

**Spring Street – Free Street  
Streetscape Plan  
Public Advisory Committee  
Meeting 2 Summary**

October 11, 2012 – 4:00-6:00  
Portland City Hall, City Council Chambers

**Proposed Schedule**

Meeting 3 – **Thursday October 25<sup>th</sup> – 4:00 to 6:00pm, Cumberland County Civic Center, Lobby Conference Room**

Date ? - Meeting 4 – Public Meeting

Date ? - Meeting 5 – Final PAC Meeting

**Summary**

The meeting began with a presentation of existing material – studies, plans, evaluations, etc. – concerning the Spring Street – Free Street area. The presentations highlighted material such as Victor Gruen’s Patterns for Progress Plan (1967), Portland Downtown Traffic & Streetscape Study (1999), the City of Portland Wayfinding System Study (2008), Henry Cobb’s Lecture (2011), Liberate Spring Street (2011), available GIS maps from the City website, and Tom Farmer’s presentation of a revised streetscape plan in response to comments and concerns from the first meeting. All the material referenced in the presentations is available on the project website at [PortlandMaine.gov/springstreetfreestreet](http://PortlandMaine.gov/springstreetfreestreet).

After the presentations the Committee discussed the positive and negative attributes of the design and function of the area’s streets. Draft goals and principles for Spring St – Free St improvements prepared by staff was presented to the Committee for comment. Based on Committee comments, the goals and principles will be revised and distributed to the Committee for final comment in advance of the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

Tom Farmer led an abbreviated discussion of design improvement concepts for Spring Street. Tom distributed a concept plan to encourage comments on layout and design issues. Given the limited amount of time available this item will be taken up at the next meeting. A brief preview of amenity options was presented to the Committee which will also be considered at the next meeting.

<u>Positives</u>	<u>Negatives</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Spring Street is a <b>sunny</b> street and there is <b>open space</b> due to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ parking lots</li> <li>○ vacant lots</li> <li>○ street width</li> <li>○ streetscape topography</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ The scale of Free St is attractive /comfortable</li> <li>▪ High St and Spring St intersect at an historic building – a destination</li> <li>▪ North side of Free St. is active and historic</li> <li>▪ Spring St. is great for bicycle traffic – wide streets, steep slope, few cars</li> <li>▪ Area is a direct connection between the West End and Old Port – adjacent to Art District (Free St.)</li> <li>▪ There are open lots with infill possibilities – Spring &amp; Free streets</li> <li>▪ Both streets have appealing names</li> <li>▪ Many adjacent attractions</li> <li>▪ Many attractions along the street Maine Health, Children’s Museum, new hotel, that can be marketed and spur activity</li> <li>▪ The East end of Pleasant street is “great”</li> <li>▪ Small # of owners/shareholders on Spring St – good for “getting things done”</li> <li>▪ Free St. has potential to have enhanced building frontages and entrances</li> <li>▪ Streets naturally divide Spring St. – there is an opportunity to enhance the individuality of those natural sections, much like what exists along Free St.</li> <li>▪ There is great flow and access for parking provided by available spots and vehicular inlets &amp; outlets</li> <li>▪ Spring St. is wide enough to easily accommodate the large vehicles and their turning radii</li> <li>▪ Free and Spring provide critical parking to the greater downtown area in the form of parking garages and open parking spaces.</li> <li>▪ This area isn’t historic and therefore has more opportunity for a unique identity</li> <li>▪ The concrete surface is easy to walk on, brick tends to become uneven</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Spring Street looks out of place and is an unfinished project originally designed in 1967. It has long been a street in need of a “make-over”</li> <li>▪ Is relatively underutilized area of Downtown Portland</li> <li>▪ It is not enough for Spring St to be considered a crucial connector – it needs an identity as a street to visit</li> <li>▪ Free St feels like a back alley to Congress St., but has improved</li> <li>▪ Free St. sidewalks are in terrible condition</li> <li>▪ The West end of Pleasant St. is bleak</li> <li>▪ Spring is truncated at Middle St.</li> <li>▪ Spring St. is steep for pedestrians (icy conditions)</li> <li>▪ Crosswalks on Spring St. are misplaced / non-existent</li> <li>▪ The concrete jersey median is an unnecessary and unpleasant barrier to pedestrian flow</li> </ul>
	<p data-bbox="829 953 1291 989" style="text-align: center;"><u><b>Additional Concerns/Considerations</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ South St. is sensitive (residential)</li> <li>▪ Lane widths for all uses and paving details</li> <li>▪ Loading trucks access to Portland Museum of Art</li> <li>▪ Backside of Pleasant St parking needs to be connected to Spring St. (all the way down to commercial from Maple)</li> <li>▪ Consider Commonwealth Drive in Boston concept for public space</li> <li>▪ Consider making Spring St. two lanes (with bicycle lane), but increase lanes/space and sidewalk space in front of Civic Center</li> <li>▪ Consider selling space to private investors to fund part of project</li> <li>▪ Who would maintain green space – if added?</li> <li>▪ Maintain positives, while reducing negatives to add value to downtown area</li> </ul>

## **Guiding Principles Discussed**

A draft of guiding goals and principles for the Spring St – Free St Streetscape Plan were presented to the Committee. The Committee was generally supportive of the principles although there were suggested revisions to a number of the principles, which will be reflected in the next draft. Among the ideas expressed at the meeting include the following:

- Reference to pedestrian friendly should include safety
- Recognize differences and subsections of each street (“upper Civic zone”)
- Recognize stormwater practices and impervious surfaces
- Design needs to consider snow plowing and emergency vehicle ingress and egress
- Create an active 24 hour city on Free/Spring St. This area used to be a more residential neighborhood.
- Universal access is needed ( ramps, street level textures)
- Bicycle features (Liberate Spring St Bicycle Boulevard concept)
- Support opportunities for urban mixed use *development*
- Create a pedestrian connection to Pleasant St. Playground. There are potential South St resident concerns with a prominent Spring St – South St connection.
- Reduce Spring St to 2 – lanes where optimal and reclaim the space. A linear park or at least publicly used space has been recommended.
- Consider varying the alignments for Spring St.
- Lighting/design should recognize distinctions in the sub-areas along the streets

## **Highlights from PSA presentation of Liberate Spring Street**

The first brainstorm meeting in 2011 resulted in ideas such as a “bicycle boulevard” and noted certain attributes of Spring Street such as its 90 foot width, the need for amicable amenities such as clocks and lights, and the need for a decision to either block pedestrians or accommodate them rather than ambiguously do both.

The second brainstorming session in August of 2012, the team developed three themes for Spring Street: reconnect city streets, recreate city streets and reestablish city life. A *woonerf* street level design was suggested and the texture of the street is a valuable component that would serve various purposes. The idea of Spanish steps had been reviewed as a way to access South Street which was also proposed by Tom Farmer of Terrance J. DeWan and Associates. The notion of a “50 Cent Scheme” to develop the area with more private space available was proposed. The Civic Center area might need more of an exterior appearance. Altering height limits to achieve certain goals was also suggested. Some core concepts include there is too much vehicular right of way along Spring Street and the street is more of a connecting street rather than a destination.