

Lower Taylor Creek Restoration Project: Preliminary Public Access Option Evaluation

Public Review Draft: 6/10/2013

This document contains the preliminary results of the public access option evaluation for the Lower Taylor Creek Restoration Project. This analysis applies the proposed evaluation criteria to five public access options, which were developed in March and vetted with the local community in April of 2013. Additional descriptions of the public access options and the option analysis process can be found on the project website at: www.seattle.gov/util/taylorcreek.

Preliminary Evaluation Results

This analysis was conducted by an Interdepartmental Team from Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), Seattle Parks and Recreation (Parks), Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), and the Seattle Police Department (SPD). The team qualitatively discussed the benefits and the potential drawbacks and challenges that each access option presents, relative to the proposed evaluation criteria (Table 1). The discussion also highlighted design elements or actions that may be able to mitigate for or limit specific risks and challenges. The following sections contain the preliminary results, organized by criterion.

Table 1. *Proposed evaluation criteria used in the preliminary analysis of public access options.*

Evaluation criteria	How does each public access option affect the following considerations?
1. Habitat Improvements¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to improve fish and wildlife habitat
2. City Cost, Operations and Maintenance²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Design and construction costs ▪ Staff time, costs and safety related to operations and maintenance
3. City Safety and Liability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ City liability for the site ▪ Ability to enforce rules at the site
4. Community Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access to the lake shoreline ▪ Connectivity between public open spaces ▪ Environmental justice and service equity ▪ Educational and stewardship opportunities
5. Potential Neighborhood Impacts³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crime related to property damage, theft or personal injury ▪ Nuisance behavior ▪ Property values/rental property changes ▪ Neighborhood character and privacy ▪ Impacts to neighboring businesses
6. Traffic Safety and Mobility³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cars, pedestrians, and bicyclists ▪ Traffic and pedestrian hazards accessing/along the private drive ▪ Parking

¹ This criterion was originally titled “Project Goals”; however, it was determined that public access would not affect the City’s ability to replace the Taylor Creek culvert at Rainier Ave S and would only have an effect on fish and wildlife habitat improvements. Therefore, this criterion was re-named to more accurately reflect the condition being evaluated.

² Design and construction costs associated with the public access options were added to the City Operation and Maintenance criterion.

³ Many of these concerns were noted during early outreach, particularly with neighbors close to the project site.

Habitat Improvements

This criterion evaluates how each option affects the ability to improve fish and wildlife habitat (Table 2). The considerations discussed for this criterion include:

Reduced area for stream and surrounding habitat improvements

Paths and viewpoints take up space in the project footprint that could be used for the stream, stream floodplain, and plantings that provide shade and habitat for land-based wildlife.

Vegetation and plantings

Generally, urban spaces with public access are designed to facilitate visibility, based upon Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles. If public access to the site is provided, vegetation would be installed to provide sightlines through the site (e.g., open views between three and six feet off the ground). To create these conditions, the types and numbers of plants are carefully considered and designed. Fewer plants overall would be expected on the site with more open public access.

Habitat disturbance

As more people access the site, there will be increased disturbance to fish and wildlife, as well as impacts to habitat in and around the stream and shoreline. Dogs may also cause damage to habitat, especially if they enter the stream and lake while salmon are present (e.g., during spawning, egg incubation, and/or early life rearing). Although there is a potential for people to damage habitat, there are instances within Seattle parks where salmon and people interact successfully and respectfully, such as at Carkeek Park. Design elements can be incorporated to reduce human impacts, including establishing designated areas where people can observe the stream. This would direct foot traffic to specific areas and limit possible habitat damage.

Table 2. Habitat Improvement evaluation: How each public access option affects potential habitat benefits.

	No Access	Viewpoint	Scheduled Access	Limited Access	Open Access
Habitat area available	Slight decrease for maintenance path.	Footprint for viewpoint structure will reduce habitat space, likely largest reduction among all the options.	Slight decrease for maintenance/pedestrian path, will need to address ADA requirements as appropriate.	Slight decrease for maintenance/pedestrian path, will need to address ADA requirements as appropriate.	Slight decrease for maintenance/pedestrian path, will need to address ADA requirements as appropriate.
Vegetation	Vegetation can be planted to maximize habitat benefits.	Plant type and location may need to accommodate views to stream and lake.	Vegetation can be planted primarily to maximize habitat benefits, with some small modifications to facilitate visiting groups.	Plant type and location will need to accommodate sightlines, using CPTED principles, in addition to habitat benefits.	Plant type and location will need to accommodate sightlines, using CPTED principles, in addition to habitat benefits.
Habitat disturbance	Maintenance staff only on site, producing little disturbance.	Visitors limited to viewpoint only; maintenance staff only on site producing little disturbance.	Periodic disturbance when groups on site; will need to focus activities into specific areas through design.	Periodic disturbance when site is open; will need to focus activities into specific areas through design.	Most frequent disturbance; will need to focus activities into specific areas through design.
Criterion Summary	Habitat benefits can be maximized.	Some reduction in habitat benefits due to reduced area from viewpoint and modified plantings for views.	Slight reduction in habitat benefits from occasional disturbance.	Some reduction in habitat benefits from frequent visitors and modified plant type and locations.	Some reduction in habitat benefits from frequent visitors and modified plant type and locations.
Design concepts to maximize habitat value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carefully design plantings for habitat, visual connections, and sightlines. Direct visitors to specific areas of the site to minimize/focus habitat disturbance. 				

