R.A. LONG PARK MASTERPLAN

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The City of Longview Washington

transpoGROUP

ARTIFACTS Architectural Consulting

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Project Background

Introduction

The R.A. Long Park & Civic Center Circle Master Plan project was a collaboration between City agencies, City Commissions, the Design Team, and the Community (study areas are indicated in figure 1.1). The project was developed to accomplish three core goals for the historic Civic Center Circle: 1. Celebrate the history of R.A. Long Park & the Civic Center Circle; 2. Enhance pedestrian and vehicular safety, and park access within the Circle; and, 3. Increase activity and improve the condition of R.A. Long Park.

Project Initiation

This project was initiated by a federal grant that the City of Longview received to study and improve traffic safety conditions in the Civic Center Circle that rings R.A. Long Park. The Department of Public Works is responsible for this roadway and right-of-way which are included in the Civic Center Historic District (shown in figure 1.1). The Civic Center Historic District is listed in both the local register of historic places and the National Register of Historic Places. Much of the funding for current roadway maintenance,repair and expansion project comes all or in part from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The nexus with federal funding brings into play different environmental compliance requirements, including two which relate to historic preservation: section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966 and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Both of these Acts outline planning processes that federal agencies must undertake prior to actions that might affect historic properties.

Figure 1.1 Project Study Areas for the Park and Transportation Improvements

Section 4(f) is a federal mandate requiring the US Department of Transportation to avoid funding or implementing projects that impact important natural and historic properties unless no prudent or feasible alternative is available. It requires early planning review processes that identify historic properties and potential alternatives for roadways that will utilize land from historic resources or create an environment that compromises factors that make historic properties significant. R.A. Long comes under this requirement as both a publicly-owned park and as an historic property within a National Register-listed historic district.

Section 106 requires all federal agencies take into account the effects of planned undertakings on historic properties – defined as those on or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places - and afford an opportunity for the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to comment on those undertakings. The intent of Section 106 is to balance the needs of federal agencies and the projects they initiate, sponsor, or license with the protection of significant historic properties. Agreements that avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects are the usual outcome of Section 106 review.

