



# PORTLAND MAINE

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## Planning & Urban Development Department

Jeff Levine, AICP, Director

## Planning Division

Alexander Jaegerman, FAICP, Director

January 31, 2013

City of Portland- Public Services Department  
Attention: Troy Moon  
55 Portland Street  
Portland, ME 04101

Regina Leonard, RLA  
29 Bridge Street  
Topsham, ME 04086

RE: Staff Review Comments for Level I Final Site Plan

Project Name: Fort Allen Park Landscape Preservation Project ID: 2013-001  
Address: 49 Eastern Promenade CBL: 001 C001 001  
Applicant: City of Portland  
Planner: Shukria Wiar

Dear Mr. Moon:

Thank you for submitting Level I Site Alteration Application for the Fort Allen Park Landscape Preservation project. This proposal is being reviewed as a final plan for administrative review subject to the following applicable Land Use Code provisions:

- Site Plan Ordinance, Article V
- Shoreland Regulations, Division 26

### Staff Review Comments for Level I Final Plan are the following:

a. Zoning

- a. Shoreland zone line needs to be added to the plan.

b. Environmental Quality Standards

a. Preservation of Significant Natural Features/ Landscaping and Landscape Preservation

Landscape review comments & condition recommendations for the proposed Fort Allen Park landscape preservation project.

First, as Landscape Reviewer of Portland's Planning Review Team, reviewing one of our City's preeminent public open spaces from a historic and cultural standpoint is a big challenge deserving so given the importance of this space. The proposed project brought forth by the 'Friends of Eastern Promenade' in partnership with the City of Portland Public Services Department has logged many hours of research and input from the public. In my review I offer my historical knowledge of the space as 'custodian' of the trees and vegetation since 1989 along with input from our Districting and Parks Managers.

- i. **Existing trees** - the proposed plan removes the remaining remnants of the groves of evergreens planted in the early twentieth century that have been damaged by storms over the past several years. With the exception of a few Chamaecyparis and Mugo Pine the trees are past maturity. The proposed design intent removing the trees to open views of the Casco Bay are supported by J. C. Olmsted's recommendation to then Mayor James

P Baxter in 1905 and the 'Eastern Promenade Master Plan' from 2004. The plan also outlines removing the existing crab-apple trees to make way for the new all of 'Winter King' Hawthorns and the removal of Norway Maples between the parking lot and Portland House property along the embankment.