City Costs, Operations, and Maintenance

This criterion evaluates how each option affects the City's costs to design and build the project, as well as the City's ability to operate and maintain (O&M) the site (Table 3). The considerations discussed for this criterion include:

Costs for design, permitting and construction

Each public access option has the ability to affect design, permitting, and construction costs and feasibility. All project elements include fences on east/west sides of the property and a maintenance and/or pedestrian path. Cost increases can be due to additional pathways, structures, and/or complicated design elements.

Site maintenance and monitoring

This includes staff time for the care of plants, clearing culvert debris, removal of trash and illegally dumped items, and repair to paths, fences, and other structures. The site will also have some level of monitoring to ensure that it is being used and respected appropriately. Options with little or no access will have fewer staff time requirements since sightlines and structures will not need to be maintained and there will be little trash to clean up. The No Access and Limited Access options also reduce the chance for invasive plant introductions, reducing maintenance needs. Under all options, fences will need to be maintained.

It is assumed that more access will create greater opportunities for community stewardship of the site, helping to offset maintenance costs. The community benefits of stewardship are further discussed under the "Community Amenities" section on page 6.

Providing access

Two public access options, Limited Access and Scheduled Access, would require a gate that would need to be opened and closed for visitors. Limited Access would require that the gate be opened at specific days/times. Scheduled access would be more onerous for city staff as there would need to be coordination in advance of the scheduled visits, as well as a staff person present at the time of the scheduled event to allow access for the site visit. In addition to challenges for city staff, scheduled access could result in creating more barriers and/or limitations to our historically underserved populations due to language and schedule capacity of individuals or families seeking to use the area.

Maintenance crew safety

The crews maintaining the site sometimes encounter conditions that can pose a safety risk. Safety risks can be related to physical conditions of a site (e.g. steep slopes, high stream flows) as well as human behaviors and interactions. The Interdepartmental Team did not anticipate differences in crew safety among the public access options.

Table 3. City Cost, Operations, and Maintenance evaluation: How each public access option affects the City’s costs to design, construct, operate and maintain the Lower Taylor Creek Restoration project and site.

	No Access	Viewpoint	Scheduled Access	Limited Access	Open Access
Project Costs	Slight cost increase for fence on Rainier Ave side of site.	Increased cost for elevated structure; possible increase in permit requirements.	Slight cost increase for fence/gate on Rainier Ave side of site.	Slight cost increases for fence/gate on Rainier Ave side of site and to maintain sightlines/focus visitor use.	Slight cost increase for designs to maintain sightlines/focus visitor use.
Site maintenance /monitoring	Minimal staff time requirement: ensure fence in good condition, minimal plant care. Little stewardship opportunity to offset costs.	Modest staff time requirement: ensure viewpoint/ fence in good condition, prune vegetation for views.	Minimal staff time: ensure fence/gate in good condition, minimal plant care.	Moderate staff time: ensure fence/gate in good condition, prune vegetation for sightlines. Greater stewardship opportunity to offset costs.	Moderate staff time: ensure fence in good condition, prune vegetation for sightlines. Greater stewardship opportunity to offset costs.
Providing access	No additional staff time needed.	No additional staff time needed.	Staff time needed to schedule visitors and open gate.	Staff time needed to open gate at regularly scheduled times.	No additional staff time needed.
Criterion Summary	Minimal cost increases for gate. Little opportunity for offset costs with stewardship.	Small cost increase to design/build viewpoint. Modest staff requirements for maintenance.	Minimal cost increase for fence/gate. Moderate staff requirements for providing access.	Minimal cost increase for gate and view/use designs. Moderate staff requirements for maintenance and providing access.	Minimal cost increase for access design. Moderate staff maintenance requirements. Greatest opportunity to offset costs with stewardship.
Design concepts to reduce O&M needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use CPTED principles for plantings and maintaining sightlines. • Direct users to specific areas of the site to manage maintenance needs. 				

City Safety and Liability

Each public access option may present different levels of legal liability and public safety risk for the City of Seattle. SPU has not yet fully assessed such risks and ways to reduce potential liability. This assessment will be conducted independently.

