



# Seattle Design Commission

## MEETING OF THE MINUTES

March 1, 2007

Greg Nickels  
*Mayor*

Karen Kiest  
*Chair*

Tasha Atchison

Pam Beyette

Evan Bourquard

Brendan Connolly

John Hoffman

Mary Johnston

Dennis Ryan

Darrell Vange

Guillermo Romano  
*Executive Director*

Layne Cubell  
*Senior Staff*

### Projects Reviewed

Counterbalance Park  
Commission Business  
Commission Retreat Follow Up  
Department of Planning and Development Update

Convened: 10:30am  
Adjourned: 4:00pm

### Commissioners Present

Karen Kiest, Chair  
Pam Beyette  
Evan Bourquard  
Brendan Connolly  
John Hoffman  
Mary Johnston  
Dennis Ryan  
Darrell Vange

### Staff Present

Guillermo Romano  
Layne Cubell  
Tom Iurino  
Kadie Bell



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**1 Mar. 2007 Project: Counterbalance Park (Queen Anne Park)**

**Phase:** Design Development

**Previous Reviews:** October, 2005

**Presenters:** Patrick Donohue, Department of Parks and Recreation  
Mark Tilbe, Murase Associates  
Iole Alessandrini, Artist

**Attendees:** Scott Murase, Murase Associates  
Rick Vanderhodd, Murase Associates

Time: 1.0 hour

(SDC Ref.# 169/RS0605)

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**Action**

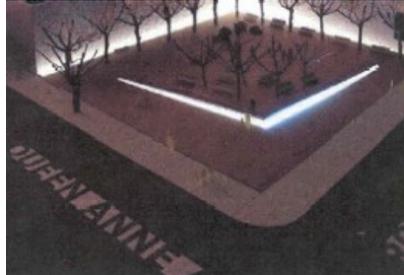
The Commission thanks the Parks Department and the design team for presenting the design development stage and recommends unanimous approval of the project with the following comments:

- The Commission feels that the up-lighting scheme is the best alternative
- The design team should take another look at the railing and determine if it can be removed altogether or pulled back and separated from the wall and treated minimally.
- The concrete angled edge wall should continued to be explored further and specifically:
  - the surface of the wall and graffiti are concerns
  - push the envelope in terms of texture of the wall or pursue a smooth finish
  - not a typical site cast wall, so there needs to be a strong focus on controlling the workmanship
  - discourage skateboarders and vandalism with possibly a stainless steel edge
- Ipe decking should be FSC certified and is a good choice of material, but the corner and edge between the ipe decking and the sidewalk pavers needs better resolution. The Design team in encouraged to explore the different ways to better treat this corner, including a quirk miter transition or other means of pulling the decking further from the radiused street corner.
- Applaud the positive interaction between the Parks Department and the design team and encourages its continuation
- Support integration of event planning infrastructure such as power outlets and benches to serve the design and the goal of active site programming
- Recognize that there is a desire in the community to incorporate historical reference from the neighborhood into the park, but the Commission encourages an abstract integration in order to not take away from the purity of the design approach
- As the design team moves forward the spare quality of the park should be maintained as that is its greatest strength
- The design team is cautioned to continue exceptionally close collaboration into the construction phase since the success of this design relies on the adherence to stringent construction quality controls
- The Commission feels there is a inherent value in the use of a full scale mock up on site in order to refine design, construction details and viability of lighting effects
- Lighting design on site should consider light spillage into the night sky
- Applaud early address of maintenance concerns

## Proponent's Presentation

### *Update*

The project has been fully funded but has encountered minor setbacks with private funds which caused some delay. The expected dates for the beginning of construction are mid-summer with scheduled completion at the end of 2007.



### *Site Plan*

Trees have been removed from the site plan to comply with SDOT requirements for the street edge design. Other coordination with the City includes tree installation and species longevity. The addition of a short rail was added to the wall to guard against trip hazards. Graphics illustrate different possible front light wall design. The team is still exploring the species of trees onsite. Lighting fixtures that are easy to maintain are being explored. Tree species are small, broad-leafed evergreen trees for those at the rear of the site. The middle of the park has a loose cluster of trees and the team is currently exploring options with shady, low-maintenance, deciduous trees. The street trees are selected in collaboration with SDOT to replace Dogwood trees that are not ideal.