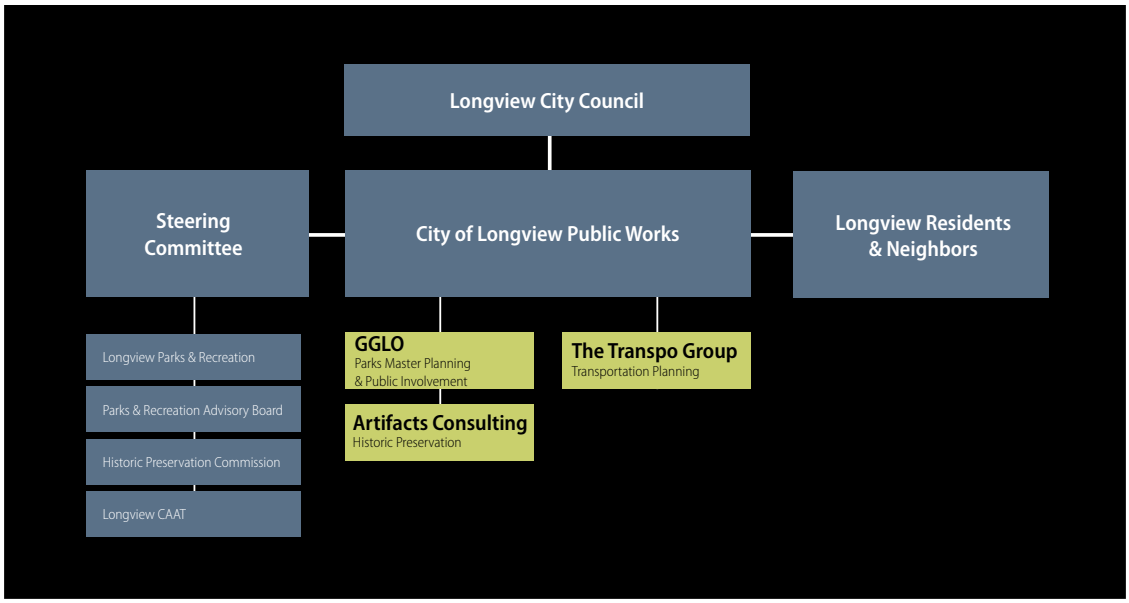

Figure 1.2 Project Organization Diagram

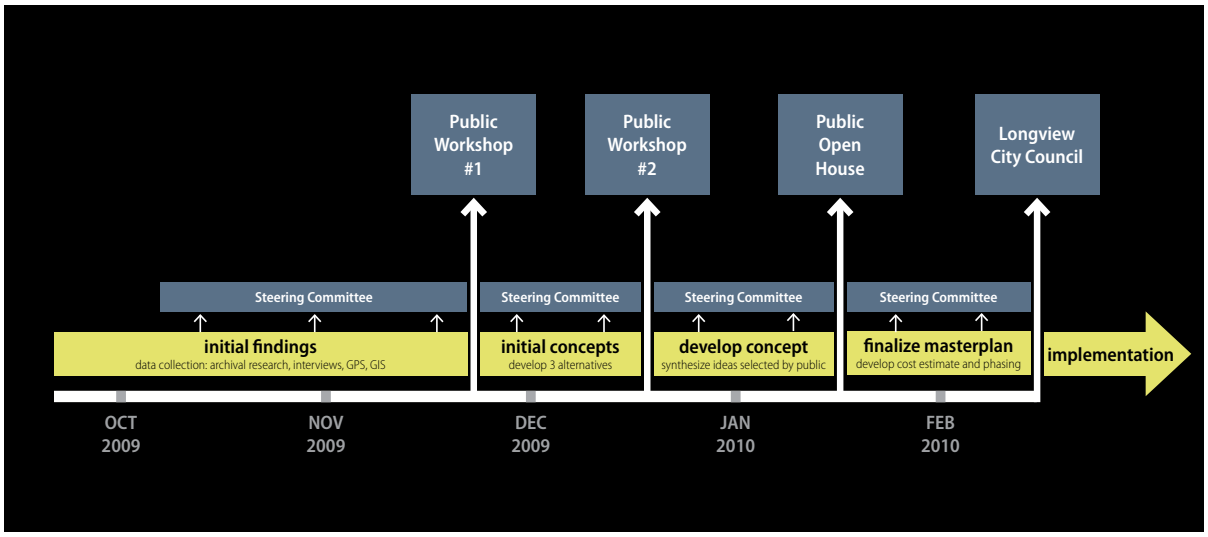

Figure 1.3 Project Timeline Diagram

R.A. Long Park and Civic Center Circle Transportation Masterplanning Process

To meet the project goals and to ensure that improvements made to the Park and Civic Center Circle were in line with the public's expectations and desires, the City of Longview determined that a master planning process should be undertaken. As part of this process, the City hired GGLO (figure 1.2) to research and collect existing historic documentation, assess the existing condition of the Park and traffic in the Circle, and to hold three public meetings. The first two meetings were workshops in which public input and feedback were gathered to guide the master planning process. The third meeting was a public open house during which the preferred master plan concept was shown to the public for final review and comment. A Steering Committee of key stakeholders (figure 1.2) was organized to provide oversight and feedback on the entire process. The timeline of this process is shown in figure 1.3.