Community Amenities

This criterion evaluates how each option affects community amenities near and adjacent to the lower Taylor Creek project site. The considerations discussed for this criterion include:

Access to the lake shoreline

The City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan has a Shoreline Access Goal to “provide for the optimum amount of public access—both physical and visual—to the shorelines of Seattle (LUG44).” Shoreline Access Policies in the Comprehensive Plan include:

- Increase opportunities for substantial numbers of people to enjoy the shorelines, by permitting non-water-dependent uses providing public access to locate in waterfront areas less suited for water-dependent uses, and by requiring public access on public property. (LUC235)
- Promote public enjoyment of the shorelines through public access standards by requiring improvements that are safe, well designed, and offer adequate access to the water. (LUC236)

Shoreline access in Seattle is generally provided through either park property or street ends that reach the water (see Figure 1 on page 18). The lower Taylor Creek project site is located 0.9 mile from Chinook Beach Park, the nearest shoreline park. This park is a shoreline restoration area that features a small beach with informal access to the water. Beer Sheva Park is located 1.25 miles north of the project site on the shore of Lake Washington and provides large grassy areas, a children's play area, picnic tables, restrooms, and a motorized boat launch. There are a number of street ends that exist close to the project site; however, no formal shoreline access has been developed at these sites.

Connectivity between public open spaces

The lower Taylor Creek site is across Rainier Ave S from Lakeridge Playfield and within walking distance of Deadhorse Canyon/Lakeridge Park (see Figure 2 on page 19). A trail network in Lakeridge Park allows people to walk from the upper Taylor Creek watershed (e.g., Skyway area) through the natural area park to 68th Ave S/Holyoke Way S, then down 68th Ave S to Rainier Ave S and the playfield. A publicly accessible lower Taylor Creek project site could connect with these spaces to enhance recreational enjoyment of the Taylor Creek corridor and connections with the natural environment, fellow neighbors, and other site users.

Environmental Justice and Service Equity (EJSE)

The City of Seattle is committed to providing equitable service delivery to all Seattle residents. SPU efforts are guided by the City of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative, which is aimed at ending race-based disparities in our community and achieving racial equity.

Southeast Seattle, within includes the project site, is more ethnically diverse than most areas of Seattle⁴. Based on 2010 census data, Seattle on average is about 70 percent white. In contrast, southeast Seattle

⁴ 2010 U.S. Census Bureau data, 98118 ZCTA

is not dominated by any one ethnic group. Those of Asian descent are 32 percent of the area's population, followed by non-Hispanic whites (28 percent), non-Hispanic blacks (25 percent), Hispanic (8 percent) and multi-racial (6 percent).

Previous assessments have indicated that southeast Seattle and the project area do not provide equal amount of open space and shoreline access per capita when compared to other portions of the City of Seattle. The Parks report *An Assessment of Gaps in Seattle's Open Space Network: the 2011 Gap Report Update*⁵ reported that gaps in single family usable open space occur at the very southwest and southeast portions of the city. An assessment by the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition/Technical Advisory Group in 2012 found that the zip code 98178, which includes the project site, has fewer square feet of park area per resident, compared to other zip codes in the Seattle area.

The Scheduled or Limited access options could favor certain users over others. For example, a working family would not be able to use the site if it was only open on weekdays during normal office hours (which would be easiest for the City to staff). Alternatively, groups who do not speak English as a first language may be less inclined to schedule a visit. The degree of community benefit and inclusiveness will be dependent on when (days and times) and to whom (school groups, environmental groups, etc.) access is granted. Equitable access can also be affected by visitors' primary mode of transportation and the ease with which they can get to the project site.

If public access is allowed, the City will need to ensure that:

- Design provides access to all potential users. It does not prevent, reduce, or create barriers to historically underserved populations from amenities as a result of the project.
- Use of site is inclusive and provides equitable access to all users, whether a general visitor or coming to the site for educational or stewardship opportunities. The area should be designed and operated based on environmental, economic, and social benefits for the affected community.

Educational opportunities

The habitat restoration improvements provide an opportunity to educate school and community groups about urban streams and shorelines, the habitat they provide for fish and wildlife, and ways to protect and improve stream and shoreline environments. These opportunities will be dependent on if and how the site is accessed.

Stewardship opportunities

City areas, particularly natural areas, benefit from having local stewards engaged and active in maintaining the site. Stewards are able to care for native plants and remove invasive ones, which can help reduce City-staff time for maintenance work. Stewardship also helps connect people to a site and the community, as well as discourages nuisance activities.

Allowing access to the site would provide an opportunity for community-based groups to serve as stewards of the site, assisting the City with protection and maintenance of the habitat improvements.

⁵ <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/publications/GapReport.htm>

Table 4. Community Amenities evaluation: Expected community benefits from each of the public access options.

