

Good evening. My name is Will Hooker and I live at 610 Kirby Street. I am a registered landscape architect and a retired professor from NC State where I taught landscape design for over 35 years. I would like to comment on the proposed Master Plan for Dix Park

Fifteen years ago, I was involved with a group lobbying to keep the Dix Hospital Campus as a Park. With the hospital closing, the City and State were in the process of deciding what to do with the land. Because there was a call to maintain a portion of the land for services to aid the mentally ill, my group felt that we would be okay for some of those services to be maintained, with the bulk of the property given over to natural park land.

The City called a public meeting so that citizens could state their desires. There were two microphones set up in the audience and as I stepped up to the microphone in my line, the person in the other line was making his statement.



**That person was Gregory Poole.**

He said, **“Raleigh needs to devote the entire 306 acres to a park, - no exceptions.”**

I was awestruck. It was what my colleagues and I really wanted. I did not know Gregory Poole at the time but decided right then to follow wherever he would lead. His vision of **maintaining the entire campus for a park** is still true. Thank you, Gregory Poole.

The main point that my colleagues and I would like to make tonight is that whatever we do in creating this park, we should follow the vision of **respecting and enhancing the natural beauty of the park as our first priority, and relative to the draft master plan, that means removing any references to development and parking until they are studied further.**

One of the main precedents for Dix Park is Central Park in New York City. It does not have roads or parking lots.

It does not have a hotel or private housing and contains no services not intended for park users. For our master plan, **we urge the council to remove all references to parking and development from the master plan until they have been studied thoroughly.**



This image on the top shows Central Park in 1864; the image at the bottom shows what the park and its environs is like currently. In the coming century our city will grow up around Dix Park providing all the services and development needed.

Fredrick Law Olmsted, one of Central Park's designers, advocated for the park by saying that it was critical for the mental health of the residents of NYC. A recent study from Stanford University corroborated this statement. Our city is growing, the population continues to expand, and the stresses of urban living will only increase. Protecting Dix Park as a peaceful refuge will become ever more important, coveted, and needed. In addition, it will be a significant part of the legacy of Dorothea Dix herself.

**Let's follow the vision of Gregory Poole and others and commit to respecting and enhancing the natural beauty of Dix Park as our first priority, and remove all references to development and parking until these have been thoroughly studied.**

Thank you.