

# South Park Plaza

**Jenny A. Durkan**  
Mayor

**Samuel Assefa**  
Director, OPCD

**Brianna Holan**, Chair

**Justin Clark**, Vice Chair

**Kim Baker**

**Elizabeth Conner**

**Azzurra Cox**

**Mark Johnson**

**Rick Krochalis**

**Amalia Leighton**

**Vinita Sidhu**

**Elaine Wine**

**Michael Jenkins**  
Director

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Planner

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## Commissioners Present

Brianna Holan, Chair  
Justin Clark, Vice Chair  
Kim Baker  
Elizabeth Conner  
Azzurra Cox  
Mark Johnson  
Rick Krochalis  
Amalia Leighton  
Vinita Sidhu

## Commissioners Excused

Elaine Wine (Excused at 11:30 am)

## Project Description

The project is one of 14 land banked sites 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) second review of the South Park Plaza project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the schematic design phase (60% design phase) for the project. At this meeting, the SDC voted 9-0 to approve the schematic design for the South Park Plaza project with several recommendations. The SDC will review the project again during the design development phase (90% design phase).

## Recusals and Disclosures

None

**February 4, 2021**

10:00 am - Noon

**Project Type**

CIP

**Phase**

Schematic Design

**Previous Reviews**[9/3/20](#)**Presenters**Karen Kiest  
KKLAMeredith Hall  
KKLARoss Tilghman  
Tilghman GroupJay Rood  
SPRAndy Sheffer  
SPR**Attendees**Adam Amrhein  
AttendeeKadie Bell Sata  
SPRKathleen Conner  
SPRJill Crary  
AttendeeDavid Goldberg  
OPCDJoy Jacobson  
FASCayce James  
OPCDEd Pottharst  
DON**Summary of Presentation**

Karen Kiest and Meredith Hall, of Karen Kiest Landscape Architecture, Andy Sheffer, of SPR, and Ross Tilghman, of Tilghman Group presented the schematic design for the South Park Plaza project. The project team discussed recommendations provided by the SDC during the previous project review on September 3, 2020. The team then provided a brief history of the project site and surrounding community as well as information on the existing site context (*see figure 1*), specifically as it relates to environmental concerns, such as sea level rise, and concerns around pedestrian safety. The presentation also included information on potential traffic improvements along the perimeter of the project site along Dallas Ave S, 14th Ave S, as well as potential improvements within the surrounding neighborhood.

The remaining presentation focused on the continued development of the design proposal for the plaza. The proposal is meant to reflect the multiple layers of history of the site while also serving as a gathering space for the surrounding community. The proposed design and programming focuses on responding to community input to provide space for events and vending, utility access/hookups, native plants, and connectivity to the river as well as the importance of highlighting Indigenous culture within the overall design and programming of the plaza.

The updated design includes formal and informal elements identified by the community from the previous design alternatives, such as a large gathering space, stage area, open lawn, central pathway, amphitheater, and play area, as well as rain gardens, vegetated areas, and secondary pathways meandering throughout the site. The proposal also includes right-of-way improvements along S Orr St and Dallas Ave S. The main pathway through the plaza is aligned with 13th Pl S and is meant to provide a visual and physical connection between the business area, plaza, and riverfront. (*see figures 2 & 3 for more detail*)

The project team then discussed how they are continuing to coordinate with the community, local non-profits, and city departments to develop programming opportunities that are culturally relevant and important to the community. The team also expressed their intent to continue conversations about ways to incorporate art and cultural elements within the plaza design and programming.