	No Access	Viewpoint	Scheduled Access	Limited Access	Open Access
Shoreline access	No increase in shoreline access.	Visual access to shoreline only.	Increased shoreline access through scheduled opportunities only.	Increased shoreline access open to all during specified days/times.	Increased shoreline access open to all during daylight hours.
Connectivity between open spaces/parks	No increase in connectivity.	Connectivity between playfield and viewpoint only; no connection to shoreline.	Connectivity between playfield and shoreline; limited to scheduled groups only.	Connectivity between playfield and shoreline; limited to specified days/times.	Connectivity between playfield and shoreline.
Improving Environmental Justice and Service Equity	No increase in equitable access to open space/shoreline.	Slight increase in open space available.	Increased access to open space/shoreline; access may not be equally available.	Increased access to open space/shoreline; access may not be equally available.	Increased access to open space/shoreline; access more equitably available.
Educational opportunities	Groups not able to interact with site.	Groups able to use viewpoint; marginal opportunity given that users cannot closely observe/interact with the stream or shoreline.	Groups able to interact with site; use limited by need to schedule visit.	Groups able to interact with the site; use limited to days/times the site is open to the public.	Groups able to interact with the site during daylight hours; increased flexibility and opportunity.
Stewardship opportunities	Negligible stewardship opportunity due to a closed site. Least opportunity for stewards to interact with/feel ownership of the site.	Marginal stewardship opportunity given limited area accessible.	Marginal stewardship opportunity given need to schedule visit.	Moderate stewardship opportunity due to increased access during open hours.	Strong stewardship opportunity due to open access Largest opportunity for stewards to interact freely with/feel ownership of the site.

	No Access	Viewpoint	Scheduled Access	Limited Access	Open Access
Criterion Summary	Very little community benefit.	Marginal community benefit as viewpoint and visual shoreline access is only amenity.	Fair community benefit from ability to access site; however, users may be discouraged by need to schedule a visit.	Moderate community benefit with regular open hours at the site.	Largest community benefit due to shoreline access, connectivity to nearby open space/parks, and easiest access for education and stewardship groups.
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public access, if provided, will carefully consider providing equitable access to all Seattle residents. 				

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Potential Neighborhood Impacts

A number of concerns have been voiced by nearby neighbors about how public access to the lower Taylor Creek site could affect their neighborhood and properties. Concerns include loud music, public drinking, fireworks, dumping/littering, drug use, property damage, camping, and trespassing.

To assess potential neighborhood impacts, the evaluation examined specific site conditions that are known to promote or discourage criminal and nuisance behaviors, compared those conditions to what is expected at the lower Taylor Creek site, and then predicted the likelihood of unwanted behaviors to occur. In some cases, design elements and other helpful actions were identified during the analysis to further discourage undesirable behaviors.

It is important to note that there is not a large body of data and relevant studies that exist on these topics. As such, reasonable judgments were made based on expertise from Parks, SPD, and using the applicable information that was found.

Likelihood of increased nuisance behaviors

Nuisance activities are unwanted behaviors that reduce the enjoyment of the space for others users, but are not considered major crimes (although they may be illegal). Examples of nuisance activities include loud music, unruly groups, fireworks, littering, and public drinking. Factors that contribute to nuisance activities include availability of parking and large open spaces such as grassy areas or pavement, and the presence of park facilities, such as bathrooms, swimming beaches, trail networks, and picnic sites. The presence of positive users of the space helps to deter nuisance activity⁶.

Likelihood of increased property damage

Property crime includes activities that damage private property, including vandalism, graffiti, burglaries, and car prowls. The incidence of these activities is related to foot access, perceived vigilance of the property owners and neighbors, seclusion and visibility. Vandalism, burglaries and car prowls are most likely to occur when there is seclusion and someone can go unnoticed because of visual barriers or absence of people. Conversely, graffiti is more prevalent in areas that offer up a “canvas” with high visibility so the work can be seen. As with nuisance activities, neighborhood awareness and community involvement can be a strong deterrent against potential property damage. In addition, some research has found that residential areas with adjacent green spaces tend to have fewer incidents of crime⁷.

There are a number of relatively easy practices that can strongly discourage vandalism, graffiti and burglaries, which include well placed lighting, open visibility, and good property upkeep that indicates that property owners and neighbors are observant. Car prowls can be further reduced by parking in garages or driveways close to homes.

Likelihood of other criminal behaviors

These behaviors include drug dealing and use, prostitution, urban camping, illegal dumping, and assault. The largest factor that promotes the occurrence of these activities is vehicle access and availability of parking, since people are able to carry out their actions with and/or in their cars. The proximity to city centers, seclusion, and the reputation of an area (e.g., being known as a place to purchase drugs) can

⁶ Wolf, K.L. 2010. Crime and Fear - A Literature Review. In: Green Cities: Good Health (www.greenhealth.washington.edu). College of the Environment, University of Washington.

