

South Park Plaza

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Brianna Holan, Chair

Justin Clark

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Commissioners Present

Brianna Holan, Acting Chair
Justin Clark
Mark Johnson
Amalia Leighton
Vinita Sidhu
Lucas Whitesell
Elaine Wine

Commissioners Excused

Rick Krochalis (excused at 4:00 pm)

Non-voting Commissioners Present

Elizabeth Conner

Non-voting Commissioners Absent

Azzurra Cox

Project Description

The project is one of 14 land banked site purchased by Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) to provide access to additional open space within higher density, urban areas. The .83 acre project site is located west of the South Park Bridge, between S Orr St and Dallas Ave S in the South Park Neighborhood. The project site is also located near the Duwamish waterway, providing views from multiple areas on site. The proposed design concept will include programming such as open gathering space, activity space, vending areas, and art. The proposed project has a budget of \$2,083,725 for planning, design, and construction.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the South Park Plaza project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the concept design phase (30% design phase) for the project. At this meeting, the SDC voted 7-0 to approve the concept design for the South Park Plaza project with several recommendations.

Recusals and Disclosures

None

September 3, 2020

2:45-4:15 pm

Project Type

CIP

Phase

Concept Design (30% design)

Previous ReviewsNone**Presenters**Karen Kiest
KKLAMeredith Hall
KKLAEd Pottharst
SPR**Attendees**Kim Baldwin
SPRKathleen Conner
SPRDavid Goldberg
OPCDJessica Gomez
OHAngel Guillen
Villa ComunitariaEdwin Hernandez
Duwamish Valley Sustainability
AssociationJoy Jacobson
FASCayce James
OPCDFrank Miranda
Solid GroundKaren O'Conner
SPRJay Rood
SPRRobin Schwartz
Duwamish River Cleanup Coali-
tionValerie Thiel
DVAH CoalitionJaime Thomson
DVAH CoalitionPeaches Thomas
Duwamish Valley Safe StreetsRuby Vigo
Duwamish Valley Sustainability
Association

Figure 1: Project location

Summary of Presentation

Ed Pottharst, of SPR, and Karen Kiest and Meredith Hall, of Karen Kiest Landscape Architects, presented the concept design phase for the South Park Plaza project. The presentation began with a brief introduction of the overall purpose and program for the project as well as an overview of the surrounding neighborhood and site context. The project is located along the South Park River Walk, an element of the South Park Green Spaces Vision Plan identified by the surrounding community to increase open space within the neighborhood. Originally located on an oxbow, or old channel created by the Duwamish River, the site is currently located one block south of the Duwamish waterway, serving as a potential connection between the South Park Business district and the riverfront (See figure 1).

The project team then discussed community involvement in the development of the concept design alternatives. The South Park Community is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Seattle, but also experiences high percentage of pollution and is at a higher risk for displacement and poor health. The community has expressed a need for additional open space and housing, amongst other things, to help reduce the negative impacts and inequalities that currently exist. To provide open space that will best integrate within the context of the neighborhood and used by the community, the project team hosted an open house in Fall 2019. The team also hosted an online survey in early 2020 to better understand what elements should be included in the concept design. The team has also assisted the community in hosting activation events on sites and has engaged with neighborhood organizations such as the Duwamish Valley Youth Corps. Throughout the outreach process, the project team was able to identify several community design themes such as event/activity space, vending areas, multi cultural space, play areas, and art that should be included in the plaza design.

The project team then presented four concept design alternatives. Each concept includes programming inspired by the community design themes such as an open lawn, play area, event/market space, stage and plaza area. Each concept also provides a connection between the neighborhood business