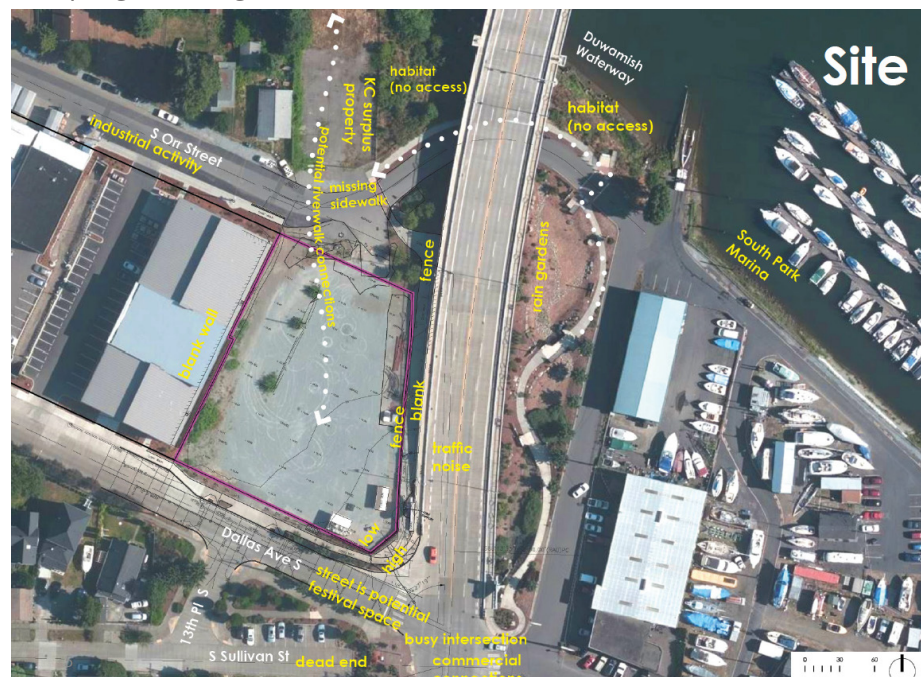


Figure 1:  
Project  
location



Figure 2: Updated design proposal

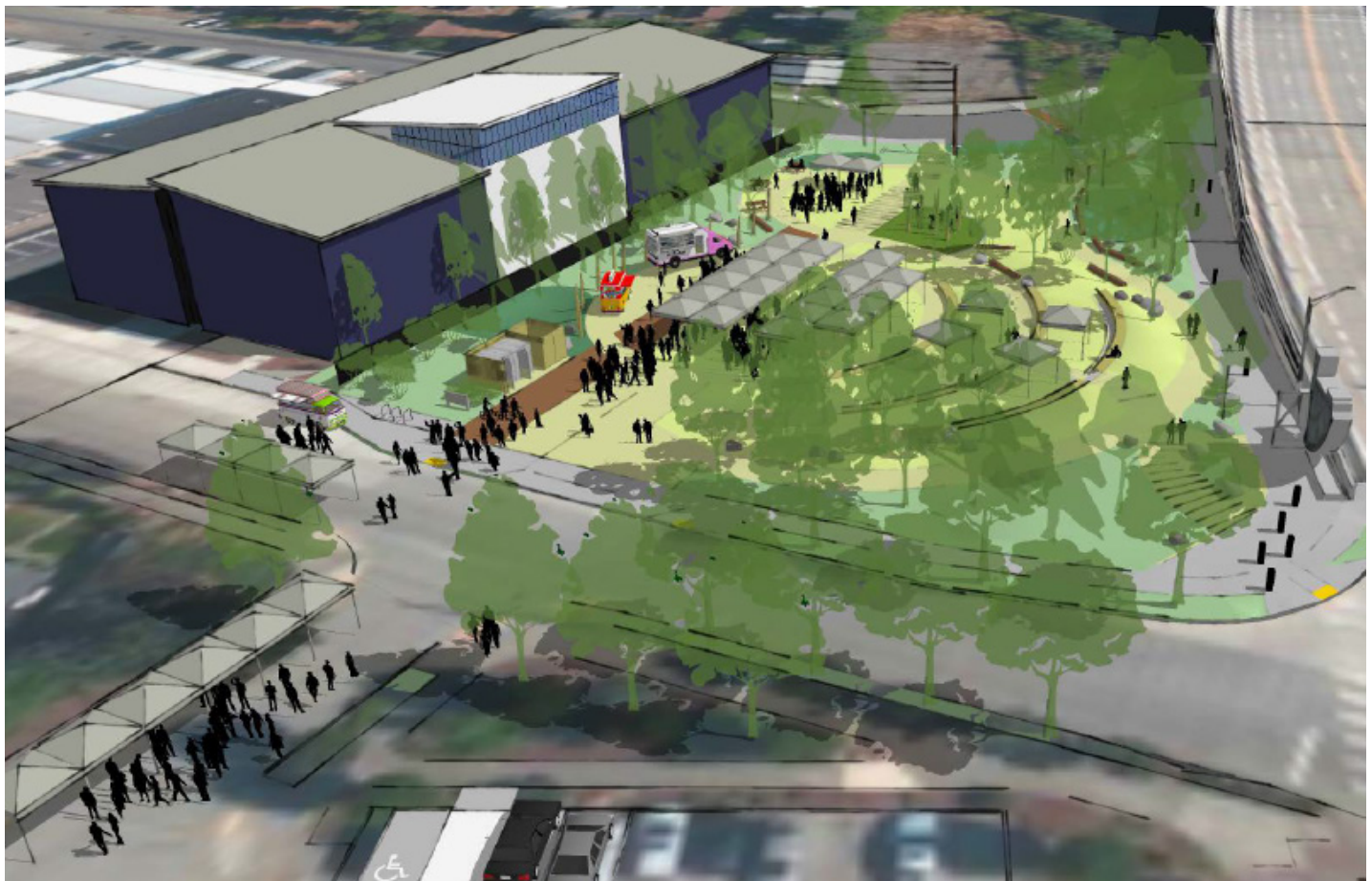


Figure 3: Rendering of the plaza during a community event

## Agency Comments

None

## Public Comments

None

## Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Updated design concept
- Circulation
- Engagement
- Sustainability
- Art and cultural integration

### *Updated design concept*

Overall, the SDC commended the project team for their development of a preferred design proposal. Commissioners appreciated how the preferred design responded to community input and thoughtfully incorporated elements from the design alternatives presented during the previous review to provide a mix of formal and informal spaces. The SDC acknowledged that this plaza is central to the surrounding community, providing connections to the neighborhood and business area as well as connections to additional open spaces along the Duwamish River and strongly encouraged the project team to maintain that connection as the design continues to develop.