⁷ Brunson, L. 1999. Resident Appropriation of Defensible Space in Public Housing: Implications for Safety and Community. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, IL.

also encourage these behaviors. The number of people using a site will affect the likelihood of these activities, as well as other unwanted actions, occurring. Research has found that people committing crimes or engaged in other undesirable activities avoid well-used residential areas where their activities might be easily observed⁶.

The future site conditions are not predicted to increase the likelihood of criminal activities. The project site is not expected to provide parking or vehicle access under any public access option, which will deter many activities, including drug dealing and illegal dumping. Additionally, the project site is not located close to a city center nor does it have reputation as referenced above. The close proximity of homes to the lower Taylor Creek site and the existing views from the homes and the private drive entrance onto the site minimize opportunities for seclusion.

Changes to neighborhood character

A single-family, residential area surrounds the lower Taylor Creek site. Residents live on a quiet private drive that is somewhat isolated from the activity on Rainier Ave S. Depending on the level of public access, the project may introduce more people to the area – potentially affecting the character of the immediate area. It is likely that the adjacent neighbors will feel the greatest change as a result of public access than those that live further from the site. It is possible that public access at the site will increase customers for local businesses, notably the restaurant at the corner of Rainier Ave S/68th Ave S.

Under all public access options, four homes will be removed at the site and many native trees and shrubs will be planted. These changes will improve site aesthetics for adjacent properties, but will also alter view corridors of the lake (however, no complete view blockages are expected given the layout of the lots, homes and shoreline). Depending on the level of public access, the adjacent homes will have a different level of privacy than what exists now, given the removal of homes on the project site.

The extent of neighborhood changes will depend on the number of people that use the lower Taylor Creek project site and how that use is structured. The Interdepartmental Team discussed the type of use that would be expected if public access was allowed. Because the Taylor Creek site is rather small and would not contain park facilities (e.g., parking, bathrooms, picnic tables, docks, trail systems), the expected users are primarily nearby neighbors and community members coming from Deadhorse Canyon and Lakeridge Playfield. As a small natural area, the site is unlikely to be a regional draw or see the same number of users that developed shoreline parks receive, such as Seward Park. Design elements, including fencing, signage, and path entrances can direct visitors into appropriate areas and reduce the potential for adverse character changes in the neighborhood.

Likelihood of changes in property values and rent

Predicting changes in property values and rental costs is difficult and dependent on a variety of factors. If neighborhood concerns become a reality, it is reasonable to believe that property values could decrease if public access is allowed. However, local studies have found that public open spaces are often seen as valuable to the community and have a positive impact on property values (*Trust for Public Land, 2011*). SPU's recent experience selling a property adjacent to the Taylor Creek project site in March 2013 is consistent with the Trust for Public Land's conclusions, as the site sold above asking price within one week of listing. Additionally, potential buyers were provided full disclosure about the restoration project and the potential for public access at the site. Having a publically accessible open space nearby may also affect rental properties and their residents. Due to limited information about how property values or rental costs could be affected by the various public access options, no conclusions were made for this consideration.

Table 5. Potential Neighborhood Impacts evaluation: How each public access option affects the likelihood of potential neighborhood impacts near the project site given contributing factors and expected future site conditions.

	No Access	Viewpoint	Scheduled Access	Limited Access	Open Access
Likelihood of nuisance behaviors	Negligible as site will not be accessible.	Low due to no parking on site; however viewpoint could provide area for groups to congregate.	Negligible as site will only be accessible to scheduled groups.	Low likelihood given no parking, open grass or concrete areas or facilities will be provided.	Low likelihood given no parking, open grass or concrete areas or facilities will be provided.
Likelihood of property crime	Negligible as site will not be accessible.	Low given modest increased visitors. Viewpoint may encourage visitors to wander the private drive while trying to access the shoreline (vs. options allowing shoreline access). Observant neighbors can significantly reduce the likelihood.	Negligible as site will have a low number of visitors at scheduled times only.	Moderate increase in visitors could slightly increase or decrease the likelihood depending who visits. Observant neighbors/positive users paired with appropriate site design will reduce the likelihood.	Largest increase in visitors could slightly increase or decrease the likelihood depending who visits. Observant neighbors/positive users paired with appropriate site design will reduce the likelihood.
Likelihood of other criminal behaviors	Slightly increased chance of urban camping with closed site/seclusion; however, site is not within close proximity to social services and adjacent neighbors regularly observe the site.	Small chance that people visiting viewpoint may try to access the rest of the project site. The site would offer some seclusion; however adjacent neighbors regularly observe the site.	Negligible given that the site would have occasional visitors.	Moderate increase in visitors could slightly increase or decrease the likelihood depending who visits. Encouraging community-use will discourage bad behaviors.	Largest increase in visitors could slightly increase or decrease the likelihood depending who visits. Encouraging community-use will discourage bad behaviors.
Changes to neighborhood character	Moderate change in aesthetics from plantings and altered lake views.	Moderate change in aesthetics from viewpoint, plantings and altered lake views.	Moderate change in aesthetics from plantings and altered lake views.	Moderate change in aesthetics from plantings and altered lake views.	Moderate change in aesthetics from plantings and altered lake views.

