

Washington Park Alliance

WASHINGTON PARK SOUTH ENTRY & PARKING VISION STUDY

May 20, 2011



INTRODUCTION

The Washington Park Alliance (WPA) is a coalition of not-for-profit cultural attractions within Washington Park in the west hills of Portland, Oregon. These include the Portland Children's Museum, Portland Japanese Garden, World Forestry Center, Hoyt Arboretum, the Oregon Zoo / Metro and Portland Parks & Recreation. The organizations share a commitment to providing a quality visitor experience and working together to enhance their collective contribution to the Portland metro region.

The WPA's mission is to coordinate a pro-active, collaborative effort to address and solve major issues. The WPA believes that there must be a coordinated effort to solve the Washington Park access issues, to improve the internal road and trails systems, to enhance vehicle access to the facilities and green areas, and to offer visitors high-quality experiences that are safe and comfortable.

The Oregon Zoo has begun planning for the implementation of its \$125 million bond measure passed by the voters in 2008. SRG Partnership, Atelier Dreiseitl, kpff Consulting Engineers and CLR Design were selected to design a 20-year master plan for the zoo and to develop designs for each of the specific projects included in the bond.

To construct the bond projects, the Oregon Zoo will need to update its conditional use master plan with the City of Portland and address the non-conforming conditions, many of which are outside the zoo property line. The parking lot is the major one, and though heavily used by zoo visitors, it is also used by the neighboring WPA institutions and general park visitors, and is owned by Portland Parks. The Oregon Zoo asked the Washington Park Alliance to collaborate with the design team in a series of workshops to study how to improve the entry approach and parking lot to benefit all users and visitors.

The specific tasks of this study were to address:

- » the entrance to Washington Park off of Highway 26, to improve aesthetics and way-finding to the WPA institutions, to improve pedestrian connections, bike paths and vehicular traffic alignments to address current deficiencies;
- » the circulation to and within the main parking lot, understanding current zoning code development standards as well as creative stormwater-management techniques;
- » improvement of pedestrian linkages between the light-rail station and WPA institutions;
- » drop-off and pick-up improvements at the Oregon Zoo's Conservation Discovery Zone, the Children's Museum and the World Forestry Center;
- » short, medium and long term solutions.

WPA GOALS

The WPA agreed that it wanted to create a common campus that meets the collective needs of all the cultural institutions in the park. The park is a destination and offers users a variety of quality experiences. Transportation to and through the park is the primary issue that needs to be resolved. The pedestrian experience should be enhanced and cars slowed down for safety. The WPA wants to encourage the use of parking and alternative mode resources to support broad and overarching goals for transitioning the Park access system to more diverse, sustainable and holistic goals.

The WPA developed a list of common goals that it hopes to achieve through any improvements to the area.

- » Environmental quality



- » Sustainability
- » Health & safety
- » Enhanced customer experience
- » Holistic transportation
- » Pedestrian experience within site
- » Fiscal health of institutions
- » Neighborhood context
- » Community awareness of cultural significance of Washington Park
- » Unification of the park
- » Public relations with surrounding neighborhood associations
- » Opportunity to identify funding opportunities



ENTRY AND CIRCULATION STUDY

Washington Park is the first and most historic park in Portland, supporting some of the region's most significant public attractions, including the Rose Garden, Hoyt Arboretum, Forestry Center, Children's Museum, Japanese Garden, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Oregon Zoo and numerous trails, forested open spaces, and recreational opportunities.

The park is also served by a roadway system that is comfortably shared by vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.

