

Overlook Neighborhood Association

Christian Trejbal, Chair

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March 23, 2018

Re: Dog Bowl inclusion in draft ORCMP

Dear Parks Board Members,

At its March 20 meeting, the Overlook Neighborhood Association voted to request that the “Dog Bowl” at N Willamette Boulevard and N Jessup Street in our neighborhood not be converted to an off-road bike park as proposed in the draft Off-Road Cycling Master Plan (ORCMP). The ORCMP proposal for the Dog Bowl is included below/attached and has an illustration of the proposed loop trail.

The Dog Bowl is a popular site for local residents to walk, enjoy lunch and run their dogs. Its current, low-impact use is optimal for the neighborhood and all of Portland. Ideally, the property would be transferred to Portland Parks and Recreation, which can better oversee it and create a formal off-leash dog park consistent with current use.

Dozens of people visit the Dog Bowl most days. Families and workers at nearby businesses walk its informal trail network, eat lunch, exercise their dogs, have a moment of quiet reflection or simply enjoy the views overlooking the Willamette River, Swan Island and the West Hills. These people come from Overlook and surrounding neighborhoods. Most arrive on foot or by bike. The Dog Bowl is a gathering place, a public commons where neighbors and friends meet to enjoy the outdoors and catch up with each other.

These uses evolved organically over decades. The Dog Bowl fills a niche in a part of Portland that does not have ready access to comparable facilities. North Portland lacks an expansive park comparable to Forest Park. Instead small open spaces like this make the outdoors accessible.

Users of the Dog Bowl recognize how precious a resource it is. They are exceptionally conscientious about cleaning up after themselves and their pets.

The Dog Bowl is located on a quiet corner of N. Willamette Boulevard. Through vehicle traffic is routed around this residential stretch of the street. It is not the busy thoroughfare that exists just a few blocks to the north. The Dog Bowl therefore provides a oasis in the city that is accessible but tucked away from the hustle and bustle.

We agree with the Draft ORCMP that the property would benefit from habitat restoration and a master plan. The Draft ORCMP notes that the site now has “a natural surface trail network for family-friendly cycling, walking, running and enjoyment of nature.” The “potential loop trail” shown in the Draft ORCMP would preclude the lower-impact activities that take place there now.

Contrary to the draft’s vision, the usable area of the 4-acre site could not be divided in a way that would accommodate those uses as well as off-road biking. A large portion of the Dog Bowl is steep, landslide-

prone hillside and a special habitat oak woodland. The remainder is not sufficient to accommodate off-road biking and other uses without immediately generating conflicts.

The Draft ORCMP was developed without community input from the Overlook neighborhood and the dozens of people who use the Dog Bowl daily. We recognize the need for infrastructure to support the city's off-road biking enthusiasts, but the Dog Bowl is not a suitable site. Instead, we urge Parks and Recreation to acquire the property and make modest improvements that facilitate walking, running, enjoyment of the outdoors and off-leash dog play.

If plans move forward, it is imperative that a broad community engagement process take place so that the Dog Bowl continues to serve the diverse communities and users who live nearby and who visit this unique corner of North Portland.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christian J. Trejbal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christian Trejbal
Overlook Neighborhood Association, Chair

North Portland

“Dog Bowl” at N. Willamette and N. Jessup

This site, owned by the Bureau of Environmental Services, is located along N. Willamette Boulevard at N. Jessup Street. The property is located along the potential upper alignment of the North Portland Greenway. The upper portion of the property, of about 4 acres in size, is environmentally degraded and has several demand trails currently used by walkers, runners, dog-walkers, and cyclists. This portion offers an opportunity for restoration and a sustainable loop trail. The western slope of the property is landslide-prone, contains special habitat (oak woodland), and should be protected and restored.

Recommendations

- Transfer of ownership from the Bureau of Environmental Services to Portland Parks & Recreation is optimal for successful implementation.
- Development of a Master Plan to guide site improvements and environmental restoration.
- Habitat restoration including native plantings and removal of invasive plants.
- Closure and restoration of existing demand trails.
- A natural surface trail network for family-friendly cycling, walking, running and enjoyment of nature. This trail network should remain on the upper, flatter portion of the site and protect oak and other special habitat.
- Building a trail here will require additional planning, community input, and consideration among other needed or desired park improvements.