	No Access	Viewpoint	Scheduled Access	Limited Access	Open Access
Changes to neighborhood character (continued)	Negligible changes to neighborhood character expected.	Visitor use focused close to private drive, creating modest character change at the viewpoint.	Other possible changes modest due to scheduled visits only.	Increased visitors expected; users would be on the site and close to the stream/lake. Could have increased customers to local business. Site design should account for and address any expected changes.	Increased visitors expected; users would be on the site and close to the stream/lake. Could have increased customers to local business. Site design should account for and address any expected changes.
Criterion Summary	Little likelihood of neighborhood impacts.	Slightly increased likelihood; however, greater visibility given location of viewpoint close to private drive.	Little likelihood of neighborhood impacts. Most changes would be to aesthetics.	Increased likelihood of neighborhood impacts, simply based on increased visitors to site. Avoid/ minimize with design elements, community engagement, and vigilant observation. Greater chance of local business benefits.	Increased likelihood of neighborhood impacts, simply based on increased visitors to site. Avoid/ minimize with design elements, community engagement, and vigilant observation. Greater chance of local business benefits.
Design and social concepts to deter unwanted activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site design should account for/address expected changes as appropriate • If public access is allowed, activate spaces with positive users, such as stewards, neighbors, and educational organizations • Limit/avoid visual barriers and provide sightlines through the site • Limit/avoid solid, highly visible surfaces for graffiti • Maintain fencing and gates in good condition • Plantings should be designed to improve habitat conditions, while managing sightlines and lake view corridors • Fencing, signage, path entrances, and other features should be designed to positively influence neighborhood character • Encourage vigilance of the neighborhood – both nearby residents and site visitors 				

Traffic Safety and Mobility

A number of concerns have been raised by members of the community regarding the current street configuration near the project site. This criterion considers pedestrians, bicyclists, and people in vehicles traveling on Rainier Ave S and associated side streets, and possible changes as a result of the different public access options (see Figure 3 on page 20). There is also a King County Metro bus route along Rainier Ave S and a bus stop located near the project site.

While options allowing public access could increase the number of people in the area, the existing condition of the site (e.g., natural area, no parking or park facilities, small size of space) are expected to primarily attract the nearby community who can walk to the site. Visitors outside of the immediate community who are traveling by car will likely account for only a small number of the overall users.

Pedestrian and Bike Safety

The Seattle Department of Transportation studied southeast Seattle in their Southeast Transportation Study (2008)⁸. The report found that Rainier Ave S and Martin Luther King Blvd, as principal arterials, “act as obstacles to pedestrian travel across the study area in the east and west directions because of the lack of safe crossing points and the lack of signalized intersections.” The study also examined the intersection of Rainier Ave S and Cornell Ave S specifically, and found:

“The skewed angle of the intersection of Rainier Ave S and Cornell Ave S creates challenges for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists. Although Rainier from Ithaca Pl S to the south city limit was converted from a 4-lane to 3-lane cross-section with bicycle lanes, the intersection still does not function optimally. Because of the skewed angle, southbound drivers on Rainier turning right onto Cornell can make the turn without slowing, creating an uninviting environment for bicyclists in the bicycle lane and for pedestrians walking along Rainier and crossing Cornell.

A parking/bus zone lane on the west/south side of Rainier and the large gravel area on the south side of Cornell add to the conflicts for all users. Cornell is also a Metro transit route.

The marked pedestrian crossing on the north/west approach of Rainier conflicted with motorists turning left from Cornell and has been relocated to the south/east approach and median islands and curb ramps have been installed.

The pedestrian crossing of Cornell is nearly 150 feet long, partially through undefined gravel parking area; it is not handicapped accessible. The gravel parking area serves the adjacent Lakeridge Park and its baseball field. Motorists backing out of parking spaces conflict with fast-turning traffic from Rainier to Cornell. In addition, the gravel poses problems as it spills out onto the bicycle lane.”

SDOT has identified actions to improve safety at the intersection of Cornell Ave S and Rainier Ave S that includes adding sidewalks and making improvements to the crosswalk, curb area, and parking. If public access is provided at SPU’s project site, it is likely to increase the number of people crossing Rainier Ave S to some degree.

Community members have also expressed concern about pedestrians walking on 68th Ave S. The roadway does not have a sidewalk or trail and people frequently walk on the road between Rainier Ave

⁸ <http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/docs/SETsfinadec08.pdf>

S and the trailhead for Lakeridge Park. Working from SDOT's Pedestrian Master Plan, SPU will work with SDOT to investigate potential pedestrian improvements during project design.