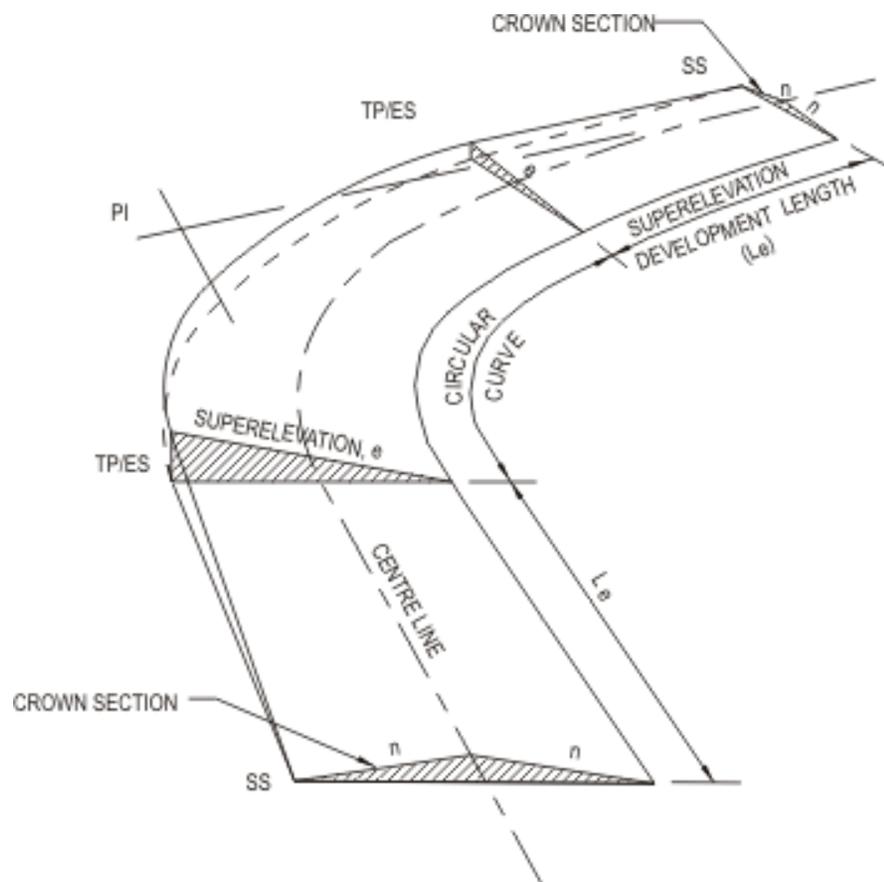
The following statement reflect a vision for the future of Washington Park that is supported by all members of the Washington Park Alliance.

The roads within the park are as pleasant as some of the most scenic byways in the state, following the landform with graceful movement and pace.



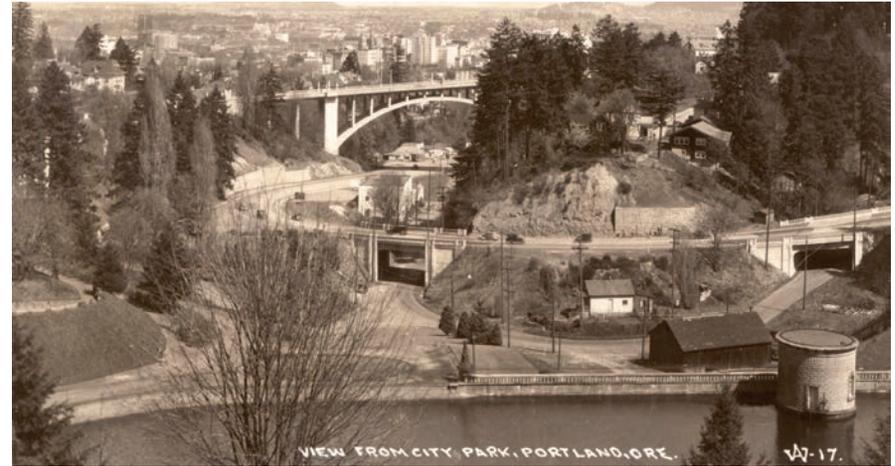
They are not engineered for efficiency and speed, with a tangent and radius, but rather, with a much more elegant spiral.

