



Meeting Notes

Open House

12th Ave W & W Howe St Park Site Restoration & Slide Removal

July 9, 2019

6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Queen Anne Community Center

Attendees: Approximate 15 participants
 Project Planner: Libby Hudson
 Capital Project Coordinator: Sandra Albertsen
 Planning Manager: Susanne Rockwell

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: 12th Ave W & W Howe St Park Site Restoration & Slide Removal Project

Address: 1927 12th Avenue W, Seattle, WA 98119

Total Project Budget: \$100,000

Planning/Design: Spring/Summer 2019

Construction: Project Currently on Hold

Habitat Restoration: Fall 2019 or Spring 2020

Scope:

The purpose of the project is to restore the old play area site to a natural condition as part of the contiguous greenbelt supporting wildlife habitat. The project involves removing the last pieces of the play area – a slide & stairway, retaining walls & foundations – stabilizing the slope and replanting with native species. The park is located within the SW Queen Anne Greenbelt and within designated critical areas for slope, soil landslides, and wildlife habitat.

Project Background:

The park land was acquired in 1982 and the playground was constructed in 1983/84. It is situated on a steep slope, adjacent to and part of lands managed as a restoration zone by the Green Seattle Partnership.

The property is designated critical areas under the Environmental Critical Areas (ECA) code, which includes Steep Slopes of 40% or greater (ECA-1), Potential Slide area and Known Slide area (ECA-2 and ECA-8), and Wildlife Habitat (ECA-9). A concrete pedestrian walkway is located within the adjacent un-opened right-of-way of W Howe St. This walkway leads down to a staircase that accesses 13th Avenue W, below. It will remain and is not part of the restoration project.

The only play element remaining in the park is the embankment slide. During the last two decade, the park's aging play equipment was removed due to safety concerns. The swings were removed in early 2000's because it did not meet safety zone requirements. The last remaining piece, the hillside slide, does not meet current safety zone standards.

Meeting Summary:

Approximately 15 people attended the open house to learn about the project and provide comment.

- A number of people commented that they were against removal of the slide and were saddened that it was being removed instead of improved and asked that it remain
- A couple of people felt that pocket parks such as this one, were a benefit to a neighborhood
- Several people commented that a replacement play area should be provided for the growing neighborhood if this one is restored as habitat, or at least provide seating near the concrete walkway
- A number of people supported the proposal to enhance the greenbelt and improve wildlife habitat at the site
- Several participants noted concerns about the appropriateness of a play area located in a steep-sloped greenbelt
- Several people were concerned that site is not visible or a safe place for children to play.
- A number of people said that the park was used often by people in the neighborhood, while others noted that the concrete walkway to 13th Ave. W was often in use, they rarely saw the park being used
- Some people objected to the open house format, feeling that they would have benefitted from hearing other people's discussion and opinions

Specific comments are provided in the comment matrix. These are comments from the meeting as well as comments received by phone and email.

Next Steps: Seattle Parks and Recreation will consider the public comments and determine the next steps for the project.

12th Ave W & W Howe St Park Restoration & Slide Removal Project Comments - 2019

Date	Type	Comment
6/28	Phone	Against the removal of the slide; will fight against this proposal.
6/28	Phone	Slide valued by neighbors; daughter loves the park and slide; neighbors against proposal to remove and restore the greenbelt. Keep it a play area.
7/3	email	I find such pocket parks to be great for families with small children. If the upper area was kept (with the slide area restored with native plants), that would still be a great area for neighbors and their children.
7/3	email	Great idea, especially now with all the overbuilding in the neighborhoods. I feel these greenbelt areas are important to everyone's wellbeing - both wildlife and people. Support idea 100 percent. Greenbelt should not be a play area, but habitat. Slope is prone to erosion, which is not good. Makes a lot of sense while in turn protects the future of our greenbelts.
7/4	email	SPR is engaged in restoration projects across the city with solid principles in mind and environmentally sensitive motivations. However, this particular small park really does not align well and its removal would detract from our neighborhood.
7/5	email	Feel bad about removal of park. Our family lives nearby. It's a unique place, loved by many. I see kids playing and having fun on the slide every day. If there is no way to save the park, can the slide be moved to another park?
7/9	email	<p>We oppose plans to close our neighborhood playground. It has served our neighborhood for over thirty years and the need for this park is increasing in spite of the lack of maintenance and support by SPR. The neighborhood density around this playground is increasing rapidly, and children need a place to play nearby.</p> <p>This playground and three other mini playgrounds were funded by Forward Thrust. SPR has supported improvements to the other three, while removing swings and other play structures from this park, leaving just the very special long slide and the sand pit. In spite, the playground continues to be used by local neighbors every day. This location adjacent to the greenbelt provides a unique forest-like exploratory element to the park.</p> <p>We observe active use of this facility daily. Instead of closing, either leave it as is, or better, invest to improve it to serve those living nearby in this growing neighborhood. Don't give up on this unique park site.</p>
7/9	email	<p>Closing this well loved park that is maintained by the local neighbors after Parks abandoned it is another example of failure in the QA area. We are watching the degradation of our parks rather than the steady improvement that was promised with the creation of the metropolitan parks district.</p> <p>SPR should be talking with the QA community before deciding to remove this park. Turning this park back into green space will deactivate the area and only accomplish more places for people to camp and more not less environmental damage.</p>

