



MEMORANDUM

Date: October 24, 2016
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Michael Shiosaki, Planning and Development Division Director
Subject: Seattle Asian Art Museum Renovation and Expansion project

Requested Board Action

At the Board's request, Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) staff is returning with an update on the Seattle Asian Art Museum (SAAM) renovation and expansion project. The Board was previously briefed on the project on June 23, 2016. This briefing will primarily cover the issues that have arisen since that time, including the latest schematic design plan – a plan that is still evolving as SAAM receives feedback about the expansion of the museum building, the design, and the approval process for the project.

No Board recommendation is sought at this time.

Project Background

The Seattle Asian Art Museum building was built in Volunteer Park in 1933 as the Seattle Art Museum (SAM). The City of Seattle owns the building and the land under it, Volunteer Park.

Since 1933, the museum has undergone several additions: The museum building underwent the addition of an office in 1947, the addition of a gallery in 1954, the addition of a board room in 1955 and the addition of an elevator in 2007. Apart from these, in recent years significant building renovations also were needed, including seismic upgrades and major updates to the heating, ventilation and cooling systems. To undertake this work, Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) and SAM entered into a 2007 Memorandum of Agreement under which the City accepted SAM's offer to act as its agent for the purpose of seeking permits and design approvals. The MOA anticipated that the parties would negotiate a separate construction agreement.

The renovation of SAAM was a named project in the 2008 Park and Green Spaces Levy, funded in the amount of \$9 million. SAM agreed to raise a like amount to make the project budget whole. The recession made it unlikely SAM could raise the like amount, so SPR obtained Council approval to redirect the funding to several much-needed major maintenance projects elsewhere in the park system with the understanding that the funds would be available later, when SAM raised the matching funds.

Since then, Levy funding for major maintenance projects has been replaced with funding from Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) revenues.

SAM has moved forward with the design of the project, which now includes the originally anticipated renovations, regulatory upgrades and structural improvements, and the net addition of gallery and educational space. The City's contribution in the current proposed budget includes \$14 million in 2017 and \$5 million in 2018 to support the improvements.

SAM began holding public meetings in July. The Seattle Asian Art Museum has been a City landmark since 1989, and Volunteer Park has been one since 2011. SAM has made briefing presentations to the Architectural Review Committee, a subcommittee of the Landmarks Review Board, on May 27, June 23 and August 12, and briefed the full Landmarks Preservation Board (LPB) on October 9. SAM needs a Certificate of Approval from the LPB to alter both the building and the park landmarks. The museum has not yet applied for that certificate. SPR must sign the Certificate of Approval application as it is the property owner.

SPR is a partner in the project by virtue of the funding in the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy in the project budget, and because of its status as the owner of the building and the land. As such, SPR will review the project in terms of its design and integration into the park, ensuring the project scope meets the project description in the levy language, and analyzing the possible impacts of Initiative 42 (see discussion below). This review is underway.

ProView, SPR's internal project review team, reviewed the project on September 20. At that time SAM committed to bring back a final schematic design, as the landscape design around the building was in flux and the preliminary schematic plan was no longer accurate.

The schematic design is in the process of being completed. In response to comments received through the public involvement process thus far the plan has been evolving. At this point, SPR and SAM staff will bring the most up to date version of the schematic plan to the Park Board meeting.

Public Involvement Process

Public Meetings – sponsored by SAM unless otherwise noted.

Thursday, June 23, 6:30 – 9 p.m., Park Board Briefing
Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
100 Dexter Ave. N, Kenneth R. Bounds Board Room

Saturday, July 16, 10:30 a.m. – Noon, Public meeting
Asian Art Museum, Alvord Board Room

Saturday, August 20, 10:30 a.m. – Noon, Public meeting
Cal Anderson Park Shelterhouse, 1635 11th Ave.

Saturday, September 10, 10:30 a.m. – Noon, Public meeting
Nagomi Tea House, 519 6th Ave. S, Suite 200

Saturday, October 15, 1 - 2:30 p.m., Public meeting

Asian Art Museum, Alvord Board Room

Saturday, November 19, 1 – 2:30 p.m., Public meeting
Asian Art Museum, Alvord Board Room
Seattle Parks and Recreation is co-sponsoring this meeting.