## Commissioner Questions and Comments

- Are you using the stone pavers?
  - No, crushed granite and ipe wood decking will be used.
- Does the crushed granite go right up to the trees?
  - Yes, it will and one of the benefits is that it drains well.
- What is the parks department's experience with maintaining lights like this?
  - L.E.D. lights are new therefore we are looking for secure, tamper-proof fixtures that are simplified and easy to fix. We are avoiding fixtures that hold water.
- Could you describe your ideas for lighting fixtures?
  - The picture is representative of what the park will look like. When lighting was designed, the design team looked at the neighborhood character and activity. This area will be used for gathering. For that purpose, the lighting should not be overpowering, but should function for security and be welcoming. L.E.D. lights are able to change color in a subtle way and are the most lasting (guaranteed for 10 years from the manufacturer). There are ways being explored to reduce the gap and also vandalism. L.E.D lights are very small and the team has explored one lighting wrap from a company based in Seattle—provided a 12-inch fixture that is modular and waterproof with optics. The lights also pivot to enable light orientation on the walls to have it more intense at the bottom and less at the top.
- How difficult is it to change the light? Is it computerized/programmed?
  - There is a small box/computer that has a program that changes the color. There are many options, but it is key to be subtle. The team has been thinking at the most important calendar events and those specific to the neighborhood.

- Previous Commission comments included concerns over the adjacent walls and property owners
  - There are verbal agreements to light the walls and remove graffiti. The agreement must be formalized and will be complete by early summer.
- Is the wood material sustainable?
  - Yes, they are certified, but have become expensive due to LEED certification. Portland has used this wood in public spaces and we will benefit from their experience
- What about surrounding lights—will they interfere?
  - It has been looked at and a mock up will be created and brought to the site.
- You prefer the light coming from the bottom?
  - Yes, that option is strongly preferred
- How do we preclude night pollution/over-illumination for Queen Anne?
  - We are concerned about this; the cutoff point will be on the wall and low enough to prevent annoyance for people in the buildings light is cast on.
  - There is no “spill out” of light due to angling—also the trees will cup the light.
- The site is very simple and has not changed much since the last presentation. The walls shown are probably not the direction where you’re going. I understand edge supporting. Do you want to extend the wall above the grade of the granite? The rail will be significant and the simplicity of the wall could be extended.
- The fact you are rebuilding the sidewalk—you do not need to stick to the current sidewalk. Could you pull the ipe in a little?
  - Yes, there is currently an exercise that allows us to explore grading and edge design.
- Are you considering extending the wall or must it have a railing?
  - Anything is on the table. The Uptown Alliance wants to bring more knowledge of the historical background of Queen Anne and would like to have some drawings or pictures. The team suggested it was insightful and could be incorporated on the top of the rail.
- That information should be incorporated other places onsite like rocks or ground.
- When thinking about graffiti, what kind of concrete will you use?
  - There is plywood covered with rubber that creates a perfect wall.
- You could add some abrasive rock to the concrete to add texture—this also avoids graffiti.
- In order to have more security, have opportunities to adjacent properties explored?
  - The configuration would not allow for this.
- Could the seating be integrated? The rocks could be placed in a way that recognizes the history of Counterbalance.
- I don’t think the walls should be extended to become the guardrail. It dilutes the design. If you need the guardrail, make it thin and light.
  - Currently, it is being thought of a thin with steel
- I would strongly encourage a divorce of the railing element from the wall
- The wall should be simpler since there is more activity on the ground
- The corner is awkward due to the geometry; this could be explored.
- Keeping it simple is a good idea. With the incorporation of history—avoid plaques! Keep them abstract and avoid them on the plane.
- Encourage reuse of materials from other Parks sites. Anything you can use and have it blend in with park’s abstraction is great to emphasize the simple/spare concepts, but there must be things to touch for people who like substance.

- Is there seating in the park?
  - There will be benches, the focus now is tree configuration
- The lighting plan is elegant and simple, it may not come out the way you hope because of the abundance of uncontrolled elements
- When choices are made, push the options as much as you can to make the concept work—more intense light may be good.
- Events: are there facilities on site?
  - This has been pushed by Uptown Alliance and there will be above grade outlets provided for events.
  - Event layout for tables and tents have been conceptualized
- The park should be kept spare. The edge of the wall may be beat up by skateboarders.
  - The handrail could address this.
  - A stainless steel edge could be added to prevent damage.
- It is important to understand how skateboarders will use this.
- Maintenance: this is important.
  - There is too much energy to allow it to deteriorate.
- Trash cans: what will they look like?
  - They will all look the same whatever they look like.
- Step out of the typical and look for a great trash fixture with input from designers.
  - This has been in the works and there is consensus that this is not a standard park.

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**1 Mar. 2007 Project: Commission Business**

**Time:** 2.0 hours

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| <b>Action Items</b>     | A. Timesheets   |
| <b>Discussion Items</b> | B. Minutes from 02/15/07/Bell   |
|                         | C. DC 2007 Recruitment/Cubell & Hansen<br>DC staff is coordinating with the Mayor's Office on recruitment and has worked out a schedule. Two positions, urban planner and artist, will soon be available on the Design Commission. A press release will go out next week. Commissioners can help with recruiting qualified candidates and also participate in interviews. |
|                         | D. Outside Commitments/All<br>Commissioner Connolly, Northgate Stakeholders<br>Commissioner Hoffman, Coleman Dock   |
| <b>Announcements</b>    | E. PC/DC University District Orientation, 3/30, 2:30-4:30pm<br>UW Gould Hall  |