Unlike the utilitarian design of the super-elevated highway, which promotes speed and efficient point-to-point travel, parkways have historically been designed to enhance one's experience of a place. The undulating, graceful line of the parkway follows the form of the French curve and engages the landscape instead of simply moving through it.



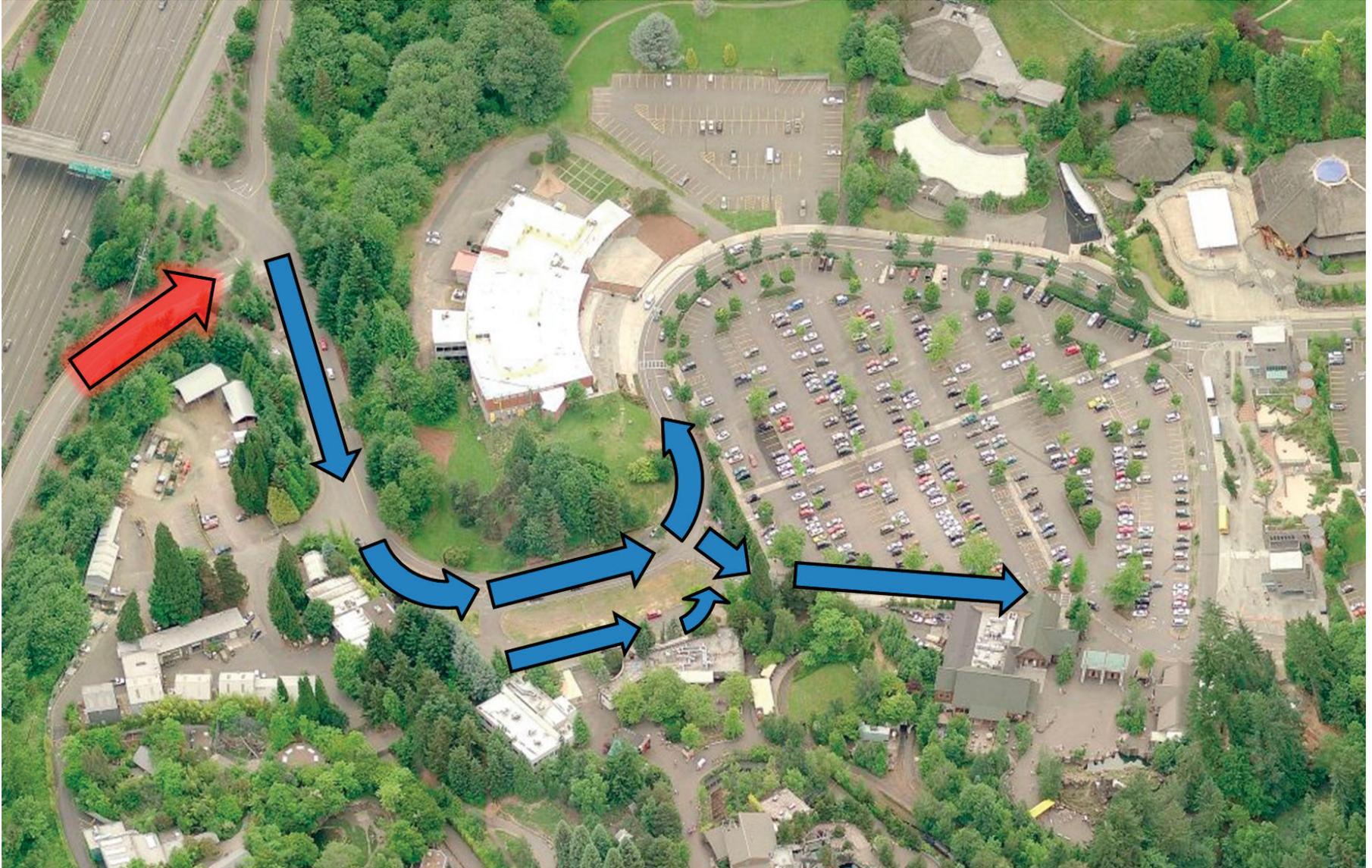


The roads and entries were designed as parkways, and remain in most areas of the park.