Saturday, December 10, 1 – 2:30 p.m., Public meeting
Asian Art Museum, Alvord Board Room

In addition to the public meetings, most of which have been attended by SPR staff, the SAAM design team has met in charrette-format meetings with representative from the Volunteer Park Trust and Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks groups.

Issues for Discussion

As with any proposed capital project, there are project proponents and others raising issues or concerns with the proposal. Several issues have recently arisen with the project's design through the public involvement process. These issues include: (1) expansion of the building into the park's greenspace on the east side of the existing SAAM building and Initiative 42; (2) potential tree loss; and (3) historic preservation issues with the building and park landscape.

Building expansion into the park and Initiative 42

The project proposes an addition on the east side of the building of approximately 3800 square feet (SF). When factoring in other areas where the project will decrease the building's footprint, the total net building expansion area is approximately 3600 SF. The issue has been raised by some community members that the building expansion takes away greenspace on the east side of the park and that this constitutes a conversion from a parks and recreation use. There are other examples of museums in Seattle parks, including: MOHAI at its former location at McCurdy Park, and its new location at Lake Union Park and obviously the Seattle Art Museum's long-time presence at Volunteer Park.

SPR's real estate staff are conducting an analysis of whether there are Initiative 42 impacts from the proposed project. Initiative 42 legislation provides:

- All park land shall be preserved for park, boulevard or open space use and cannot be sold, transferred or changed from park use to another use, unless:
- The City holds a public hearing on the necessity of the transaction and
- Adopts an ordinance finding the transaction is necessary because there is no reasonable and practical alternative and
- The City receives in exchange a piece of land or facility of equivalent or better size, value, location and usefulness in the vicinity.

Trees removals

As currently proposed, two small trees will be removed and relocated, one Korean Fir and one Katsura. Two Cherry trees will be removed, as well as one dead Fir tree. The originally proposed building addition was further north on the east side of the building and would have had more significant impacts to existing trees. The addition has been redesigned and relocated to avoid impacts to the large Beech tree on the east side of the building.

An interesting side note on tree removals - as the park is being reviewed in light of the building project it has been suggested, from a historic preservation standpoint, that some of the trees and overgrown shrubs to the south and east of the building (some Hollies and other 'volunteer' plants) be removed to return the east meadow area to a more open lawn as envisioned in the Olmsted plan for the park.

Historic preservation issues

The Seattle Asian Art Museum building and Volunteer Park are both listed as landmarks on the local, State and National registers.

The proposed building addition is outside the boundaries of the building's National Register application and inside the established National Register boundaries of Volunteer Park. Volunteer Park is considered a 'national level of significance' (the highest level). These elements translate to a much more stringent review from a landscape preservation perspective, over a building compatibility perspective.

We have recently received comments from Susan Dolan, National Park Service LA, National Director of Cultural Landscapes Preservation on the project. She has suggested some potential solutions to mitigate project impacts, including:

- Limit plant palette to Olmstedian lawn and trees,
- Grade the slopes to 'softly' roll away from the building,
- Include some tree maintenance (removal of deadwood and the like) and removal of some existing trees and overgrown shrubs (provides more open space as an offset to building addition),
- Re-establish - to the extent possible – pathways of the original Olmstead plan in the east lawn area.
 - re-work 15th Ave entrance,
 - re-establish trail on south end of building,
 - re-work trail on north side of building (which is included in current landscape plan and potential for ADA on that trail).
- No foundation plantings, plaza/patio, or seat-wall.

Budget

\$49M estimated Project Budget, from the following sources:

- \$19.0M Requested from the city of Seattle as part of Mayor's Capital Improvement Program
- \$2.0M in original Funding from Seattle for Design and Planning
- \$5.0M in estimated Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits
- \$1.5M Requested from Washington State Building for the Arts – To be confirmed
- \$1.4M from King County
- \$20.1M in Private Contributions

Schedule

- Project design is underway and SAM will soon complete schematic design.
- Summer 2016 – mid-2017 - Landmarks Preservation Board Briefings and Certificate of Approval (note, this is dependent on when the C of A application is submitted).
- February 29, 2017 – SAAM building closes to begin moving the collections out of the building in preparation for the construction project.
- September 2017 – Begin project construction.
- 2019 – Construction completion.