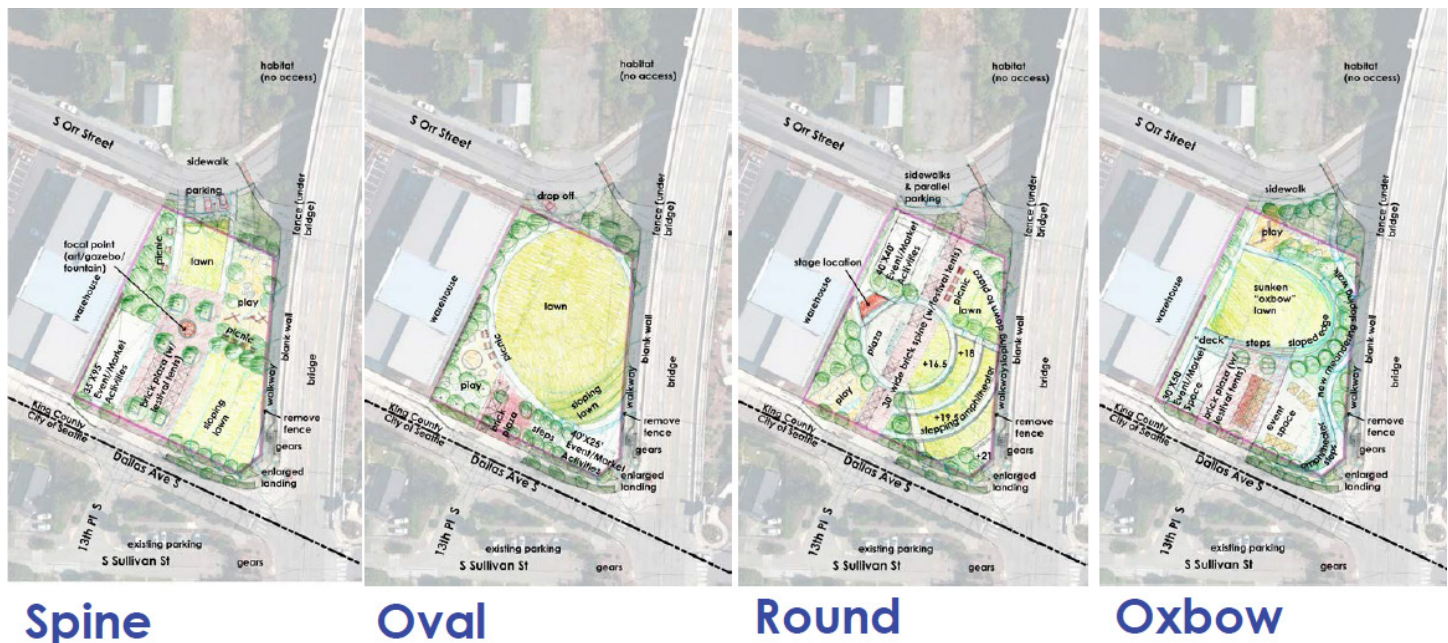


Figure 2: Proposed design concept alternatives

district and riverfront as well as street improvements along S Orr St (See figure 2). The project team also provided additional concepts for the potential future development of the King County surplus property located north of the project site along the riverfront.

Agency Comments

David Goldberg, OPCD, stated that OPCD is continuing to work with community organizations within the South Park Neighborhood. David mentioned that both open space and affordable housing are needed by the community and that OPCD and the Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) team want to support capacity building for affordable housing. David stated that it is unfortunate the South Park Community feels like it is in position to choose between housing and open space when it deserves to have both. David then mentioned that SPR is focusing on providing high quality open space in a community lacking open space and that other City departments are working on addressing other community needs. David thanked the project team for their collaboration with the community, neighborhood organizations, and city departments and then recommended that the team balance the programming and on-site development to best meet the needs of the community.

Public Comments

Ruby Vigo, Duwamish Valley Sustainability Association, mentioned the South Park Neighborhood should have greater access to sustainable programs and recommended the South Park Plaza include sustainable programming to help educate and train community members. Ruby then mentioned that their organization is currently working with SPR to develop sustainable programming within the plaza design.

Edwin Hernandez, Duwamish Valley Sustainability Association, stated there are too many negative environmental impacts affecting the South Park Community. Edwin commented that the plaza is located in a highly visible area and recommended the project include programming to highlight and develop sustainable jobs and practices for both adults and youth. Specifically, Edwin recommended they develop programs specifically for the summer as well as programs for career development.