Rainier Ave S is also used by bicyclists. If public access is allowed, it is possible that cyclists may visit the site, although the site is only expected to attract a modest number of visitors, mostly from the immediate area. SDOT's draft Bicycle Master Plan calls for a cycle track on Rainier Ave S, which is a bike lane with some form of separation from vehicles.

Regardless of the public access chosen, SPU will work with SDOT during project design to coordinate project and transportation-related improvements.

Vehicle Traffic

Rainier Ave S is a principal north-south arterial. The roadway has three lanes, with one travel lane in each direction and a center turn lane that facilitates cross traffic from 68th Ave S, Cornell Ave S and the private drive. If public access is selected for the project site, there is a potential for increased vehicle trips into the area. However, the small size of the site and the lack of park facilities are not likely to draw significant numbers of people, and the bulk of visitors are expected to walk from the immediate area.

Parking

Due to limited space at the site, parking will not be provided. There is existing public parking at Lakeridge Playfield and along Rainier Ave S. Given the modest number of people expected to visit the site if public access is allowed, and that expected from the immediate area, it is likely that existing parking will be sufficient for the modest increase in demand.

Private Drive Traffic

SPU's property is accessed via a private drive that connects to Rainier Ave S. The entrance is located on SPU's property and forks to provide access to homes east and west of the project site. SPU's property contains an easement, as do other properties along the drive, to secure access in perpetuity.

Residents on the private drive are concerned about vehicle access their homes and the safety of residents and children on the private drive. Vehicle access could be affected by additional vehicles or increased numbers of pedestrians, which can delay or impede cars moving through the area. Preliminary designs do not include parking or vehicle access at the project site, which should mostly prevent any potential impacts to access and pedestrian safety on the private drive. However, people may enter the private drive unaware that there is no parking, vehicle access, or public access (if that option is chosen). Regardless of which public access option is chosen, signs or other measures should be developed and implemented to deter parking and vehicle access onto the private drive. Also, if public access is chosen, websites related to the project site should specify that there is no parking or vehicle access available on site. Pedestrian access, if allowed, should be designed to reduce any potential for creating traffic congestion on the private drive. For all options, maintenance vehicles will need to access the site occasionally.

The entrance to the private drive will need to be discussed during project design. Currently there is little room for more than one vehicle at a time entering and exiting onto Rainier Ave S. Maintenance vehicles may also need a larger corridor to access the site than what currently exists. The new culvert is likely to run underneath the driveway entrance, which may provide an opportunity improve the drive entrance.

Table 6. Traffic safety and mobility evaluation: Expected traffic safety and mobility changes under the different public access options.

	No Access	Viewpoint	Scheduled Access	Limited Access	Open Access
Pedestrians and bicycles	Negligible change from current conditions.	Slight increase in pedestrians/ bicyclists crossing Rainier and on 68th.	Slight increase in pedestrians /bicyclists crossing Rainier and on 68th.	Some increase in pedestrians /bicyclists crossing Rainier and on 68th.	Some increase in pedestrians /bicyclists crossing Rainier and on 68th.
Vehicle traffic	Negligible change from current conditions.	Slight increase from visitors to the viewpoint.	Minimal increase from scheduled visitors driving to site.	Some increase simply from increased visitation, a small portion of visitors are expected to drive.	Some increase simply from increased visitation, a small portion of visitors are expected to drive.
Parking impacts	Negligible change from current conditions.	Slight increase in parking demand possible; current supply appears adequate.	Slight increase in parking demand possible during scheduled visits; current supply appears adequate.	Some increase in parking demand possible; current supply appears adequate. Coordinate with SDOT during project design.	Some increase in parking demand possible; current supply appears adequate. Coordinate with SDOT during project design.
Private drive	Negligible change from current conditions.	Viewpoint will be adjacent to private drive; visitors will be in close proximity to private drive.	Slight increase in pedestrians crossing the drive during scheduled visits. Expedite crossings of the drive through design features.	Some increase in pedestrians crossing the drive during open hours. Expedite crossings of the drive through design features.	Increased pedestrians crossing the drive during daylight hours. Expedite crossings of the drive through design features.
Criterion Summary	Little change from existing conditions. Fewer opportunities to make improvements for traffic-related safety concerns.	Small increase in visitors to the area that may slightly affect traffic conditions. Avoid/minimize with design/SDOT coordination.	Small increase in visitors to the area that may slightly affect traffic conditions. Avoid/minimize with design/SDOT coordination.	Some increase in visitors to the area that may affect traffic conditions. Avoid/minimize with design/SDOT coordination.	Increased visitors to the area that may affect traffic conditions. Avoid/minimize with design/SDOT coordination.