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Date	Type	Comment
July 9th Open House – Queen Anne Community Center 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm		
7/9	Written @ meeting	This restoration project is critical to the functioning of the Queen Anne Greenbelt. Birds, mammals and humans all benefit from the removal of the slide and existing infrastructure. Please continue with the 12 th and Howe restoration and your efforts to support and expand green space and native vegetation
7/9	Written @ meeting	This little park is so unique and loved by kids and adults. Kids love to come there to play and have fun on the slide. If there is now way to save the park, can at least the slide be moved to some other park and not just decommissioned?
7/9	Written @ meeting	Pocket parks like W Howe, make the city livable & loveable. Don't get me wrong, I love Seattle natural areas. We need a play area at W Howe & 12 th West, and at Newton & 13 th W. The rest should be reforested whatever it takes save our pocket parks. Keep playground equipment there.
7/9	Written @ meeting	I use the stairs that cut through the greenbelt often. I was told that those stairs are to remain. I just want to ensure that they do.
7/9	Written @ meeting	I agree that open space and native habitat is so important. I am proud that the City of Seattle prioritizes the green space. However, the site of the park (slide, sand box, concrete, bench & grassy area) is such a small area. Ecologically, it can't be that important for wildlife habitat. What it is important for is human habitat: places for neighborhood children to play, for adults to meet and chat, for people to walk their dogs. This park is an important part of our community. It is a place to meet up with neighbors and friends, for children to play next to big trees & for couples to sit and chat on a bench. As neighbors, we would be happy to help with native restoration, with park maintenance – even helping pay for equipment to be restored. We would do anything to maintain some sort of place for children and adults to enjoy.
7/9	Written @ meeting	Hi, my name is Scout. The park is important to my life. The park is one of the only spaces I have to play outside because I don't have a yard. Kids need at least 4 hours outside every day! And for me, if I don't have the park, I won't have that. So please don't take out the park. I like the park because I can meet new friends and play imaginary games, play on the slide and play in the sand box. Can you please keep the park? I will help a lot and be a great, great citizen to our environment by helping clean=up and play with chalk to make our park beautiful. Thank you for listening.
7/9	Written @ meeting	The city needs more opportunities for kids to play and to be pushed. We are becoming denser and losing our yards. The city must replace these, not eliminating them.
7/9	Written @ meeting	We are in need of more, not fewer play areas. This is not a public meeting. It is following the letter, not the spirit. I am here for a meeting. What was the commitment with Forward Thrust? Will there be a new play area in the neighborhood?

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Date	Type	Comment
7/9	Written @ meeting	Great idea – that place is creepy & ripe for predatory people. I would never send a child there to play.
7/9	Written @ meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our questions should be answered in public. • We should be told who will answer our concerns and when. • Kid’s recreational equipment must be replaced in the neighborhood, not replaced. • There should be a master list available to the public that shows the age & replacement plans for all play equipment. • Public meetings should allow the public to hear all concerns & get public responses.
End of Open House written Comments		

7/15	email	I’m opposed to the removal of the slide and sand pit. This park has not been maintained by the Parks Department. It is still a well used asset for the community. I pass the park often on walks and it is always occupied. I take my granddaughter there to play. I use the staircase that abuts the park. I strongly object to the removal of these amenities. The proposed repurpose does not well serve the community. The funds available should be used to update and maintain the park.
7/16	email	I am 7 years old and would like this park to remain instead of turning it into a forest. I like going down the slide.
7/17	phone	Support the restoration of this park and removal of the slide and remaining infrastructure. Concerned about safety at this hidden park and have had incidents with homeless people that were occupying the play area. Would like to see the park re-vegetated and turned back into a natural area. Concerned about the trails that cross the concrete walkway that leads down to 13 th Ave W. Would like to see barriers provided along the edges similar to what is provided to the south along the greenbelt. Support providing fencing of some type.