

Freedom Park Master Plan: Public Meeting #1, 9/17/2020 – Questions and Answers

Public Meeting Session #1 – 12:00PM

Question:

“Just a note: If you pursue enhancing the "photo moment" opportunity on Jefferson Bridge, please visit it during peak photo hours. It's very busy, congested, and dangerous for pedestrians spilling out into roadway, bicyclists trying to move through along the road, and of course the cars. I would encourage you to look into road diet solutions or protected pedestrian refuge islands for photos before you encourage even more people to gather in that space for a photo op.”

Response from SWA:

We did visit the site, and you're absolutely right. It was very busy, with no protected sidewalk or bike lanes, so that is certainly something we are looking into with this master plan.

Also, we understand the City of Atlanta is currently studying a restriping strategy for Jackson St. at that location. This is a major gateway to Freedom Park, we would want to really funnel people into the park from Jackson Street Bridge and the nearby Martin Luther King Jr. historic district. Given the high volume of all kinds of traffic on the bridge, we definitely want to make safety a priority at this location.

Also, an attendee shared a link to an article about a proposed road diet/parklet at Jackson St Bridge:

<https://atlanta.curbed.com/2019/9/20/20873775/jackson-street-bridge-atlanta-photos-parklet-road-diet>

Question:

“I've heard through the years that a pedestrian bridge at Moreland / Freedom Parkway was planned - is that in play?”

Response from Master Plan Chair:

The answer is “yes,” but it's not part of the master plan at this point. We've heard from constituents both in support and against this bridge idea. The goal of the master plan will really be to see what the community at large wants to see here – the pedestrian concern is universal, so there are a number of ways we could address it through the master plan. Those could be interventions at the street level, they could also be a raised bridge. The goal is to hear from as many people as possible their feelings on that topic, and that will inform the master plan.

Response from SWA:

The bridge is a great example of an idea that makes a lot of sense on the one hand, but has a lot of impacts on the other, particularly as it relates to the more immediate community. So with all of these ideas, they need to fit into some larger strategy that presents big new opportunities. Sometimes plans aim to solve small problems, sometimes they create big new realities, and both are valid. We just have to be sure that the pursuit of big new realities doesn't steamroll or violate the needs of the nearby communities. We'll be digging into these problems one by one as we go through this process.

Question:

“Does adding lights in Candler Park also create unintended consequences?”

Response from SWA:

Yes, absolutely. Nighttime use of parks is really important. One of our sort of basic tenets is that, if you invite people to do certain things in an urban park setting, it has to be safe. This goes right to the heart of the question, "What is the right amount of activity? What types of activities are we trying to promote, if any?" - and nighttime is an important consideration for that. There are ways to control lighting, but there are limitations to how much you can control it. We know in the Candler Park area, there are residences that front Freedom Park on different sides, and that's another strong consideration. In short, yes, there are unintended consequences that we will need to navigate.

We also think of lighting not only in terms of human urban habitat, but also animal urban habitat, and how that has implications on the ecological health of the park and its surroundings. As the site is so extensive, we'll really study lighting on a contextual basis, and think about introducing it where it makes sense.

Question:

"What can we expect at the Oct 15 meeting / what will be presented, draft concepts?"

Response from SWA:

In total, we've planned three public meetings. Today was primarily an introduction and solicitation for comments - we weren't trying to drive any heavy-handed ideas forward. During the next meeting on October 15, we'll start presenting concepts and sketches and vignettes for different locations in the park, but also big ideas, like how the identity of the park as a whole can be strengthened as a brand. We'll be thinking about big ideas for each system/area within the park. We think the meeting will include both mapping, diagrammatic, and visual material, with proposals for people to respond to, as well as site-specific developments that will be illustrated in a way that will allow you to provide your input.

During our final meeting in December, which has yet to be scheduled, we'll be rolling out master plan concepts. Throughout the whole process, materials will be posted on our website, everybody will have access and be able to provide comments. So it's a living process, not a black box - that's the kind of silver lining to this COVID-era public involvement methodology, that we have these new tools to make this information available throughout the whole process, and people can access at their leisure, not just at these meetings. So, this really extends the time of engagement, which is really beneficial.