



Multnomah County is
creating an earthquake-ready
downtown river crossing.

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October 14, 2020

Urban Design and Aesthetics Working Group (UDAWG) –Meeting Notes #2

Project:	Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge (EQRB)
Subject:	Urban Design and Aesthetics Working Group
Date:	Wednesday, October 14, 2020
Time:	1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
Location:	WebEx (see email for link)

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

Randy Gragg, Executive Director, Portland Parks Foundation
Bill Will, Public Works Artist
Paddy Tillett, ZGF
Chris Herring, Artistic Director, Portland Winter Lights Festival
~~Megan Crosby, Urban Development + Partners~~
~~Ian Williams, Deadstock Coffee~~
~~Priscilla Macy, Oregon Outdoor Coalition~~
Izzy Armenta, Oregon Walks
Dave Todd, Portland Rose Festival
Brian Kimura, Japanese American Museum of Oregon
Gabe Rahe, Burnside Skate Park

AGENCY GROUP MEMBERS

Patrick Sweeney, PBOT
~~Teresa Boyle, PBOT~~
Lora Lillard, BPS
Hillary Adam, BDS
Tate White, PPR
Justin Douglas, Prosper Portland
Bob Hastings, TriMet
Magnus Bernhardt, ODOT

PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

Megan Neill, Multnomah County
Mike Pullen, Multnomah County
JD Deschamps, Multnomah County
Heather Catron, HDR
Steve Drahota, HDR
Cassie Davis, HDR
Michael Fitzpatrick, HDR
Katy Segura, HDR
Jeff Heilman, Parametrix
Allison Brown, JLA
Carol Mayer-Reed, Mayer/Reed
Jeramie Shane, Mayer/Reed
Josh Carlson, Mayer/Reed
Anne Monnier, KPFF
Suzanne Carey, DEA

COMMUNITY TASK FORCE MEMBERS OBSERVERS

Peter Finley Fry, CTF
Ed Wortman, CTF
Art Graves, CTF
Marie Dodds, CTF
Susan Lindsay, CTF
Peter Englander, CTF





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INTRO

- Review of Meeting Agenda
- Review of Pre-Meeting Information Packet
- Review of UDAWG Purpose, Outcomes, and meeting timeline
- Project Update: Multi-Modal Working Group added; Ongoing Eastbank Esplanade connections discussion
- “UDAWG Library” coming soon. Meeting materials and information will be posted to the Multnomah County website and the link will be sent to the group.

DISCUSSION / QUESTIONS

- Randy Gragg: Is there any parallel discussion about Waterfront Park with the Eastbank Esplanade.
 - Steve Drahota: As we progress over to the west side, similar questions will show up, such as how to best provide connectivity. We are coordinating with City of Portland staff to talk about various options and trade-offs. We will have more conversations about the west side over the next month or so.

CHARACTER OF PORTLAND AND BURNSIDE BRIDGE

- UDAWG Members were provided an opportunity to summarize their homework findings; 1-2 minutes per person.
- Izzy Armenta: Currently, the bridge is not inviting; there is so much noise. Accessibility on the east side is more inviting than the west side, especially in regards to ADA. Things that would be nice: an unobstructed view of downtown. The White Stag sign seems like the “spirit” of the place. Highlights: preserving nature, seeing the West Hills, the Willamette River – not obstructing them – together with the environment. Continuing that would be great.
- Magnus Bernhardt: I walked the bridge and around and under it; explored the whole environment, and was even able to experience the bridge opening. It was a long journey to get from one side to the other; I had never done it. I was seeing it from a new perspective. It’s the equator and dividing line of north/south Portland. It has amazing view of the river. It was very noisy, so I very quickly wanted to get to the other side. I really liked what Randy had to say in his response: if we’re going to build a bridge, let’s make it light and unobstructed or big and amazing – not something in between.
- Justin Douglas: There are different experiences between the western bridge head and eastern bridge head. The railroad tracks and I-5 are such a divider between you and the river, unlike the west side where you feel like you could almost touch the river.
- Randy Gragg: I have spent a lot of time on that bridge, commuting by bike and walking. The most important thing about it is, “What is the city to come?” The bridge will be there for 100+ years. There is an opportunity to “make” a landscape with the bridge. Currently, when you walk underneath it on both sides, it’s a “background” thing; a heavy, dark, imposing thing that



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supports elicit activities; it creates ambiance for that. Something that is lighter and has a sense of being made would be an incredible opportunity, like for skate parks and festivals and anything else. There could be an opportunity to create a cathedral-like roof for these spaces that would make people want to be there.

