proposed "living memorial" of trees would be planted in regimented rows around them. These 30 acres comprise approximately 2% of total parkland.

ENVIRONMENT/WILDLIFE

57. How might you better incorporate the golf course into the park both programmatically and ecologically? What changes can environmentally be made to be more responsible (ie: water use, storm water filtration)?

The master planning team will be working with a golf course designer to explore upgrades and revisions to the current course. One of the most important environmental changes that the master plan is examining for the golf course is its water use. The master planning team is looking at designs that rework the existing storm drainage system to route water to expanded existing ponds and new proposed ponds to maximize storm water capture for reuse in irrigation.

58. As reported in an Ecotech meeting, there exist some areas that are suitable for Houston toad habitat. Will there be a goal to host a sustainable population of Houston toads within the Master Plan?

The master planning team, with its Ecotech panel of local experts is looking to improve habitat value in the park to help maximize the ecological functioning of the park as a whole.

59. Plans to conserve, preserve the prairie remnant along the power easement? (Keep the park wild)

The master planning team is looking to improve and expand the existing grasslands along the Centerpoint easement bordering the railroad tracks. The team is studying how the habitat value of that area can be improved through introduction of greater species diversity, and is studying how the trail network could provide visual access to this type of landscape for the general public.

60. How will the wildlife corridors, mostly along the drainage features, be preserved and enhanced?

Our ecology consultants have noted that existing vegetation along the drainage ways (barrancos) are doing much of the work to stabilize these fragile slopes. They have recommended that for the most part, the barrancos be left as they are, except for the very focused removal of invasive species. Where possible, the major barrancos that currently cross under Memorial Drive in narrow culverts will be reconnected through construction of larger bridging structures over these areas, to allow these corridors to be more continuous across the park. Additionally, the master plan would provide some bridging structures in the South portion of the site over the barrancos to provide ways for the public to experience those spaces, while minimizing physical access to protect their integrity.

61. Your plans are interesting but will require the cutting of many trees. How many trees will be lost with this plan?

There have been almost innumerable losses of native trees in Memorial Park due to drought and hurricane. HPARD counts over 20,000 trees removed since the drought. The plan works to recommend that major pieces of program, like ball fields and golf course amenities that require large open areas get clustered on the Northeast part of the site, where previous disturbances have already thinned much of the tree cover. Also, much of the vegetation we see on site currently is invasive species of plants. The master plan calls for significant removal of invasive species - trees and under-story. The native trees that are left will be preserved where possible and those that cannot be preserved will be replaced many times over in the current plan.

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62. The fill dirt used to build up the overpass. Where would it come from?

- Considerations of type soil for native plants
- Would new lakes or water areas be created from holes left over from soil

There could be some balancing of dirt excavated in the construction of the larger irrigation ponds with what is needed for the land bridge. The origin of the soil that will need to be compacted to create the shape of the land bridge has not been determined yet, but all existing top soil will be stockpiled for reuse in finishing the land bridge and the specification for soils in that area will need to consider the needs of the native plants that are to be planted there.

BUFFALO BAYOU/WATERSPORT

63. Buffalo Bayou is a key to connecting the Park to the environment and other parts of the city. What is being done to ensure access to the human powered watercraft on the bayou in the Park?

64. Plans to keep a boat landing for kayak/canoes at Woodway? (We need this)

65. Will the new canoe launch built on Woodway opened, or another one created in the park?

Answer
63 – 65

The public bayou access at Woodway and 610 will remain and be re-opened as part of the master plan improvements.

66. What plans for Buffalo Bayou adjacency?

- Slopes/erosion
- access to water
- canoe launch

The ecology consultants for the team have recommended that the existing non-invasive vegetative cover be maintained to help protect slopes against erosion. The master planning team is currently studying appropriate locations for water access, and as a rule, have allowed only the lowest impact activities like hiking to be located near the sensitive banks of the bayou. There will be several discrete areas where people can access the bayou, but exact locations are currently under study.

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CRESTWOOD

67. There was a surveyor in the park along Crestwood Drive yesterday that stated he was surveying for the new running trail that is to run along Crestwood Drive and Haskell Street. Is this trail a part of the Master Plan or intentions of the “Conservancy Board” or “Park’s Group” or anyone else that has authority to develop within the park?

68. What are the pink markers on Crestwood? They are not 100 ft. from the streets or homes.

Answer
67 – 68

Current survey work is being done for two projects: 1) The refurbishment of the existing Seymour Lieberman Exer-Trail and related drainage, and 2) for a new water line in the park. Both projects are part of the partnership between the Memorial Park Conservancy, the Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD) and the Uptown TIRZ. All required review and permitting processes are being followed per (HPARD), Public Works Department (PWD) and COH for design, permitting and implementation.

69. Please explain how overflow parking will be handled on Crestwood.

There is a proposed increase in parking near the Crestwood/Camp Logan areas. The proposed plan will also:

- Distribute parking lots near each of the proposed amenities
- Encourage access to Memorial Park via hike and bike trails, mass transit and other alternative methods
- Recommend parking restrictions / parking permits in the neighborhoods surrounding the park

MISCELLANEOUS

70. Will the Rodeo Trail Riders still be accommodated by the new plan?? Also other activities such as the Bayou Art Festival?

Yes, the Master Planning team has met with both the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and the Bayou City Art Festival to understand their needs and provision have been made in the plan to accommodate these events.

71. Are you aware that the showers and locker rooms at the new Running Trails Center are sadly sub-standard? Need seating for more than one person, soap shelves in showers, hotter water, and better water pressure.

Memorial Park Conservancy provided what we can in the context of our budget for this project. We will be able to make minor improvements over time. The master plan will likely suggest other improvements for facilities in the park (bathrooms, showers, fountains, etc.). We have adjusted the water to be hotter; we can only raise it so high based on city policy. Also, we will evaluate the possibility of installing something to hold users' toiletries. Specific ADA requirements dictate the size and location of seating, and we are space constrained. If we are able to augment seating in the future, we will.

72. What plans are in place for children's play areas?

There is currently a plan for a family recreation area in the south side of the park that would include children's play area(s).

73. What is to be done with the Archery Range?

This part of the park is being studied currently and ideas will be shared and included in the final master plan.

74. Will there be more bathrooms throughout the park?

Yes

75. What considerations have you given to the less able and handicapped in this plan, particularly regarding access to the south side of the park?

The main, multiuse trails that go through the park will be ADA accessible. Consideration will also be given to people of all abilities in the family recreation area planned for the South side of the park.

76. What about existing and future equestrian users?

We are proposing that the Northwest quadrant of Memorial Park remain for equestrian use and be improved for future use and users.

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COMMENTS

1. For the natatorium and pool: Please consider the conflicting users of recreation and fitness and accommodate both. Perhaps by providing 2 pools- one for people at play and one for lap swimming. Also please consider salt water alternatives to the heavily chlorinated version.
2. The officer quarters for Camp Logan were on Crestwood. So I don't think the barracks were that far way.
3. The isolated pockets of the park on the west side of Loop 610 are too small to be meaningful wild land spaces and instead should be converted to picnic and/or active recreation activities.