

Smith Cove Park

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Director, OPCD

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Ross Tilghman, Vice Chair

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Ben de Rubertis

Thaddeus Egging

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Commissioners Present

Shannon Loew, Chair
Ross Tilghman, Vice Chair
Brodie Bain
Lee Copeland
Ben de Rubertis
Rachel Gleeson
Laura Haddad
Jescelle Major
John Savo

Commissioners Excused

Thaddeus Egging

Project Description

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) is proposing to develop Smith Cove Park, located along Elliott Bay between Magnolia Hill and 23rd Ave. W, and south of the Magnolia Bridge. The site, acquired by SPR through the Pro Parks Levy, had been initially developed with an open play field. The current proposal will expand the park from 4.9 acres to 10 acres, by developing a portion of land between 23rd Ave. W and Pier 91, and will include space for active and passive recreation. A King County combined sewer overflow (CSO) facility is located within the site and will be fenced from off from the park. The fenced site includes an underground tank, equipment building, service roads, and planting beds.

In 2014, the Friends of Smith Cove Park (FoSCP) community group received a matching fund grant from the Department of Neighborhoods to develop conceptual plans for the park site. FSCP retained Berger Partnership to conduct community outreach and develop conceptual design plans for the park. SPR is using work generated by Berger to create a framework for the park programming and design. In 2016 SPR hired Gustafson, Guthrie, Nichol (GGN) as the design consultant for Smith Cove Park. The budget for the project is \$6 million, with \$3.9 million reserved for construction. The park plan developed by GGN includes shoreline restoration, access to the waterfront, restoration of playfields, and active and passive recreation opportunities.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) second review of the Smith Cove Park project. The purpose of this meeting was to review to concept design phase. After the presentation and discussion, the SDC voted, 8-1, to approve the concept design phase for the Smith Cove Park project with several conditions and recommendations.

Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

January 19, 2017

10:30 am - 12:00 pm

Type

CIP

Phase

Concept design

Previous Reviews

[10/1/15](#)

Presenters

Shannon Nichol

GGN

Tess Schiavone

GGN

Attendees

Bruce Carter

Friends of Smith Cove Park

Cole Eckerman

Citizens for Off-Leash Areas

David Graves

SPR

Donald Harris

Citizen

Sara Zewde

GGN

January 19, 2017

Summary of Presentation

Shannon Nichol and Tess Schiavone of GGN presented the concept design for Smith Cove Park. Ms. Schiavone provided a brief overview of the site, its context, as well as a summary of the three proposals initially developed by Berger and presented to the Commission in October 2015. In 2014, Friends of Smith Cove Park received a neighborhood grant from DON and hired Berger Partnership to conduct community outreach and create a pre-concept design for the park site. It is estimated the pre-concept designs developed by Berger would cost up to \$20-25 million to construct. While SPR will use the pre-concept design as a starting point for the design process, the initial outreach and visioning process conducted by FoSCP and Berger were not facilitated by SPR nor was it a part of SPR's development process. In 2016, SPR hired GGN as a design consultant for the project. SPR currently has a budget of \$6 million, \$3.9 million of which is reserved for construction of the park.

The project site is located along the waterfront at the head of Elliot Bay. It is located across a waterway from Pier 91, which currently serves as a pier for commercial cruise ship operations. The park provides unobstructed views of Elliot Bay, Downtown Seattle, and Mt Rainier. Due to its location, the park is mostly accessible by automobile. Pedestrian and bicycle connections to the park are difficult.