- Bob Hastings: My comments come from a place of stepping back, instead of looking at the bridge today. I'm thinking about the City, but also the river that it straddles. The Willamette River is in the heart of Oregon; a throbbing artery of the state. It has a grittiness to it, but also a delicateness to it, such as lichen on the balustrade. It's a servant, but is also served by us. The bridge remembers these stories and carries it with it – past and future.
- Brian Kimura: From both a vehicular and ped/bike access, the bridge should be more inviting. The approach on the east is nice, but the actual approach to it is not inviting. It's long, the noise is unbearable and the path to get on the bridge is not the most convenient. The current signage and lighting doesn't create a very good pedestrian experience; feels like an "ad-hoc" situation. Underneath the bridge, I like how it's handled at the Saturday market. The "roof" is important. The Saturday Market gets a lot of light, but when you get to lower light area it doesn't feel the same. We're considered one of the most sustainable cities in the world; any design going forward needs to be very environmental; not just its structure, but even its operations – perhaps net-zero operations.
- Patrick Sweeney: I like Justin's point-of-view in the differences between the east and west side. The Eastbank Esplanade is amazing, to be so close to the water and under the bridge is a really special experience. On the west side, it's borderline offensive. The razorwire fence under the bridge is a deterrent to a positive riverfront experience. The connection to the river on the bridge approaches and from the riverbanks is important. As citizens, we're going to spend more of our lives off of it than on it, so we're going to spend more time looking at it than using it. I think the bridge should be "forward-looking", I think we're culturally trying to break from the patterns and ideas and weight of the past; imagine having a bridge take advantage of this moment in time where we are looking forward to a better future than what we are in right now. The design of the bridge is part of a record - it can record a moment in time when there is so much upheaval; to be a spot where people can go to note "this is where and the time that things started to change". Just like the architecture throughout the City, what's wonderful is that they are points on a timeline. For instance, when Fox Tower right next to Pioneer Square was built, it was indicative of the time; bigger and bolder, yet complementary to the overall scheme of downtown. The bridge can be timeless if it is done right, while also marking a time when people were thinking differently.
- Paddy Tillett: For most of Portland's history, the Willamette River was the "service road" – it was a sewer – we changed our minds about that in the 1970s and built Waterfront Park; a glorified tradesman's entry. That is a huge change. As you cross the bridge, westbound now, it's an extraordinary statement about how we have reinvented it. Across the bridge and into downtown, you have a sense of entry, it was the elephant head that welcomed you. I think we have an opportunity to redefine the entry into the City and east side - the way the bridge connects to the east side. The new bridge will be wider, it needs to be programmed and the light



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needs to be good there; be a center of positivity. It's a crossing for pedestrians as much as it is vehicles; there needs to be direct access from the park to the bridge. The design scope for the bridge should be outlined in those terms.