Planning History of the City of Longview

Marketed as "the city designed by experts," Longview, Washington represented a revolution in city planning. Located near the western edge of a nation exploding with sprawling, haphazard boomtowns, Longview was unique - it was a city built from the ground up, all at once, based on the designs of a team of Kansas City landscape architects. In the 1920s, Longview became the largest privately funded city to begin life as a master plan. On paper, the city was sectioned into zones for industrial, commercial, and residential land uses (figure 1.4). Emphasizing both aesthetics and efficiency, Longview earned the moniker "the city practical that vision built." The plan itself integrated parks, open spaces and a graceful civic center into the urban core, clustering public buildings around

Figure 1.4 Rendering of Longview as Envisioned by Hare and Hare City Planners, 1923

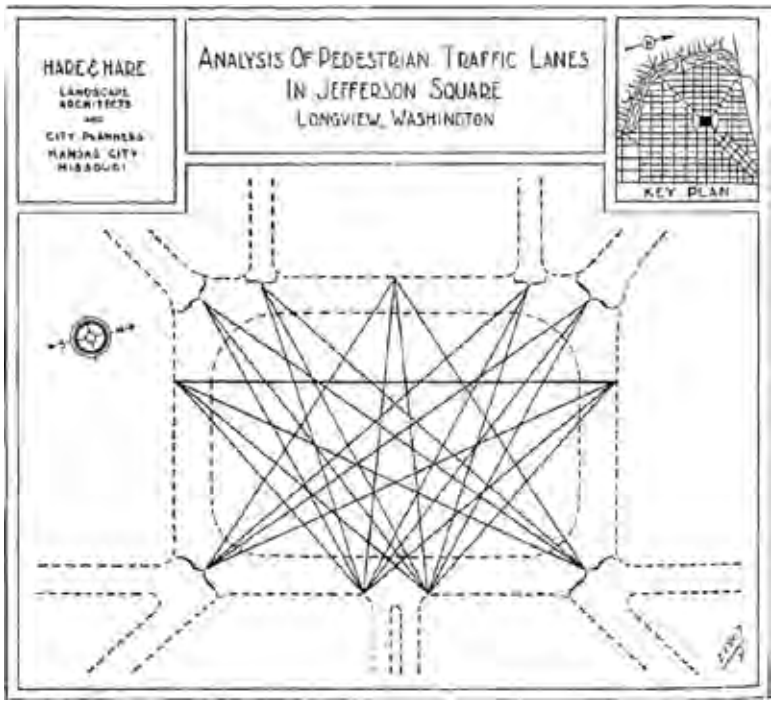

Figure 1.5 Pedestrian Analysis By Hare and Hare for Design of R.A. Long Park

a central park meant to be the anchor and focus of the civic core. Originally designated as Jefferson Park, it has since been named after Longview's founder, benefactor, and namesake, R.A. Long.

History of R. A. Long Park

Prior to development Hare and Hare undertook an extensive analysis of the site. In particular they did an analysis of pedestrian traffic (figure 1.5) because they intended for the park to be an active area heavily used by pedestrians moving between civic buildings

The original plan (figure 1.6) shows the original intent of the design - a formal network of pathways and clear axial views organizing and surrounded by large, less formal expanses of lawn and mature deciduous trees, all of which finds focus in the central raised terrace