Design concepts to improve safety and mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regardless of the access option chosen, coordinate with SDOT on their plans for pedestrian, bike, and vehicle improvements in the project area.• During project design, consider additional pedestrian, bicycle, or parking improvements as needed to address possible public access concerns.• If public access is selected, provide guidance to visitors on the City's website regarding parking conditions and ways to responsibly visit the project site.• During design, work with nearby neighbors to discuss design elements of the private drive entry, possible signage, and other features that can facilitate their access.
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Figures

Figure 1. Lake shoreline access opportunities in the Lower Taylor Creek Restoration project vicinity.



Figure 2. Map of existing open spaces, natural areas, and parks near lower Taylor Creek that could potentially connect recreational users in the area to the new open space and Lake Washington shoreline.

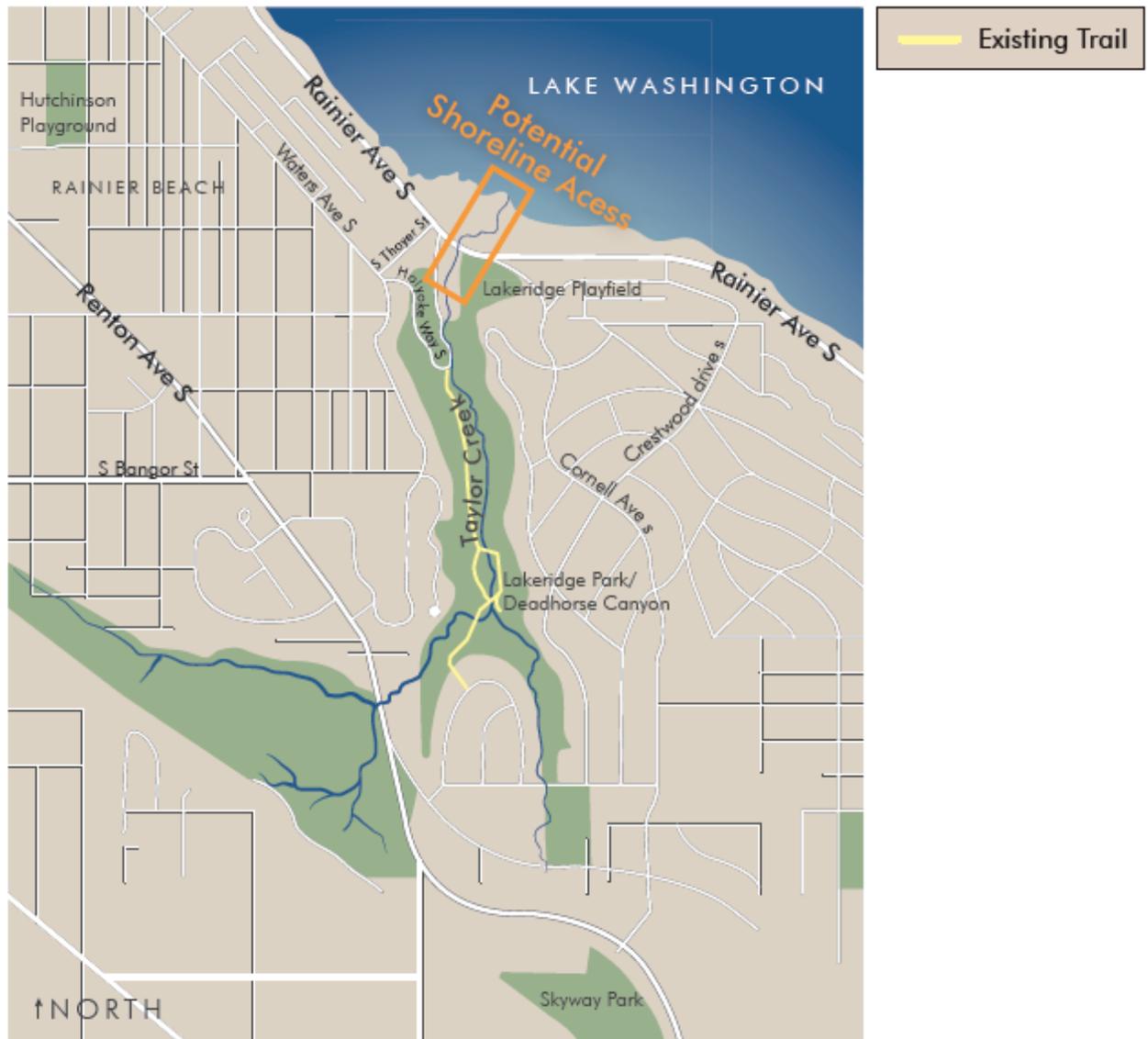


Figure 3. Map of the major arterials, side streets, private drive entrance, and the existing crosswalk near the project site. The project site outlined represents the general location of the habitat improvements downstream of Rainier Ave S only and does not depict accurate property lines.