- ii. **Trees to remain** - 'tree saves' include a large Mugo Pine near the bandstand (a favorite of children playing while parents listen to band concerts), an Austrian Pine near the Portland House boarder along with a remaining Norway Maple. With the exception of the latter I agree with the plan as proposed. After reviewing the recent EP Master Plan and John Olmsted's recommendations, removing the large crown of the invasive Norway Maple that blocks views towards Casco Bay follow prior recommendations from Vic Walker in the 2004 plan. This space should remain clear of large trees that could block views. Tree-save measures should reach the drip line of trees when possible.
- iii. **Landscape & Tree Planting as proposed** - the tree subject has been a controversial topic for many years, the proposed plan re-establishes the all of street trees along the Eastern Promenade. Street-trees, the Ginkgo trees selected offer the height or scale desired with a reduced crown size thus not adversely impacting views. 'Princeton' American Elm could be an alternative. Smaller scale 'Winter King' hawthorns are proposed along the park drives, eight on the South or Portland House side and seven on the North side. The 'WK' Hawthorns were selected due to their low canopy height or less impact from the Eastern Promenade roadway view towards Casco Bay. They could grow almost as large as the existing crab-apples near the 9-11 Memorial for comparison. This proposed planting is to frame the park as noted in early photographs of the park, noted at the time the property and residence to the Northwest was owned by the Cummings family. The 'Winter King' Hawthorns will have some effect on the sweeping views in the park that designers feel are outweighed by the framework / historical period they are looking to re-create. As a reviewer of this proposal, knowing the view debate, feel that pruning or removing the two closest trees on the water side could be future options. The landscape plan also seeks to plant two additional 'Princeton' American Elms between the Fort Allen Park drive and the Portland House in the vicinity of the Norway Maples that seeded in to the landscape in the past. I would recommend not planting the two Elms in light of the Olmsted & Master Plan recommendations to not obstruct the views to Casco Bay as a principal design feature. This also balances some of the public concerns as well. Options could be to plant lower growing trees such as Amelanchier off the lawn area near the path to the Eastern Prom trail. Not replanting the Elms or other shade trees in this location between the Fort Allen Park drive and the Portland House would be a condition of approval.
- iv. **Landscape treatment** - "Ideally" the proposed landscape treatment would have included LID features to treat stormwater that currently and as proposed flushes over the cliffs down (after the plunge pool) to Fish Point. The City of Portland has been actively seeking developers / site plans to include LID / stormwater treatment options when viable. It is unknown if these features could be included or adjusted in the plan without impacting the process. Improving the existing 'plunge pools' and spillway are recommendations that will likely be covered in the Engineering review and perhaps off set the rain garden function. The proposed landscape planting is extensive... it is intended to add horticultural interest, direct pedestrian circulation and provide some basic screening in the plaza and bandstand areas. And, has some reflection of historic display as noted in the 1907 City Annual Report: *"... All of the shrubbery was given a systematic pruning, and the result was a fine display of the flowering shrubs all summer, especially the display of hydrangeas from July to September; the branches were bent beneath the weight of the huge flower clusters. They were the largest and finest we have ever had in our park, although they have been planted only two years."* Our Park & Districting Managers both commented in their review of the plan that the shrub planting will be a challenge to maintain, as it has been at the East End Beach and Harbor View Memorial Park. We noted in the EP Master Plan the recommendation states: **"Shrubs and Horticultural Displays: The use of shrubs and flowers should be limited to the capacity of the city to maintain them."** p 4 EP Master Plan. After careful review the planting near the Bandstand outside the closest ring would likely be the biggest challenge or be in an area that could see some reduction or phasing. Landscape maintenance assistance from "others", 'Friends of Eastern Prom', Master Gardeners etc. is needed to balance the increased planting maintenance. Also noted was the slope below the plaza near the stairs - this area is a problematic for mowing and has looked unkept in the past, a closer look at this space to see if options are available is recommended. A small strip of turf near the drinking fountain plaza should be removed to reduce trimming. 'Low mow' grass seed mix should be used in areas such as between the drive and new sidewalk locations. These spaces appear to be designed to allow the mowing machines to maintain.

- v. **Access to the USS Portland Memorial** - the proposed plan appears to block vehicle access to the USS Portland Memorial which is needed to maintain the mast and hang the signal flags. Our Aerial lift or bucket truck needs to park in the exact location of the proposed Virginia Rose bed. This space should be adjusted to facilitate this access as a primary condition. This would include a curb tip-down and removing one of the bollard lights. The current tree spacing appears to be adequate to fit by between the two trees.
- vi. **Flagpole** - After reviewing the proposed center walkway and the age of the existing flag pole it makes sense to replace the pole with a new one. The existing pole dates back to at least the 1970's, a new pole with mast arm as shown in the attached photo would be an improvement.

Overall - the landscape plan is acceptable as shown with the conditions and recommendations mentioned. The Fort Allen Park landscape preservation project proposes many changes that improve existing conditions; it will require teamwork between the City, our public park advocates and citizenry to make the project a success for years to come.

b. Water Quality, Storm Water Management and Erosion Control

A Level I Site Plan Submission is required to include a stormwater management plan and a soil erosion control plan (*City of Portland Land Use Code, Article V. Site Plan, Section 14-527(b) (12) and (13)*). Level 1 Site Alteration Plans are required to conform to City Code of Ordinances, Section 14-526(b) 3, Environmental Quality Standards; specifically the Basic, General, and Flooding standards defined in Section 5 of the Technical Manual. We offer the following comments related to each of these Standards:

- i. **Basic Standards:** Notes and details have been provided to address erosion and sediment control, maintenance requirements, and good housekeeping practices in general accordance with Appendix A, B, & C of MaineDEP Chapter 500; however, the following additions or revisions should be addressed:
  - a. The location of proposed erosion & sediment control measures should be noted on the site plan.
  - b. The plans should include provisions for a stabilized construction entrance/exit.
  - c. The Temporary and Permanent Erosion & Sediment Control notes refer to the Standards and Specifications for Erosion Prevention as contained in the Maine Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook for Construction: Best Management Practices (dated March 1991). The most up-to-date manual for erosion control BMPs is the MaineDEP Erosion and Sediment Control BMP Manual dated March 2003.
- ii. **General Standards:** The project will result in an increase in impervious area of approximately 4,300 square feet. As such, the project is required to provide stormwater quality treatment in compliance with the General Standards for the new impervious area or an equivalent, existing impervious area of comparable size. The Applicant has requested a waiver from meeting this Standard; however, there are no waiver criteria established by the City for this Standard. Based on the layout of the site, we recommend that the Applicant consider providing treatment for a portion of the driveway within the proposed planting beds (rain-gardens) between the driveway and new sidewalk area; however, alternate concepts are acceptable. The application will need to include a stormwater inspection and maintenance plan for all stormwater BMP's designed to meet the General Standards, developed in accordance with and in reference to MaineDEP Chapter 500 guidelines and Chapter 32 of the City of Portland Code of Ordinances.
- iii. **Flooding Standard:** The project will result in an increase in impervious area of approximately 4,300 square feet. The increase in peak flow-rate from the site is negligible, and will outlet to a drainage area along the narrow gauge railway/Eastern Promenade Trail, which directly discharges to the Fore River, a tidal waterbody. The project is therefore eligible for a waiver from the Flooding Standard.

c. Public Infrastructure and Community Safety Standards

- i. All proposed lighting will be owned and maintained by the City of Portland. The applicant will be required to install an electrical meter to monitor usage for billing.
- ii. Ballard lighting seems excessive. Can the numbers be reduced? Also there is a concern on the susceptibility of these bollards to vandalism. City resources may be limited to make necessary repairs if required.

- iii. As proposed, stormwater treatment will be required for this project. Please see comments by David Senus.
- iv. It appears that two crosswalks are proposed across E. Promenade at Morning St. Both crosswalks should be shown with block style marking on Sheet L4.0 and labeled as such.
- v. Where the proposed center concrete walk passes the drinking fountain, please eliminate the approximate 18" grass strip between the walk and the fountain.
- vi. It would be desirable to provide an approximate five foot wide concrete apron through the cobble gutter line at the bandstand to allow handicap access from the drive to the interior walkway.
- vii. Additional detail (cross sections/dimensioning) needs to be shown for construction of the proposed overlook steps.
- viii. Rip-rap out let protection needs to be shown at both catchbasin discharge locations.
- ix. Note four on Sheet L8.2 indicates yellow for the detectable warning for crosswalks. The color should be Gray.
- x. Note on Sheet L7.0 refers to Sheet L8.2 for detail on the water distribution system. Those details are shown on Sheet L8.4.
- xi. Casco Traps for catchbasins are no longer available. Please use the "The Snout" available at EJ Prescott.
- xii. Instead of individual slabs for each bike rake, it may be more cost effective to pour one slab.

d. Site Design Standards

a. Historic Resources

b. Exterior Lighting

The applicant is proposing thirty-one (31) bollards along the two pedestrian pathways. Is there a need for this amount of lighting? A photometric plan should be provided for all the proposed lighting. Staff would like to see more spacing between the bollards and reduction in the amount of bollards.

c. Signage and Wayfinding

Is any traffic signage being proposed at the park? Any proposed signage will need to be on the site plan.

The Planning Authority may request additional information during the continued review of the proposal according to applicable laws, ordinances and regulations.

Please submit one (1) complete paper set of revised final plans and upload the digital plans and documents to address staff comments. Upon receipt of the revised material, the City of Portland will review the additional plans and information for conformance with applicable ordinances. Please be aware that an application expires within 120 days of the date upon which this written request for additional information was made.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 756-8083 or by email at [shukriaw@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:shukriaw@portlandmaine.gov)

Sincerely,



Shukria Wiar  
Planner

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