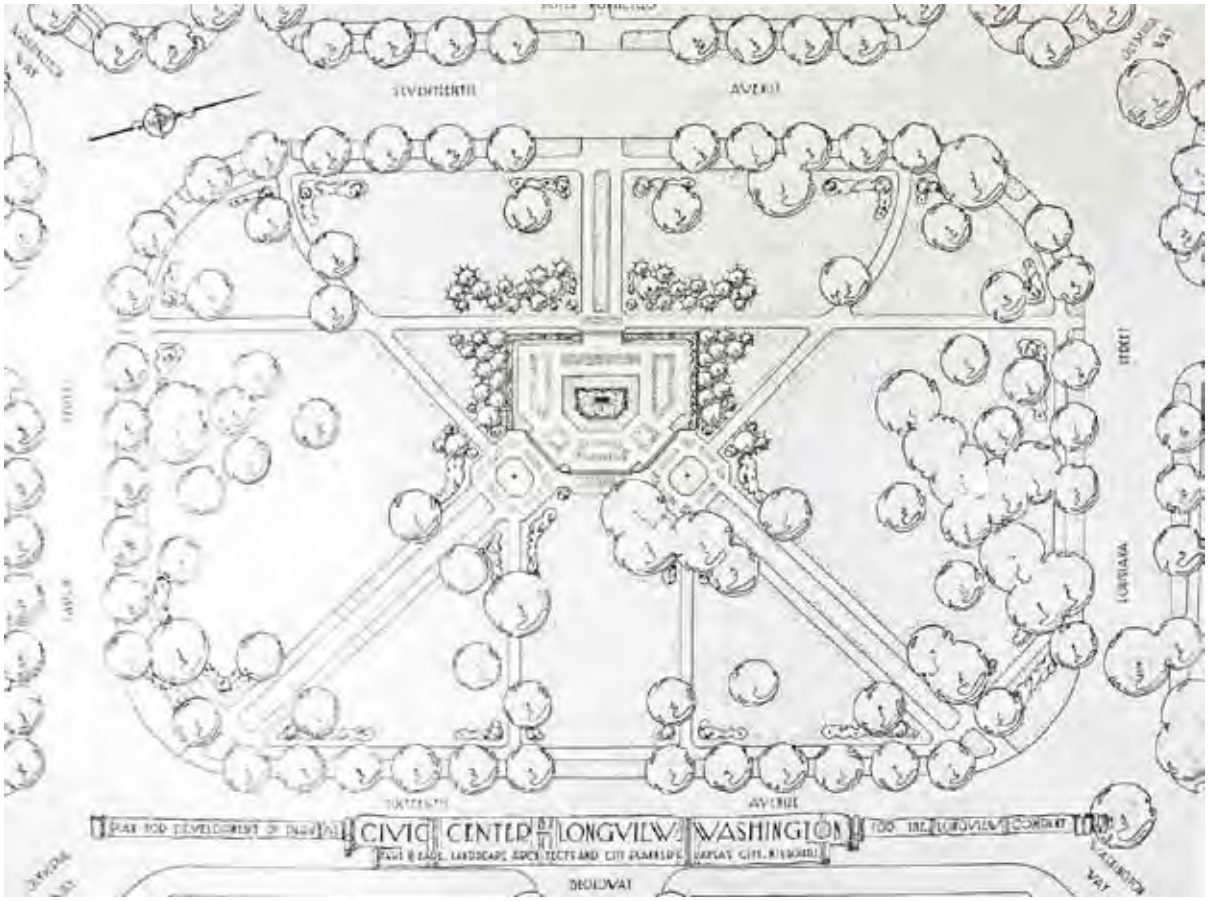

Figure 1.6 Pedestrian Analysis Map Created By Hare and Hare for Design of R.A. Long Park

(figure 1.7). The evergreens surrounding the central space are shown adding definition to the terrace without dividing it visually or physically from the surrounding park in both the original plan (figure 1.6) and in an early rendering of how the finished park was meant to look (figure 1.8). To give additional emphasis to the raised terrace, S Herbert Hare noted (in an article in Parks & Recreation Journal published eight years after the Park's completion):

> *"One of the interesting features of the design is a raised terrace near the center of the park. {...} The central area of the terrace, now in flower bed, is intended in the future to be occupied by some monumental sculpture or fountain"*

Situated between the newly completed 'Hotel Monticello' (figure 1.9), the library, the post office, and the future CIty Hall, the Park was also conceived as a place for formal gardens to showcase civic pride (figure 1.10) and a space to accommodate important events and civic gatherings (figure 1.11).