WEST ENTRY ISSUES

The existing west entry however, has been modified for efficiency and to respond to multiple traffic and circulation patterns. Confusing circulation, especially in the parking lot at peak times causes traffic backups onto Hwy 26.





Following the directional signs to the parking lot, visitors are greeted by a sea of cars with distant views of their destinations. Way-finding is difficult, especially for first-time visitors. Some parking lot drive lanes are one-way with limited turns, creating confusion and unnecessary congestion.



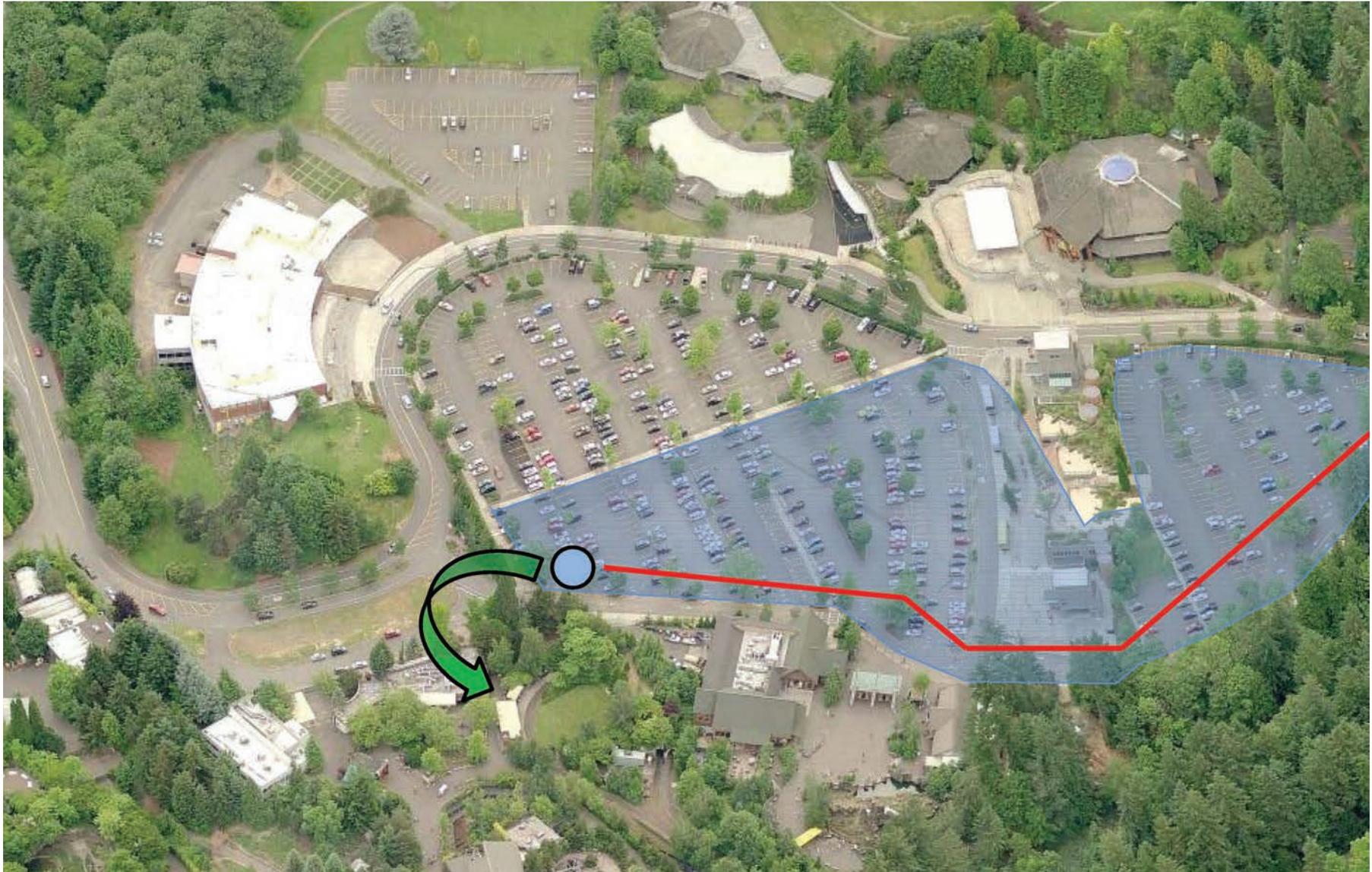
PHASE 1: CLARIFY

An initial first phase is proposed that would redefine the parkway style entry, limiting decision points for visitors and clarifying the main traffic route. Drop-off at the zoo's Conservation Discovery Zone would be reduced to a driveway-type access point to reinforce the circulation hierarchy. Access for emergency vehicles and truck access to existing loading docks for delivery and maintenance will be maintained.



CLARIFY