- Tate White: I walked to the bridge using the Eastbank Esplanade; it was a pretty incredible experience. There was a lot of water recreation happening; a beautiful day. I was hit for the first time that parts of the Eastbank Esplanade features mirror the truss-like structure of Portland's bridges. If we change the bridge, I think we'll need to consider changing the structure of the Eastbank Esplanade. I appreciated the big open views of the bridge. As a group, I think we'll need to confront the tension of wanting the bridge to serve as a beacon for resiliency and having more support structure at the top so we won't have the same openness providing big expansive views. We'll have to think about how to fulfill a similar view experience with more structure.
- Bill Will: I focused on what the bridge could say. I think the design should be one that shows that Portland is looking to a better future. I think Portland, when we make a change, we like to implement new and innovative solutions: I think the bridge should show that intent. Show Portland as a multi-modal city, values bike/ped/train over the automobile. I want an elegant design that is original; that is why I am concerned about how we choose the designer for the bridge. The proportion of elements, large and small, are critical. Something that doesn't interrupt what showcases the views and is interesting to watch when it is opening.
- Dave Todd: While the openness can't probably be replicated, perhaps we can provide the feeling of openness. The bridge is a connector: Portland was a bunch of separate towns and it provided a sense of connection. The relationship with the bridge itself to the river: it gives a historical illusion to it. The cut waters and shape of the piers speak to the nautical sense; the bridge is working with the river instead of "conquering" it. We want to keep what the native people had with their relationship with the river.
- Chris Herring: Coming from the east side going towards downtown, the buildings feel oppressive. Most of the buildings on the west side will be getting larger, so I think the bridge should be larger and open and iconic; perhaps even a green space on the bridges. The approaches are heavy and dark and don't open well to the parks on the west side. It could be opened up. That bridge should be our beacon; Portland doesn't have that many iconic spaces; it has a pretty skyline, but nothing in particular that stands out, except Big Pink. It's not like we need a Space Needle, but it would be neat to have something to look at. It should overwhelm what is around it, instead of *being* overwhelmed by what is around it. It should be a gateway; it could be beautiful and lead into the City.
- Peter Englander (via Chat): Our bridges are, or could be, our Space Needle - as is OCC to some extent.
- Randy Gragg (via Chat): Bridge could give Yard a purpose: a background wall to a sculpture!
- Hillary Adam: What I noticed about the bridge is that it is simple, but it has a little bit of charm; it would be nice to carry that over. Safety features should be integrated into the designs so it is not tacked on afterward. The ADA access lacks dignity due to all of the graffiti. In regard to the "spirit"; when the traffic was low, it almost felt like an open plaza, like it did during the early



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October 14, 2020

June protests. It should say it is “an open and inviting space for all”. It would be nice to show that it says we value all people, but when you get into downtown, it doesn’t feel that way, and I think it’s something we need to address honestly with the project.

- Lora Lillard: I think the visual access from the bridge itself is pretty positive, especially looking to Waterfront Park or the Eastbank Esplanade. The physical access will need to be made better, a part of the bridge, not a “tacked on” sense. I appreciated the human scale and the shadow of the rails on the sidewalk. The bridge should say something about our values; that we value people; it should be easy and pleasant on foot. The design of access of the approaches are meant to be experienced should be well designed, as well as the design underneath. It should show that we value Portland, but you should be able to see the other iconic features in one way. I don’t think it needs to be a blank wide open bridge; it should be iconic. It should show the value of the different modes and value of the river.
- Carol Mayer-Reed: Thank you everyone for your opinions and observations.

DISCUSSION

- Carol Mayer-Reed: A few things that stood out to me from everyone’s words: the idea of optimism and that we have a rich future, putting our best selves forward, the episodic nature of it, the weighing of the differences in the east and west. Also a Maya Lin quote came to mind: “Things don’t have to be symmetrical to be equal”. I’m noting that it is not just the bridge itself, it’s everything around it. It is a cacophony of experiences while you are there, but it is also a place-making opportunity. I would imagine we have all taken visiting friends and family to the Tilikum Crossing Bridge to view the city. Several people made points that the traffic is distracting. There are noticeable gaps that allow the bridge open. The relationship to the river is a strong theme: at first it served as a gateway to the region with land secondary, then it became the sewer, and then we cleaned it up. As far as it being “iconic”: in a lot of people’s minds, something very iconic can be diminutive or large in scale. Our values: the people, the earth, sustainability, our experiences on foot as pedestrians. Does anyone want to add to the thoughts on the bridge’s relationship to the Willamette River?
- Randy Gragg: Looking ahead at the slides, I realized that there will be a lot of the features of the bridge that we won’t see. There’s going to be some scale and heft to this bridge, it will be interesting to see how it may express what we can’t see.
- Carol Mayer-Reed: That’s a great point. Do we want to be open with how it works or do we want to leave it a mystery?
- Bill Will: It is truly amazing how the bridges work; the mechanisms are so interesting. I’d like to be see that if at all possible.
- Carol Mayer-Reed: I wonder if Ed Wortman would like to add to that.
- Ed Wortman: That’s something I hadn’t thought about: what could be done in the design to show the mechanisms of the bridge. I love watching them work. The new John Street Bridge in Victoria, BC has a pretty unusual design. There’s a huge circle at the end of the bridge and it’s all



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open to the public, not that we'd want something exactly like that, but bringing some of the features of a movable bridge into light is an interesting thought.