Valerie Thiel, Duwamish Affordable Housing Coalition, read a letter on behalf of a colleague. The letter expressed concern that the proposed project budget is not sufficient to provide what is being presented nor what the community desires to be built. The letter also expressed a concern that there is no consideration for affordable housing on the project site, which continues to be a community need, and recommended the consideration of housing be a part of overall design with the possibility of being constructed during a future phase. The letter then stated a concern that building open space without affordable housing will further increase gentrification. The letter also expressed concern that the proposed plaza design did not adequately address climate change and sea level rise.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Programming and connectivity
- Design response- elements for preferred alternative
- Public engagement & equity
- Sustainability & design

Programming and connectivity

The SDC commended the project team for wanting to create a gathering space for the surrounding community. The Commission encouraged the project team to create a space that is welcoming and will provide a direct connection between the neighborhood, business district, and waterfront. Commissioners also encouraged the project team to understand how the plaza can be designed to best meet the needs of the growing neighborhood.

The Commission acknowledged issues with existing pedestrian connections across Dallas Ave S and S Orr St. Commissioners recognized the potential for a strong pedestrian connection across S Orr St. to the River Walk and King County surplus property and recommended the project team coordinate with King County to improve the pedestrian connection. The Commission discouraged the team from including on street parking adjacent to the park on Orr St as it would serve as a barrier for pedestrian access to the River Walk. The SDC then encouraged the project team to work with King County on providing pedestrian connection improvements across Dallas Ave S. between the plaza and neighborhood business area.

Design response - elements for preferred design alternative

The SDC did not recommend a specific alternative design for the project team to consider, but rather provided recommendations on preferred programming and design elements that should be incorporated into a preferred design alternative. The SDC appreciated the flexibility of spaces and diversity of opportunities provided in the Oxbow and Round design alternatives as well as the direct connection between the business district and waterfront provided in the Round alternative. The Commission recommended that the preferred design alternative include flexible and creative spaces for programming as well as spaces and direct connections to the South Park Business District. The Commission then recommended the project team consider taking advantage of street space along Dallas Ave S and S Orr St for activation and programming to spill out from the park and into the business district and waterfront areas.

Commissioners also recommended the project team provide a more detailed explanation of circulation patterns, including a hierarchy of how pathways will be used within the park design. The SDC reiterated its concern with traffic safety near the Dallas Ave S and 14th Ave S intersection. Commissioner strongly recommended the preferred design alternative address safety and connectivity issues near the intersection.

The SDC then recommended the project team consider opportunities for an outdoor covered area and/or community facility through project phasing and to consider allocating space in the design concept that could be developed in the future.

Public engagement and equity

The SDC commended the project team for their information on historic and current issues within the community. Commissioners also appreciated that the project site is currently being activated to better serve the community. The Commission strongly recommended the project team continue to build partnerships with the local business and residential community for ongoing activation and programming and to better understand how proposed community activation and programming concepts can be implemented within the preferred design. The Commission also encouraged the project team to continue working with the community to think about the placement and design of a future covered gathering space or community facility.

Sustainability and design

The SDC recommended the project team continue to understand the effect climate change, sea level rise, and future flood conditions will have on the park and to provide a design that will adapt to those conditions. The Commission also recommended the team include interactive programming, such as a sustainable learning garden, to engage with and provide educational opportunities for the community.

Action

The Commission thanked the project team for their presentation of the concept design for the South Park Plaza project. Overall, the Commission appreciated the context provided to highlight historical and ongoing challenges within the neighborhood. Commissioners also appreciated the project's goal of providing connectivity between Duwamish River and South Park Business area and that the project team has already provided opportunities for activation and programming on the project site. The SDC voted, 7-0, to approve the concept design for the South Park Plaza project with the following recommendations:

1. Coordinate with King County to develop a design concept that will improve safety at the intersection of Dallas Ave S and 14th Ave S (South Park Bridge)
2. Coordinate with King County on the design of S Orr St; reconsider the design for and allocation of street parking along S Orr St to better facilitate pedestrian connectivity
3. Coordinate with King County on how to develop the King County surplus site and to ensure the future use fits within the community's vision.
4. Think about circulation and hierarchy of pedestrian movement to and within the park.
5. Take advantage of street space surrounding the park for activation and programming
6. Consider opportunities for outdoor covered areas and/or community facility through project phasing. Consider allocating space in the design concept for the future development of covered areas and/or community facility
7. Continue to build partnerships with the local business and residential community for ongoing activation and programming; better understand how proposed community activation and programming concepts can be implemented.
8. Study the effect sea level rise and flood conditions will have on the park
9. Provide a learning garden to create play and environmental education
10. Continue to understand how The Plaza can serve as an active space for learning and experience