With limited modification to the existing stormwater-collection system, runoff from the east half of the parking lot can be routed to a surface facility. The zoo master plan is exploring the possibility of diverting a portion of the parking lot runoff into the zoo for storage and reuse. The surface rainwater runoff would be captured and highlighted in a terraced vegetated stormwater facility visible at the park entry.



PHASE 2: ORGANIZE

Alternate road alignments were studied that would improve vehicular access and organize the circulation system.

serpentine two-way vehicular circulation



loop alignment with one-way or two-way vehicular circulation



ORGANIZE

serpentine alignment: pedestrian and bicycle circulation



ORGANIZE

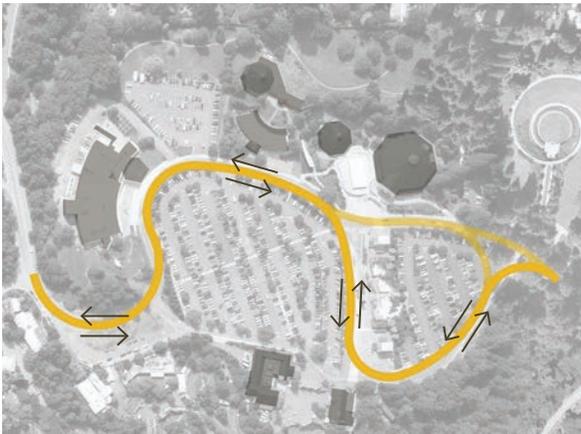
loop alignment: pedestrian and bicycle circulation



ORGANIZE

Summary of Proposed Alignments

serpentine



pros:

- » clear route
- » fewer intersections = fewer decision points
- » more landscape/park area
- » fewer pedestrian crossings
- » defined arrival sequence
- » larger parking structure footprint

cons:

- » more vehicle stops
- » more traffic directed past WPA institutions and need to loop back for drop-off

one-way loop



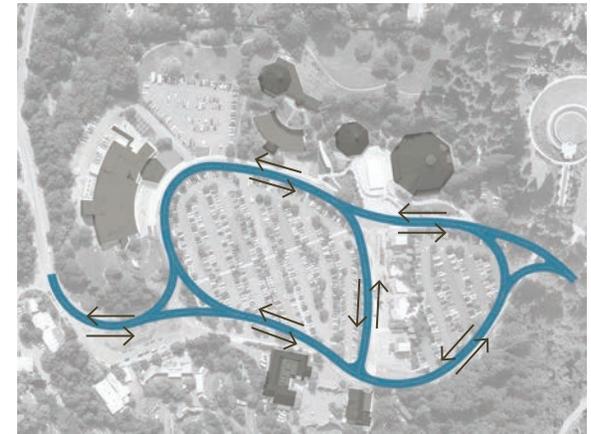
pros:

- » parking is immediately accessible
- » easy to 'loop back'
- » no cross-traffic turning required to access drop-offs

cons:

- » more routes = less clarity
- » smaller parking structure footprint
- » drivers encounter parking before WPA institutions
- » 'island' park
- » less landscape/park area

two-way loop



pros:

- » parking is immediately accessible
- » easy to 'loop back'
- » more options for drivers = more direct access to destination
- » most adaptable

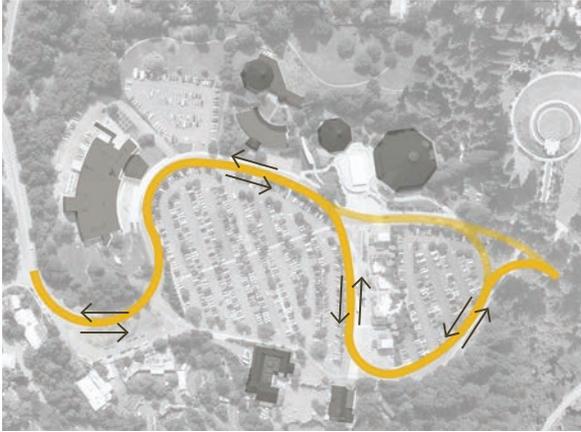
cons:

- » more routes = less clarity
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- » drivers encounter parking before WPA institutions
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ORGANIZE