The goal of the current designs is to reorient the park geometry from a north-south grid to a geometry that will place emphasis on the shoreline and views (see *figures 1 & 2*). Due to limited funding for the park design and construction, Shannon Nichol presented two design plans – the Vision Plan and phase I plan. The vision plan provides an overall vision for the park as it develops over time and as funding is made available. The vision plan separates the park into three concept areas- Central Lawn, Grove, and Sand Bar. Each concept area will include a variety of programs including shoreline restoration, renovation of youth sports fields, waterfront access, shoreline beach, kayak launch, sand volleyball courts, off-leash area, beach grove, playground, trails, bioretention and meadow planting, picnic lawn, restroom facilities, and parking lot. The current proposal is the Phase I design, referred to as the \$3.9 million plan, and will include the field restoration, walking trails, kayak launch, beach access, sand beach, playground, utilities for future restroom facilities, space for food trucks and concessions, and kids' pump track. A pump

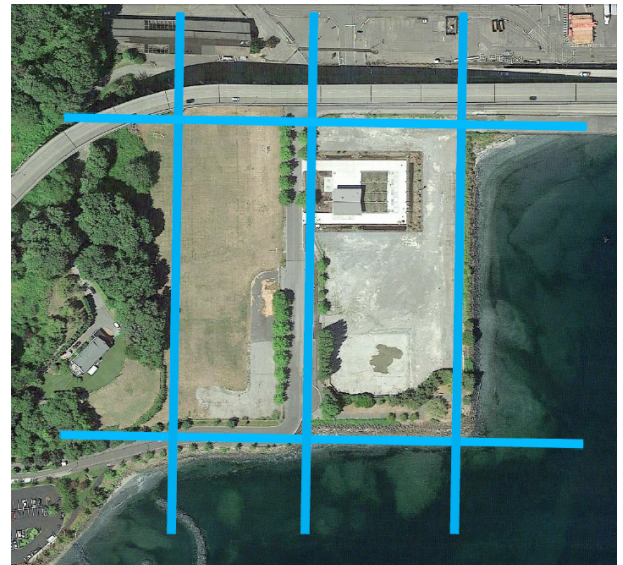


Figure 1: Existing park geometry

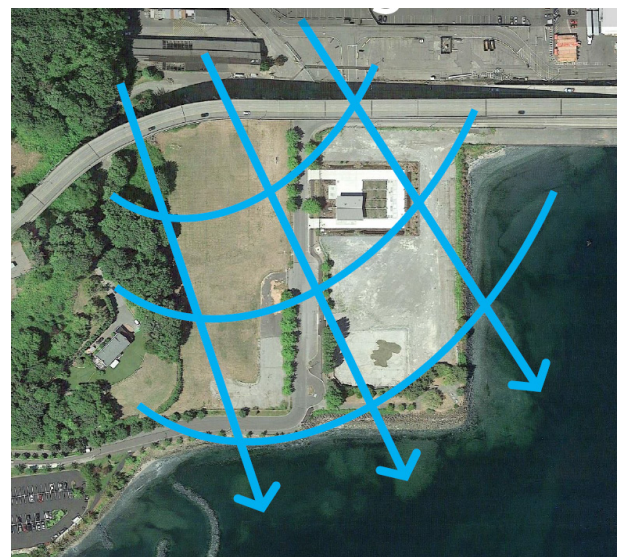


Figure 2: Proposed park geometry

track is a low cost and free form play area constructed out of landscape forms and used primarily for mountain biking. See figures 3 & 4 for more detail

The project team met with community members and local organizations at a public meeting on October 6, 2016. The project team reported that, while constructive comments were made, community members and organizers opposed many of the elements in the initial design. The current design is in response to those public comments and will be presented to the public on February 8th.

Agency Comments

David Graves, of SPR, stated that SPR has \$6 million total for the project. SPR received funding from King County to develop the west parcel, which will always be reserved for youth soccer and other sports. Mr. Graves mentioned that was a requirement that came with acquiring the property. Mr. Graves then mentioned that although SPR has received an additional \$500,000 to supplement the original budget, SPR is still actively seeking additional dollars to supplement the existing project budget. He then stated that shoreline restoration can get very expensive.