The Commission agreed that the updated proposal provided a balance of larger and small spaces and encouraged the project team to continue to think of how they can best develop these areas to support gatherings. Specifically, Commissioners recommended the project team continue to develop the entry plaza to maximize ability to provide space for large events and community gatherings as well as ensuring that the open lawn and surrounding pathways and spaces are constructed to be able to support large programming.

Commissioners appreciated specific design updates such as the relocation of the play area and the development of an overlook area near the intersection of 14th Ave S and Dallas Ave S. The Commission then encouraged the project team to coordinate with the adjacent property owner on ways to potentially integrate the building façade abutting the plaza, such as by using the façade as a canvas or projection screen for temporary programming or events. Commissioners also recommended the project team continue to understand how the plaza can integrate with other areas outside of the park boundary, such as the King County surplus property, adjacent rain gardens, and right-of-way along S Orr St, as well as the use of Dallas Ave S for larger community events.

### *Circulation*

The SDC reiterated its recommendation for continued coordination with King County on the future development of the adjacent surplus property to better understand how the connection can influence improvements along S Orr St. Commissioners encouraged the team to explore ways to further develop S Orr St such as through the development of a curb-less street, setting a precedent for this street type in industrial areas. The Commission then expressed their concern with the disconnected sidewalk along S Orr St and encouraged the project team to provide a demarcated pedestrian pathway to connect the sidewalks on both sides of the park edge.

The Commission then continued its discussion about the connectivity between the plaza and Dallas Ave S. The Commission recommended the project team coordinate with SDOT to provide a marked crossing Dallas Ave S at the intersection of Dallas Ave S and 13th Pl S. to improve connectivity between the neighborhood commercial area, plaza, and riverfront.

The SDC then expressed its appreciation for the openness and accessibility of the updated design proposal and recommended the project team provide a diagram or additional information on the areas and pathways that are accessible to better understand how users of all abilities can enjoy spaces throughout the plaza. Commissioners also encouraged the project team to identify ADA access routes into the plaza from surrounding areas.

**Engagement**

The SDC commended the project team for providing detailed information about the surrounding community context as well as how the plaza can serve as an important, central gathering space for the community.

**Sustainability**

The SDC looks forward to seeing how the sustainability strategy continues to develop.

**Art and cultural integration**

The SDC appreciated the project team's commitment to further discussing how art and culture can be best integrated within the plaza design. Commissioners also appreciated the interdepartmental discussions between SPR and the Office of Arts and Culture (OAC). The Commission then recognized that having a paid program position would provide an opportunity to advocate for programming that is not currently funded.

While commissioners acknowledged how the project team has set up opportunities for art and cultural elements, they stressed the importance of ensuring that there is an appropriate budget and space allocated for the development of specific art and culturally significant elements. Commissioners encouraged the project team to continue to collaborate with the community to think about ways to develop programming and spaces, such as the plaza entrance and play area, to incorporate culturally significant art. Commissioners strongly recommended the project team provide more information about their plan for integrating art and culture as the plaza design continues to develop.

**Action**

The Commission thanked the project team for their presentation of the schematic design phase for the South Park Plaza Project. Overall, the Commission appreciated the continued development of the preferred design concept. Specifically, Commissioners appreciated the merging of programmatic and design elements from previous design alternatives as well as the balance of both formal and informal programming provided in the preferred design concept. Commissioners also appreciated the project team's discussion about including art and cultural elements as the project continues to develop. The SDC then acknowledged that this park is central to the surrounding community, providing connections to the neighborhood and business area as well as connections to additional open spaces along the Duwamish River.

The SDC voted, 9-0, to approve the schematic design for the South Park Plaza project with the following recommendations:

1. Ensure there is budget and space for art and cultural expression; Maintain programmatic partnerships with local community
2. Maintain attentiveness as you continue to develop an art strategy
3. Be specific and intentional about addressing and providing space for cultural engagement & programming
4. Consider potential interactions and engagements beyond the park property lines; Coordinate with King County on developing visions for the surplus property and connections to adjacent rain gardens; Continue to think about how larger events can spill out onto Dallas Ave S
5. Coordinate to provide a marked crossing at Dallas Ave S and 13th PI S
6. Continue to develop the entry plaza to maximize ability to provide space during large events and community gatherings
7. Take advantage of unique spaces within and surrounding the park- bridge overlook, rain gardens, and spaces for small and large events – that elevate the experience for park users
8. Refine technical detailing of lawn, pathways, and enclosures to ensure they can support large programming
9. Provide diagram of accessible pathways and areas within the park