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**1 Mar. 2007 Project: Commission Retreat Follow Up**

**Phase:** Staff Discussion

**Last Briefing:** none

**Presenters:** Design Commission Staff

Time: 2.0 hours

(SDC Ref.# 168)

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Several issues were discussed in follow up to last month's annual Commission retreat:

- ROW Projects - and street vacations, in particular, have been a challenge.  
Meeting preparation is essential to ensure Commissioners are in the same place in terms of project knowledge and understanding. Taking time to review salient issues and materials as a group in advance is beneficial. The Commissioner handbook provides a handy mini-checklist to ensure the proponents are providing the essential information and the Commission should also refer to this as a guide during meetings. A number of other suggestions were made to improve, streamline and clarify the review process:
  - Get materials from proponents in advance of meetings
  - Stay focused during discussions, keep comments to the point
  - Remember the two-step approach: urban design and public benefits and keep the discussion and actions for these distinct
  - Commissioners should review previous minutes prior to presentations
  - Give more time for some projects on the agenda, if warranted
  - Begin initial meeting with preamble discussion on issues and context
  - Chair will manage targeted concerns
- Major Projects  
Need more time to info-share with fellow-commissioners regarding major projects, such as the Viaduct and SR-520. Previous opinions on these projects are posted on the Design Commission website. Commissioners should review these in preparation for a more complete discussion at a future meeting.
- 2007 Workplan  
The revised plan was distributed and approved. It reflects comments made at the retreat and illustrates major projects in the pipeline outlined by quarter. Priorities remain focused on large transportation projects. New projects, which provide opportunities for Commissioners to get involved outside regular meeting commitments include:
  - Civic Square (former PSB Site) – design review of the open space
  - SDOT – King Street Station workshops
  - University District Community Workshops – with the PC
- Recruitment and Leadership Plan  
Leadership planning is important. Upcoming nominations of new members and members who wish to serve another term along with Chair and Vice Chair will happen this spring according to the schedule handed out earlier. Recruitment efforts will begin next week with the issuance of a press release announcing two vacancies and will continue through September. Current members will have many opportunities to participate.

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**1 Mar. 2007 Project: Department of Planning and Development Update**

**Phase:** Staff Briefing

**Last Briefing:** March 2005

**Presenters:** Diane Sugimura, Director, Department of Planning and Development

Time: 1.0 hour

(SDC Ref.# 220)

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**Summary: The Commission thanks Diane Sugimura for taking time to update the Commission on the projects DPD is involved with around Seattle and would also like emphasize the Commission's willingness to participate in order to advance the civic design of the city.**

Diane distributed several handouts that described the history of DPD, DPD online services, information on a new housing speaker series, an overview of the design review process and current newsletter from the department.

Topics

- Development trends
  - In 2007-2008, housing will be strong, each year continues to set records
  - Much of the development is in Center City
  - Neighborhood commercial areas strengthened in Ballard and Columbia City
  - South Lake Union neighborhood plan update
- DPD activities
  - Incentive zoning – the Planning Commission's report is out in circulation
  - Visioning Charrette for triangle between South Lake Union and Queen Anne is being planned by QA/Uptown neighborhood
  - University District planning, subsequent to the recent Safeco property purchase and the likely expansion of light rail is important for the neighborhood's growth
  - Residential development
    - Increased annually since 2003
    - Growth in neighborhoods is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan
    - Jobs have increased the housing demand dramatically
    - Condo conversions have seen a sharp increase since 2004
    - Rental units are being lost and not re-developed
    - Multi-family code revision to promote rental housing
    - More town homes are being built, built at half the allowed density
    - Mayor is looking into a sidewalk requirement for developers
  - Green Building team is now located in DPD consolidated from dispersed departments.
  - Four primary DPD goals for 2007:
    - Affordable housing
    - Increased density
    - Sustainability
    - Less parking
  - Open spaces impact fee is on hold due to conceptual setbacks
  - Improved streetscapes in Belltown, the response is sustainable infrastructure
  - Open Space 2100, Bands of Green and other recent reports are being reviewed for ideas, the challenge is how related City led open space initiatives fit in

### Commissioner Questions and Comments

- What classifications do the University District and Ballard have?
  - The University District is an existing urban center. Ballard is an urban village.
- What is the difference between an urban center and an urban village?
  - There is different funding and the plans are updated in a different manner.
- What changes are taking place in South Lake Union?
- What is happening in South-East Seattle in terms of public investment?
  - The action agenda is led by the Office of Economic Development
  - Growth concerns in regards to social issues like gentrification
  - No tax-incremental financing so hard to fund projects comprehensively
- Civic Square needs better public relations for awareness building, possibly a public event
- The bus system needs to be more intuitive and also more appealing in order to increase ridership. Improved signage, kiosks, etc. are important design issues for the City.