

Staff Report- April 9, 2013
Preston Gardens Restoration Project

Plan: Stabilize retaining Wall and Restore existing stone and brick wall panels and stairs

Staff Presenter: Eric Holcomb

Applicant: Downtown Partnership in coordination with the Department of Transportation

Background

Preston Gardens comprises the 200 to 700 blocks of St. Paul Street and sits between St. Paul Street and St. Paul Place and between Lexington and Centre Streets. Approximately a three-acre park, it was first dedicated on May 19, 1919 and named after Mayor James H. Preston, who was mayor from 1911 through 1919. Preston Gardens construction began in 1914. The city hired Thomas Hastings to design the park, who would also redesign Mount Vernon Place. His design fit into the City Beautiful Movement efforts and the Beaux-Arts aesthetics. The retaining wall, railings, stairs and walkways were part of the original design. The Orleans Street Viaduct was finished c. 1935 cutting the park in half. In addition, the medians were narrowed as perimeter sidewalks were removed along St. Paul Street in order to widen the roadbed.

Plan

The plan entails stabilizing the 1919 retaining wall (which supports the current parking lane and northbound St. Paul Place roadway). Parking will be permanently removed along St. Paul Place from E. Saratoga to Mulberry Street, and the northbound lane will be moved westward away from the existing wall. A new pedestrian walkway with large grass and planting areas will be installed.

Downtown Partnership plans to restore the existing stone and brick wall panels and stairs. This includes gentle cleaning, replacement of all damaged and missing balusters, realignment and reattachment of cap stones and wall panels, and repairing of damaged, chipped, and compromised stone panels, stairs and railings. All weep holes will be restored and all failing cast-iron hardware will be replaced with stainless steel.

All masonry will be repointed.

Analysis

All stabilization work on the retaining wall with tie-back rods, when complete, will not change the visual character of the park. Existing brick will be removed in certain areas in order to install the wall plate. These brick, if possible, will be reinstalled. All masonry restoration, including replacement conforms to CHAP guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

The removal of the parking lane, the moving of the northbound lane on St. Paul Place, and the new pedestrian walkway and large grass and planting areas will enhance the park-like character of Preston Gardens.

Staff Recommendation: Approval with final details to be reviewed by staff.

The proposal meets CHAP's guidelines 8.2 *Masonry* and 10.2 *Landscape Features*.

Final details to be reviewed and approved by staff: stainless steel hardware, brick samples, stone and concrete replacement, and mortar color and composition.