Public Comments

Donald Harris, Citizen, stated he is very excited to be at this meeting. Mr. Harris said GGN has done a wonderful job of recognizing the importance of the site to the park network. Mr. Harris then stated that the City has a long history of hiring great firms to design our parks. After which, he mentioned that although GGN created an initial vision for the park that was not well received at the public meeting, the challenge for the design team is to stick with their vision and to insure this waterfront site is designed and accessible to all. Mr. Harris concluded that without looking ahead to see what this site can become, the park will be cut up into small little pieces which have no vision. Mr. Harris then challenged the SDC to help the design team return to their initial proposed vision for the site.

Cole Eckerman, Citizens for Off-Leash Areas (COLA), Stated that COLA is very concerned that if an off-leash area is not built during phase I of construction then it will not happen. Ms. Eckerman stated other projects that have promised off-leash areas but have yet to be constructed. Cole Eckerman then stated that while district 7, where



Figure 3: Proposed design - vision plan



Figure 4: Proposed design - Phase I

the project site is located, has over 1,000 acres of parks land, less than 1 acre is dedicated as an off-leash area. Ms. Eckerman mentioned that in the future, 25% of homeowners living in district 7 will have a dog, but will lack adequate outdoor space for their dogs to exercise. Ms. Eckerman then stated that COLA wants to ensure an off-leash area is brought into the plan and that the organization is available to consult on the design of the dog park within the Smith Cove Park development.

Bruce Carter, Friends of Smith Cove Park, stated that the FoSCP and community groups have been working on the acquisition, planning, and design of the park for 15 years. Mr. Carter mentioned that the Friends were influential in acquiring the property and in securing a Department of Neighborhood (DON) grant to hire landscape architects to conduct outreach with the community and produce the initial conceptual design. Mr. Carter disappointed in the design proposal and indicated that he was very dismayed that public restrooms are no longer a priority. He stated that no one at the meeting had opposed a restroom.¹ Mr. Carter indicated that other omitted FoSCP priorities are the south beach pedestrian access. He also mentioned that the previous consultant was going to spend considerably less money on renovating the sports fields. Mr. Carter continued to express his disappointment with the current design proposal.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission initially organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Programming and scope
- Phasing and prioritization
- Context and neighborhood

To be efficient with their deliberation, The Commission then reorganized their discussion around the following issues:

- Programming, phasing, and prioritization
- Neighborhood context

Programming, Phasing, and prioritization

The SDC appreciated the design team's overall vision for the project site. Commissioners are concerned that if the framework for the overall vision, including the establishment of landforms throughout the site, is not set up during phase I then it will be difficult to create during later phases. The commission recommended the design team prioritize elements that will support the long-term vision for the project site. Elements include focusing on shoreline restoration, waterfront connectivity, sports field restoration, restroom facilities and site accessibility during the first phase.

The Commission reminded the project team that because this is a city park, programmed elements should reflect citywide programming needs as well as the needs of local communities. The SDC then recommended the design team be flexible with proposed site programming, utilizing programs that will fit in the project boundaries and are in line with the overall vision.

Neighborhood context

The SDC recognized that it is very difficult to access the site, especially for pedestrians and cyclists. The Commission strongly recommended the design team prioritize increasing connectivity to surrounding neighborhood communities.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for presenting the concept design phase of Smith Cove Park. The Commission appreciated the overall vision for the park design. The SDC voted 8-1 to approve the concept design phase for the Smith Cove Park project with the following conditions:

1. Prioritization of shoreline restoration during phase I of design and construction
2. Prioritization of access and connectivity throughout the park, specifically to the shoreline, as well as increased connectivity to the park site as part of phase I of design and construction

¹The design team and FoSCP have differing accounts about the community's prioritization of restroom facilities.

3. Prioritize phasing and programming based on citywide needs
4. Provide onsite restroom facilities
5. Prioritize original goals and design principles proposed for the overall vision

The following are comments from commissioners who voted against the project:

Shannon Loew – There has been a great amount of work done and I'm thrilled that community members are showing up during public meetings. Given the conditions we provided, we are asking them to revert to something that is fundamentally there, but was ultimately not the direction the project team chose to go. The conversation, dialogue and intent are there, but they were not directly addressed during the presentation.