Summary of Proposed Alignments

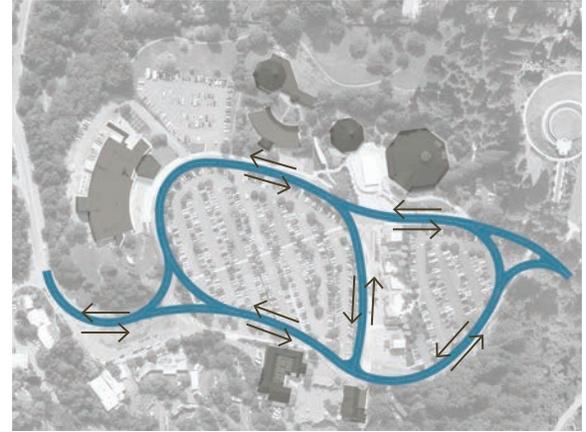
serpentine



one-way loop



two-way loop



pedestrian

CIRCULATION PRIORITY

vehicular



less

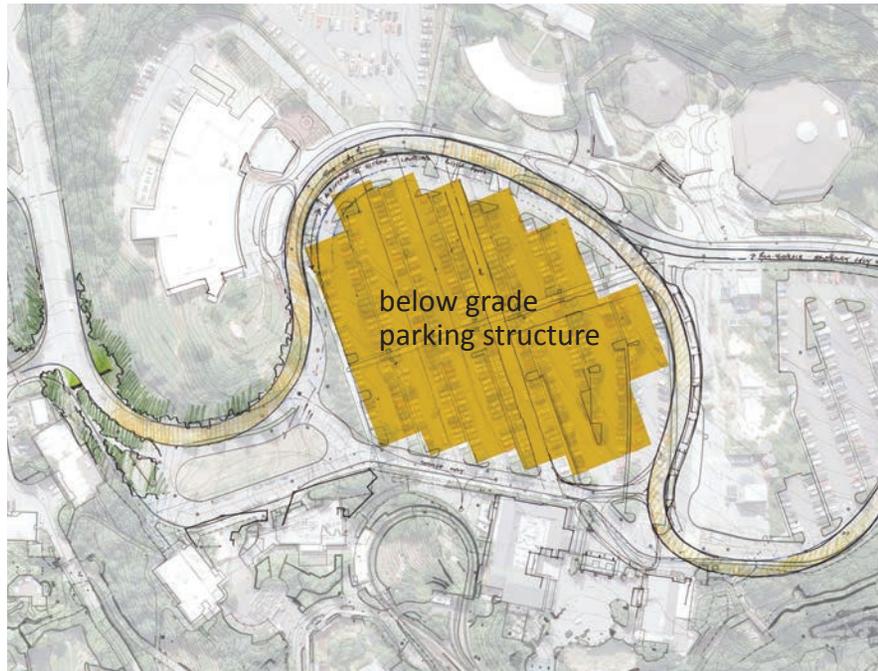
FLEXIBILITY FOR FUTURE

more

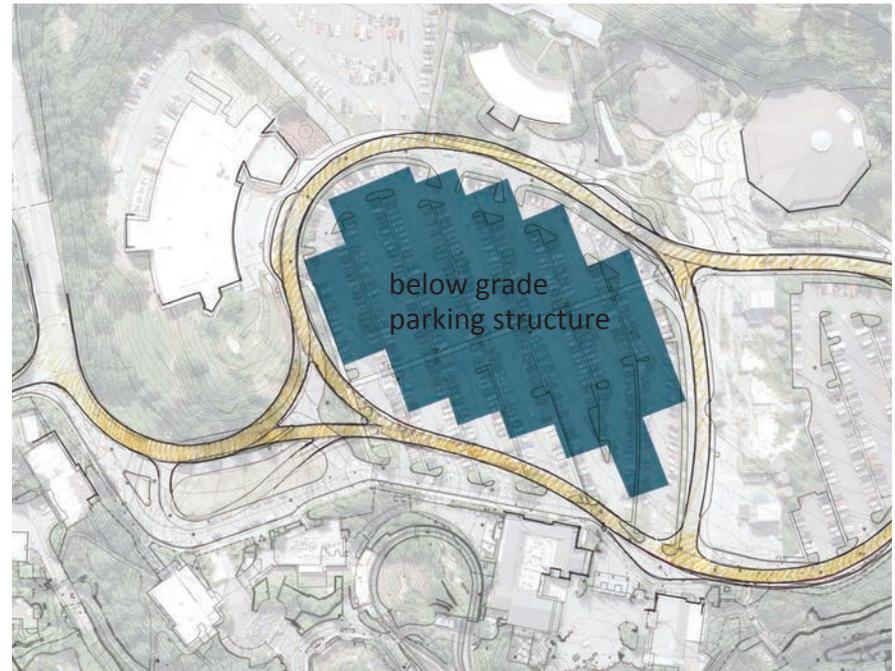
PHASE 3: ENHANCE

Both road alignments allow for the creation of a common green on top of a parking structure. The common green would be a significant new element in Washington Park, comprising up to four acres, hiding the cars and providing a pleasant and safe pedestrian connection to all the surrounding cultural institutions. It could provide open space, public art, programmable space, interpretive landscaping and an iconic Washington Park destination.

