

= Director Park =

Director Park ( officially Simon and Helen Director Park ) is a city park in Portland in the U.S. state of Oregon . Opened in 2009 at a cost of \$ 9 @. @ 5 million , it covers a 700 @-@ space underground parking garage , which connects underground to the Fox Tower and the Park Avenue West Tower . Located in downtown on Southwest Park Avenue , the nearly half @-@ acre urban park lacks any natural areas and contains little vegetation .

Features at the park include a fountain , artworks , a cafe , and a distinctive glass canopy . Director Park was designed by Laurie Olin of the design firm OLIN , and the Portland @-@ based architectural firm ZGF Architects . The park is part of what had originally been planned as a corridor of consecutive public parks stretching across downtown Portland . This plan included what are today the South Park Blocks and the North Park Blocks . Proposals to connect the two sets of park blocks arose in the 1970s , and in 1998 businessman Tom Moyer made a proposal for what became Director Park . Planning began in the mid @-@ 2000s , and construction began in 2008 .

= = History = =

Daniel H. Lownsdale reserved the Park Blocks for public use in his 1848 platting of Portland , but didn 't actually donate land to the city . As historian E. Kimbark MacColl stated , " By no stretch of the imagination could he be cited as a ' philanthropist . ' He was greedy like most of his partners .... The record is clear : Daniel Lownsdale was a visionary but shifty character whose land speculation helped to spawn more litigation in Portland than in any other western city of comparable size . " Chet Orloff wrote an editorial in 2001 stating " six crucial blocks were lost to greed , government reluctance , poor estate planning and an adverse court decision . "

The park land was previously used for surface parking , and contained an early " food cart institution " , the Snow White House crêperie .

Developer Tom Moyer wanted to redevelop the block since the 1970s . The City Club of Portland held a significant meeting in 1992 about the fate of the Central Park Blocks , also called the Commercial Park Blocks . Moyer and the PDC opposed " the downtown parking magnate " Greg Goodman 's plans to turn the block into a 550 @-@ space 12 @-@ story parking structure in 1995 , which was to be called the Park Avenue Plaza . Neil Goldschmidt said the parking structure would be " like putting lipstick on a dead corpse " and Bill Naito said that a " 12 @-@ story garage won 't go away . This is a chance to do something special . We should try to do something special every decade . "

Moyer proposed the park in February 1998 , in a move later described as Moyer 's " march to reunite " the North and South Park Blocks . Both the Portland Development Commission and the Portland Parks Foundation ( Moyer , Goldschmidt ) were in favor of Portland Planning Director Gil Kelley 's 2001 recommendation for the area , which favored a new midtown Park Block as well as " thematically consistent development " along the blocks . The foundation raised \$ 500 @, @ 000 from 20 patrons , and had an agreement from building owner Joe Weston to donate a building to make way for the park blocks .

Others , including the Portland chapter of American Institute of Architects , Vera Katz , Laurie Olin , and Michael Powell ( of Powell 's Books ) were against the plan , with Powell saying " I was sort of under the impression that people came downtown to work and shop , not to gain a rural experience " . By 2004 , the idea to reunite the Park Blocks through midtown was dead , due to Neil Goldschmidt moving out of the spotlight during his sex abuse scandal , Vera Katz 's disapproval of the plan , and because Moyer was " tired of swimming upstream " against the city council .

The park was originally titled South Park Block 5 . It was designed by Laurie Olin and ZGF Architects . Olin also designed Bryant Park in New York , as well as the redesigns of Pershing Square in Los Angeles and Columbus Circle in New York . ZGF and Olin had competed against the team of Robert Murase , SERA Architects , and Christian Moeller . The budget in 2006 was \$ 2 @. @ 1 million , which included renovations to O 'Bryant Square and Ankeny Park ( which have not been renovated , as of 2010 ) .

Developer Tom Moyer had previously donated \$ 1 million and asked the park be named Marilyn Moyer Park , after his deceased wife . Moyer also donated the surface space for the park , using the space underground for 700 spaces of additional parking , connecting the parking of Moyer 's Fox Tower and Park Avenue West Tower .

During a time of budget shortfalls , the city , the public steering committee ( headed by Chet Orloff ) , and Tom Moyer were willing to give away naming rights in exchange for further funding . Jordan Schnitzer , a local developer , donated \$ 1 @. @ 97 million for the plaza and asked city commissioners to name it for his maternal grandparents , Simon and Helen Director . Simon was born in Russia , Helen was born in Poland , and they met in Portland in 1916 . Since plans for reconnecting the midtown Park Blocks had been squelched due to Moyer 's announcement of Park Avenue West Tower , which " drove a stake through its heart " , the Park Blocks Foundation , started by Goldschmidt and Moyer but headed by Jim Westwood by 2007 , suspended conversations to donating Park Blocks Foundation cash to build the surface of Park Block 5 .

With Schnitzer 's funding , the budget increased to \$ 5 @. @ 5 million when construction began in May 2008 . The park , originally expected to be completed by late 2008 , was dedicated on October 27 , 2009 , with a performance by BodyVox .

The total cost was nearly \$ 9 @. @ 5 million , with \$ 4 @. @ 5 million from the Portland Development Commission , \$ 1 @. @ 9 million from the City of Portland , and \$ 2 @. @ 9 million in private donations , mainly from Schnitzer and Moyer . In June 2015 , it was announced that the park needed \$ 790 @, @ 000 in repairs to replace the wooden beams in the glass canopy with steel beams .

= = Design = =

The park is paved in light granite and includes a 1 @, @ 000 square feet ( 93 m2 ) glass canopy with space for a cafe , meeting Moyer 's requirement that 30 % of the space be devoted to commercial activity . It is curbless on 9th Avenue and 10th Avenue , allowing pedestrians to take a greater priority , and for the avenues to be closed for larger events .

In 2011 , Director Park was one of five finalists for the Urban Land Institute 's Amanda Burden Urban Open Space Award . The award is meant to " [ recognize ] an outstanding example of a public open space that has enriched and revitalized its surrounding community . " The other four finalists were Portland 's Jamison Square , Houston 's Discovery Green and Raymond and Susan Brochstein Pavilion , and St. Louis ' Citygarden , the last of which ultimately won the prize on May 19 , 2011 .

The wood beams under the glass canopy were determined to be defective in 2014 , and a plan was made to replace them in September 2015 with steel beams . ZGF agreed to pay \$ 602 @, @ 000 to replace the wood beams , with the city paying an additional \$ 188 @, @ 000 to upgrade to steel beams .

= = Park operations = =

The cafe Violetta was run by local restaurateur Dwayne Beliakoff . Elephant 's in the Park , a branch of the local chain Elephants Delicatessen , replaced Violetta as the cafe tenant early in 2012 . As of 2015 , Elephants pays \$ 23 @, @ 292 in rent per year . The park will cost an estimated \$ 475 @, @ 000 to run per year .