- Carol Mayer-Reed: Thanks, Ed. Now on to the idea of being "iconic" - would anyone care to comment further on that?
- Bill Will: This could add to what we already have. I think I agree with Chris that it should be iconic, if possible. It will be the biggest horizontal piece of our City, aside from the river itself.
- Magnus Bernhardt: I think Portland is kind of subtle and things are discovered in a serendipitous way. If you explore and look, you'll find character in your sense of discovery. Unlike other cities that have features that say "Look at us! Aren't we cool?"
- Bob Hastings: The lesson from the Tilikum Crossing was coming up with a theme for the overall team that treats engineering as an art form and design as an urban expression.

BRIDGE TECHNICAL NEEDS AND CRITERIA

- Steve Drahota: The slides are meant to describe some of the bridge's technical needs: what has to be achieved and how can we make this bridge everything it can be.
- Project Purpose and Need
 - Seismic Resiliency and Emergency Response
 - Regional Recovery and Rebuilding
 - Long-term Use
- Cascadia Subduction Zone Overview
 - The last major quake in Oregon occurred 320 years ago, a timespan that exceeds 75% of the intervals between the major quakes to hit Oregon over the last 10,000 years.
- Bridge Design Criteria
 - The bridge must:
 - Sustain only minimal damage
 - Withstand potential damage from adjacent buildings
 - Be usable by all travel modes on the bridge immediately following the earthquake
 - Have its movable span operational within 1-2 months following the earthquake
 - Allow very heavy earthquake recovery, response, and material hauling vehicles to cross unhindered
 - Be considered the only functioning bridge within weeks / months following the earthquake
- Seismic Resiliency
- Long-span Alternative
- Project Context: Mid-span Roadway Section
 - Additional deck width over the river provides a safer facility for bicyclists, pedestrians and other users
- Streetcar-Ready



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- Project Context: Approaches
 - Existing Facilities – Constraints
- Ship Navigation
 - Willamette River's Main Channel Alignment
 - Mandatory Vertical Clearance Criteria
 - In-river Pier Protection
- Other Design-related Criteria
 - Visual and Aesthetics
 - Community Quality of Life
 - Sustainability
 - Equity
 - Multi-modal Connectivity
 - Personal Safety & non-Transportation Safety
 - Permittability (Local, State, and Federal)
 - Fiscal Responsibility (Cost and Long-term Maintenance)
 - Bridge Constructability
 - Bridge Functionality / Future Adaptability
 - Impacts to Property Owners, Businesses, and Residents (Temporary and Permanent)

DISCUSSION / QUESTIONS

- Lora Lillard: Question about the mid-span width: does the entirety of the potentially widest portion of the bridge also need to be able to lift?
 - Steve Drahota: Yes, similar to how it functions today.
- Bill Will: For comparison, what is the width of the current bridge?
 - Michael Fitzpatrick: It is roughly 110 feet at the east and west ends and 86 feet over the river.
- Peter Englander (via Chat): Steve – you didn't mention a large drainage feature/rain garden for the Saturday Market Plinth that's on the north side of the bridge, between the bridge and the Japanese American Historical Plaza.
 - Tate White: Hi Peter, this rain garden has become a major management issue for PP&R. It is being used for different purposes that conflict with its stormwater management functions. We have asked the project team to not plan on restoring it.
- Randy Gragg: The Eastbank Esplanade will go away in the earthquake, correct? And a good chunk of Waterfront Park?
 - Steve Drahota: There is a good chance of that. Less so for Waterfront Park. The seawall is very vulnerable. There is quite a bit of consequence to the lateral spread on the east side.



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- Carol Mayer-Reed: The river fluctuation from an annual basis can be as much as 30 feet, so everything you're planning is above the highest river level.
 - Steve D: Correct. There is a fluctuation both up and down. As the water level goes down, you don't want to expose the bridge foundations; as the water level goes up with climate change, it could have a serious impact on bridge design.

NEXT STEPS AND FINAL QUESTIONS

- Next meeting is on 10/28 and will be 4 hours long.
 - Key Topics will be: Bridge type options; Typology (i.e., how tower shapes, cable arrangements, various truss and arch forms to be designed during Final Design phase influence the draft Visual Design Guidelines)
 - Steve Drahota: Think of it as a work session where we will be exploring different bridge solutions and trying to whittle down what makes sense vs what doesn't make sense.