serpentine alignment

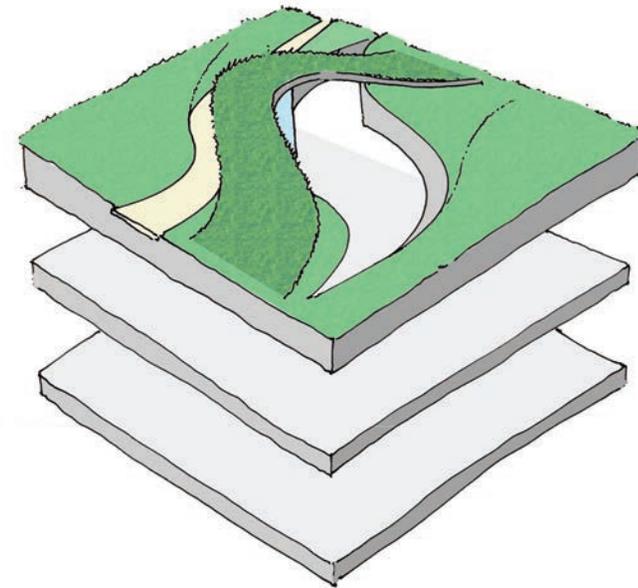
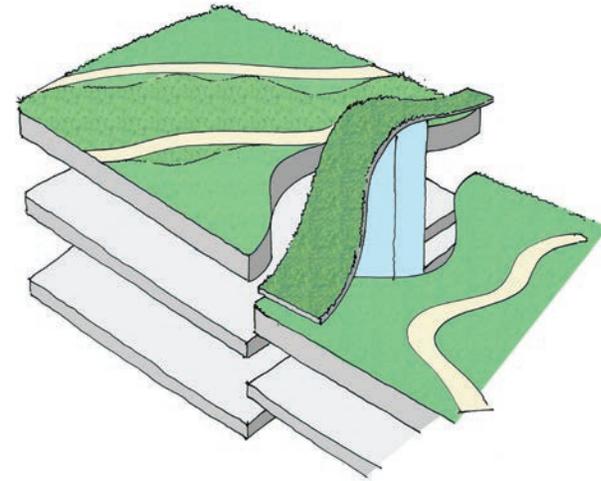


loop alignment



ENHANCE

Any variety of potential program elements could occupy the surface of a parking structure, with a variety of techniques to vegetate the surface and allow natural light to penetrate the structure.



ENHANCE

Instead of climbing the hill into the park, the road could remain at a lower elevation, whether entering a parking structure or not. This will allow an unobstructed pedestrian bridge crossing, from all of the institutions to a major park open space, parking and any other future facilities.



ENHANCE



WPA APPROVED

The WPA board unanimously approved the following themes and statements at their March 9, 2011, meeting:

- » The concept of a bolder vision for the Washington Park south entry area that this work represents;
- » The goals and opportunities identified in this study;
- » Proceeding with a technical traffic analysis on the three proposed road alignments;
- » A green park common area on top of either one or two levels of structured parking;
- » A new substantial Washington Park monument entry sign and water feature;
- » And a published report of this work under the WPA's name.

NEXT STEPS

The scope of this first phase visioning study was to look at how to enhance the character of this Washington Park entry and parking area, and did not include detailed alternative analysis, recommendations on roadway design solutions, or cost estimates. The next phase of work will study these items in more depth and begin to create strategies for beyond. The WPA is concurrently working on a transportation access and parking plan. Next steps are to:

- » Refine the design for new entrance alignment and features, including stormwater, to work with the proposed new drop-off and pick-up at the Conservation Discovery Zone (CDZ);
- » Prepare preliminary design alternatives for the west parking lot, including various parking and landscape options;
- » Prepare cost model information for the two items above;
- » Verify land use issues regarding phasing of CDZ, parking, and entry sequencing;
- » Establish cost models for parking structure options;
- » Clarify regional parking strategies;
- » Prepare a phased implementation strategy, including specific action items, decision points and cost estimates.

PARTICIPANTS

Thank you to all the following participants for their time and commitment to this study.

WASHINGTON PARK ALLIANCE MEMBERS

- » Sarah Orleans, Portland Children's Museum
- » Dennis Spidal, Portland Children's Museum
- » Gary Hartshorn, World Forestry Center
- » Mark Reed, World Forestry Center
- » Zari Santner, Portland Parks & Recreation
- » Brett Horner, Portland Parks & Recreation
- » Bob Stilson, Portland Parks & Recreation
- » Lisa Turpel, Portland Parks & Recreation
- » Terri Davis, Portland Parks and Recreation
- » Mat Sinclair, Hoyt Arboretum
- » Steve Bloom, Portland Japanese Garden
- » Cheryl Ching, Portland Japanese Garden
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