Figure 1.7 Central Raised Terrace of R.A. Long Park, circa 1925

Figure 1.8 Early Concept Rendering of R.A. Long Park and the Civic Center Circle

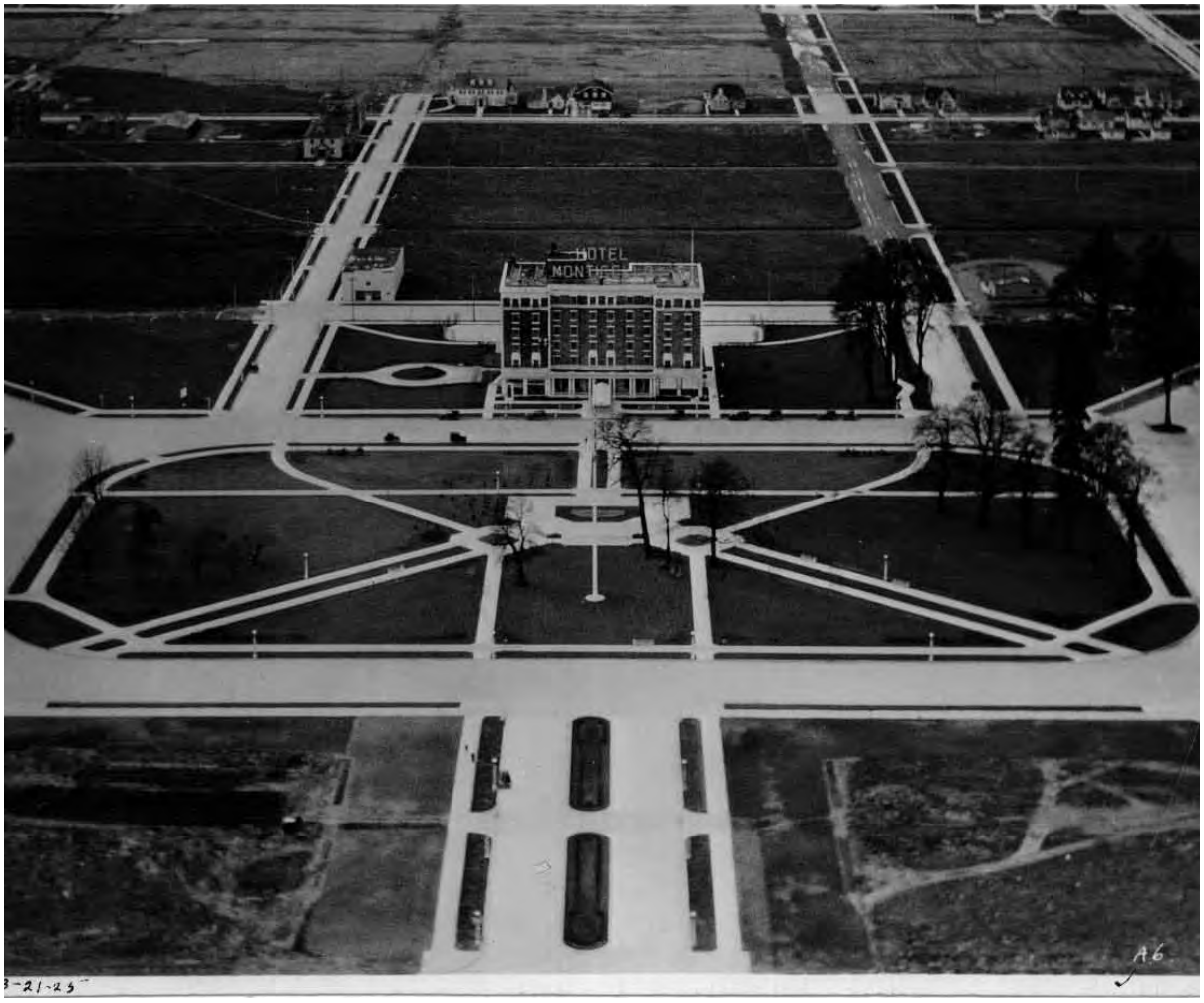

Figure 1.9 Aerial View of R.A. Long Park, 1925

Existing Condition of R. A. Long Park

As the city of Longview grew up around R.A. Long Park , the essential layout of the sidewalks and central plaza remained unchanged. However, the site furnishings -- most notably the original benches and light poles -- have not survived intact and have been replaced as needed with furnishings of a variety of styles. Additions to the Park not shown in the original plans include the central bust of R.A. Long, the sun dial, trash cans, picnic tables, electrical service, mail and ballot boxes, and several monuments and historic markers.

