



Portland Parks Foundation

833 SW Eleventh Avenue, Suite 808 • Portland, OR 97205 • portlandpf.org

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Contact: Randy Gragg, Executive Director

(503) 445-0994

info@portlandpf.org

Back to Square One:

Rethinking O’Bryant Square and how public space can work

Portland Parks Foundation presents a series of online conversations and a public park redesign process featuring local and national thought leaders in February and March

Portland, Oregon: Portland Parks Foundation (PPF) is excited to announce a major park design initiative and speaker series, *Back to Square One: Rethinking O’Bryant Square and how public space can work*. Led by Portland Parks Foundation, this public program is a collaboration with Portland State University’s Center for Public Interest Design, Harvard University’s Loeb Fellows, and Portland Parks and Recreation.

Since 2018, downtown Portland’s O’Bryant Square has been closed and fenced due to structural issues with the garage underneath. Dubbed “Park Block 1” on the city’s first map, O’Bryant has had a long-troubled history, even earning the nicknames Paranoid Park and Needle Park. But O’Bryant is now poised for a radical reinvention: the City of Portland will soon demolish it; and the Portland Parks Foundation will bring national and local thinkers together with the community to re-envision the square’s future.

Back to Square One will have two phases:

- A weekly Happy Hour webinar speaker series with innovators from New York, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, the Bay Area, and Newark paired with local leaders to compare experiences on the challenges and successes in contemporary public space design and programming.
- March 8th through March 11th, the collaboration will bring the many stakeholders around O’Bryant Square together with the general public for a week of intensive brainstorming sessions to envision O’Bryant Square’s next life.

For further information, including session details and registration, visit

<https://www.portlandpf.org/back-to-square-one-green-dreams>.

The goal of this collaboration is twofold:

1. Envision simple, fast-track, first-phase design and programming to bring O’Bryant instantly to life as soon as the demolition fences come down.
2. Learn what features and activities work, and don’t, to shape the future permanent design when funding to build anew is identified.

“Historically we’ve always designed our urban plazas first, then programmed them,” notes Randy Gragg, Executive Director of the Portland Parks Foundation and an alumnus of the Loeb



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Fellowship. “This time, we have the opportunity to learn from other cities, try things out, and let the successes we find determine the design.”

Schedule of *Back to Square One* Happy Hour Conversations:

- Monday, February 6: “Back to Square 1: An Introduction to O’Bryant Square’s Past and Future” with Todd Ferry, Lora Patiño Lillard, Randy Gragg, Nick Falbo, and Nolan Leinhart
- Wednesday, February 8: “Grassroots Urbanism: Growing Public Space from the Youth Up” with Roger Cummings, Sean Suib, and Brandt Maina.
- Monday, February 13: “Making Space for Everyone: Trauma-Informed Design and Programming” with Susan Chin and Deandre Kenyanjui
- Wednesday February 22: “Urban Futures: Work, Retail, and Living in Post-Pandemic Downtown” with Christopher Calott and Eric Zimmerman
- Monday, February 27: “Urbanism in Motion: Making the Mutable City” with Jennifer Siegal and Art Pearce
- Wednesday, March 1: “Just Space: Beyond Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Design” with Damon Rich and Karim Hassenein

All conversations take place online via Zoom from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm on the dates indicated. All are open to the public and free of charge. Pre-registration is required.

About the Speakers:

Feb. 6

Todd Ferry, Senior Research Associate, Center for Public Interest Design (CPID), PSU has led public space activation projects for Trimet, PBOT, Sacramento Transit Authority, among others. Most recently, CPID led the community design of Arleta Square in Lents.

Lora Patiño Lillard, recently joined PP&R as a Capital Project Manager, after 16 years as a planner and urban designer for the Bureau of Planning & Sustainability where she worked on numerous projects, among them the Green Loop.

Randy Gragg, Loeb Fellow, longtime journalist and Portland Park Foundation’s Executive Director, has played leading roles in advocacy for downtown plazas for the last 30 years.

Nick Falbo, Senior Transportation Planner, PBOT, works on district and corridor plans to re-envision streets and communities.

Nolan Leinhart, Principal and Director of Planning and Urban Design, ZGF, served as lead urban designer for the Broadway Corridor Master Plan.



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Feb. 8

Roger Cummings, Loeb Fellow 2009, co-founded Juxtaposition Arts 25 years ago. It employs young urban artists in hands-on education initiatives that create pathways to self-sufficiency while actualizing creative power.

Sean Suib co-founded and has led New Avenues for Youth for 25 years. A neighbor of O'Bryant Square, New Avenues is dedicated to the prevention and intervention of youth homelessness. Working with young people (ages 9-24), it focuses on the individual—their experiences, identities, needs, and goals—to make positive change in their lives.

Brandt Maina is a youth leader at P:ear, an organization devoted to creatively mentoring homeless youth.

Feb. 13

Susan Chin, Loeb Fellow 2000, is an accomplished architect, urbanist and civic leader who recently served as executive director of Design Trust for Public Space, a nationally recognized incubator that catalyzes New York City's landscape with public agencies, community collaborators and design professionals since 1995.

Deandre Kenyanjui, engagement coordinator/peer counselor, Multnomah County, played a pivotal role in developing the “peer-centered” approach of the new Behavioral Health Resource Center.

Feb. 22

Christopher Calott, Loeb Fellow 2012, Chair of Real Estate Development, UC Berkeley, is an award-winning architect, urban designer, academic and real estate developer. He currently engages real estate developers and municipal agencies working on large redevelopment projects in the Bay Area seeking more socially equitable outcomes.

Eric Zimmerman, Central City Senior Advisor, is the Office of the Mayor's point guard on trouble-shooting and reactivating downtown Portland. He has previously served in deputy and assistant city manager roles in Medford and Tigard.

Feb. 27

Jennifer Siegal, Loeb Fellow 2003, Office of Mobile Design, LA, focuses on “portable, demountable, and relocatable structures,” from homes to schools to stores. She also explores prefabrication, taking advantage of industrial processes to create a more efficient and nimble architecture.

Art Pearce, Planning and Projects Director, PBOT, Portland, guides transportation ideas through the long-range planning and policy, project development, and construction stages. His group has overseen the repurposing of streets to plazas throughout the city.



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Mar. 1

Damon Rich, Loeb Fellow 2007, Partner at Hector, urban planning and civic arts, develops vivid and witty strategies to design and build places that are more democratic and accountable to their residents. He is the former planning director of Newark, NJ, the founder of Center for Urban Pedagogy, and a 2017 MacArthur Fellow.

Karim Hassaneim is Director of Storytelling and Communication for Colloqate Design, a multidisciplinary nonprofit Design Justice practice focused on expanding community access to, and building power through, the design of social, civic, and cultural spaces.

About Portland Parks Foundation: Portland Parks Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that mobilizes support to improve Portland's system of parks, natural areas, and public spaces. We help Portland communities create more equitable access to nature, play, health, and places of connection. To learn more about our mission and programs, visit www.portlandpf.org.

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