



Portland Parks Foundation

1500 SW First Avenue, Suite 760 • Portland, OR 97201 • portlandpf.org

March 31, 2022

MEDIA RELEASE

Portland Parks Foundation commissions feasibility study for the return of the Thompson Elk Fountain

Contact: Office@portlandpf.org, 503-445-0994

The Portland Parks Foundation is pleased to announce that it will commission a design and feasibility study for the restoration of the entire Thompson Elk Fountain and options for returning it to its historical site in Southwest Madison Street between Chapman and Lownsdale squares.

“The Foundation believes that the best path to getting the elk back home is through an independent study of exactly what it will take to restore the fountain and what improvements to the right of way are needed for buses, bikes, cars and pedestrians to safely navigate around it,” said Randy Gragg, executive director of PPF. “Fortunately, we have a donor who is passionate about the elk’s return and is willing to fund this important and necessary design work.”

During the protests against racial injustice and police brutality of summer, 2020, the fountain base was badly damaged. The City of Portland removed the bronze elk statue (which suffered only minor damage) and disassembled the fountain and put it in storage. Historically four bureaus managed and stewarded the elk and its base—Portland Parks & Recreation, PBOT, Water, and the Regional Arts & Culture Council. In March, PBOT released a plan to return the elk to its historic home, but on a new, smaller base to better accommodate modern traffic within the existing right-of-way. Many members of the community expressed strong objections to the proposal because it did not include the fountain.

“There’s a lot of passion for restoring the elk and the fountain,” said Gragg. “But in Portland’s system of government, the task is bureaucratically complicated. What we need is a design—and a price tag—that encompasses all the competing interests.”

“The Portland Parks Foundation and I share a common goal: to give life and beauty to our City by creating safe, welcoming public spaces,” said City Commissioner Carmen Rubio, who oversees parks and arts. “The Foundation’s investment will help us understand how we might return the Thompson Fountain while addressing the core safety concerns with having a fountain

Board of Directors

Kia Selley, Chair
JR Lilly, Vice Chair
Lee Novak, Treasurer
Karen Kervin, Past Chair
Jules Bailey, Exec Comm
Bob Gandolfi, Exec. Comm
Melissa Naito, Exec. Comm

Jonathan Nicholas, Exec. Comm
Silas Sanderson, Exec. Comm
Mary Ruble, Exec. Comm
Kregg Arntson
Suzanne Bishop
Patricia Frobos
Subashini Ganesan

Maja Harris
Vicky Schwoeffermann
Adam Wilson
Zari Santner, Emeritus
Julie Vigeland, Emeritus

Ex Officio

Mike Elliott, Portland Parks Board
Adena Long, PP&R Director
Stephan Herrera, Office of Comm. Rubio

Executive Director

Randy Gragg



Portland Parks Foundation

1500 SW First Avenue, Suite 760 • Portland, OR 97201 • portlandpf.org

in the middle of the street. I look forward to their findings and appreciate their ongoing partnership.”

Gragg likened this private/public process to that used to build the Portland Streetcar, Director Park, or the Barbara Walker Crossing (the latter of which PPF commissioned and built).

“Sometimes in Portland,” noted Gragg, “a third party is better equipped to help government move important initiatives forward.”

With the help of a key donor (who wishes to remain anonymous), PPF will hire a firm or team with experience in architectural restoration, stone carving and masonry, and traffic engineering design to:

- Create a detailed assessment of the remaining fountain parts and whether and how new parts can be fabricated to faithfully reproduce the original fountain
- To develop scenarios for how the right of way can be designed to accommodate the restored fountain and base while addressing safety concerns for pedestrians, bikes, transit, and automobiles
- provide cost analysis for these scenarios

The design for the restoration traffic improvements will be presented to the Portland Design Commission, along with PBOT’s design for a reduced base, this summer.

The beloved and iconic Thompson Elk Fountain was commissioned by businessman and former Mayor of Portland, David P. Thompson and was installed in 1900.

Board of Directors

Kia Selley, Chair
 JR Lilly, Vice Chair
 Lee Novak, Treasurer
 Karen Kervin, Past Chair
 Jules Bailey, Exec Comm
 Bob Gandolfi, Exec. Comm
 Melissa Naito, Exec. Comm

Jonathan Nicholas, Exec. Comm
 Silas Sanderson, Exec. Comm
 Mary Ruble, Exec. Comm
 Gregg Arntson
 Suzanne Bishop
 Patricia Frobos
 Subashini Ganesan

Maja Harris
 Vicky Schwoeffermann
 Adam Wilson
 Zari Santner, Emeritus
 Julie Vigeland, Emeritus

Ex Officio

Mike Elliott, Portland Parks Board
 Adena Long, PP&R Director
 Stephan Herrera, Office of Comm. Rubio

Executive Director

Randy Gragg