Since it's completion in 1925, the most significant change the Park has experienced is the growth and maturation of its trees, especially over the first 30 years (for comparison of 1925 and 1955 see figures 1.12 and 1.13). Similar to the hardscaping, most of the trees shown in the original plans have survived. These trees now frame and create a sense of enclosure for the central plaza (figure 1.14) and provide shade and structure for the informal lawn areas of the Park (figure 1.15). The large deciduous trees in the Park are an asset to the Park and the community. On the other hand, the evergreens surrounding the central plaza have now grown taller and denser than originally intended and currently create too much visual separation from the remainder of the Park (figure 1.16).

Some of the elements added to the Park after its completion have impacted the original design intent. For example, the addition of mail boxes, the ballot box, street signage, and lights along the Broadway Street axis has cluttered this view (figure 1.17). After almost a century of service, the historic paving is now showing the signs of age and many areas are in need of replacement (figure 1.18). While the park was designed to be an active space, it is currently under utilized except during special events, such as the annual holiday lights display.

Figure 1.10 Early Spring Flowers in R.A. Long Park, 1926

Figure 1.11 Spring Celebration in R.A. Long Park, 1925

Figure 1.12 Central Plaza of R. A. Long Park, circa 1925

Figure 1.13 Matched Photo of Central Plaza, circa 1955

Figure 1.14 R.A. Long Bust with Monticello Hotel Visible in Background

Figure 1.15 Mature Trees and Lawn in North of Park

Figure 1.16 Dense Trees Surrounding Central Plaza Area

Figure 1.17 View into Park from Broadway with Mailboxes and Lightpole Obscuring Flag and Veteran's Memorial

Figure 1.18 Damaged Steps and Paving Near R.A. Long Bust

Figure 1.19 Wide Pavement Section

Traffic Conditions in the Civic Center Circle

The layout and dimensions of the Civic Center Circle roadway were developed before the advent of modern transportation engineering. In response to a review of collisions data, traffic patterns, and general roadway/ intersection capacity, it has been observed that there are:

- Inadequate sight distance for pedestrians and vehicles at intersections
- Conflict points with driveways and connection points in Circle
- Long pedestrian crossing times
- Speed issues due to the width of the roadway

The long crossing times and speed of traffic create a hazard for those wishing to get to the Park (figure 1.19). Originally intended as a wide promenade with mixed pedestrian, vehicular, and carriage circulation, the roadway now functions as a throughway for the larger road network (93% of traffic is through traffic). Additionally, weaving friction is created by having two lanes in or out at NE and SW corners.

Summary and Initial Insights

R.A. Long Park has a rich and significant history that should be celebrated in the final Masterplan design including ensuring that the final solution fits within the original design intent of the Park. As the center piece of the historic district, the Park's furnishings and light poles should be historically appropriate. Opportunities should be provided to tell the rich and unique story of the Park, the City of Longview, and the community.

Given its size and prominent location in the City, the Park is under utilized. Including elements that activate the Park and develop it as a community destination while maintaining opportunities for passive recreational use will be crucial to the Park's future success. As part of this process, damaged paving needs to be fixed or replaced.

The current traffic and design of the Civic Center Circle roadway are hazardous and make access to the Park difficult. The road and intersections should be re-designed to increase vehicular and pedestrian safety. Addition elements should be added as needed at pedestrian crossings to further increase safety and accessibility and to create a sense of welcoming to the Park. Potential Improvement elements include elimination of parking on one side of the circle, bulb outs to reduce pedestrian crossing times and improve visibility, reduction of circulating lanes, relocation of mail and voting boxes, and reducing the location and number of connections into the circle.

Finally, all proposed solutions should be evaluated for durability and sustainability