

Yesler Terrace Pocket Park III

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Brianna Holan, Chair

Justin Clark

Mark Johnson

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Vinita Sidhu

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Commissioners Present
Brianna Holan, Acting Chair
Justin Clark
Mark Johnson
Rick Krochalis
Amalia Leighton
Lucas Whitesell
Elaine Wine

Commissioners Excused
Vinita Sidhu

Non-voting Commissioners Present
Elizabeth Conner

Non-voting Commissioners Absent
Azzurra Cox

Project Description

In 2006, Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) began planning for the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace. The new 31-acre master planned community will include replacement low-income housing, market-rate housing, two community centers, 2.5 acres of open space, and other neighborhood improvements. More than 12,000 people will live at Yesler Terrace when fully built out. As part of the redevelopment, SHA petitioned to vacate (permanently close) several streets. In the vacation petition, SHA proposed several public benefits, including three pocket parks. The pocket parks are part of the Green Loop, a connected network of public open spaces included in the redevelopment master plan.

From 2009 to 2011, we reviewed the petition to vacate streets in Yesler Terrace. At that time, SHA identified the locations of the pocket parks but not their precise configuration, programming, and design. We are reviewing the design of this public benefit. The street vacation conditions outline key features of the pocket parks: each must be 12,000 square feet, have 70 linear feet of frontage on a public street, and accommodate both active and passive uses. Design elements for this pocket park include active play areas, gathering space, open lawn, and garden area.

Meeting Summary

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

Recusals and Disclosures

Vinita Sidhu recused herself as her employer is working on the project.

September 3, 2020

1:00 - 2:45 pm

Project Type

CIP

Phase

Concept Design (30% design)

Previous Reviews

None

Presenters

Brian Bishop
SiteWorkshop

Clayton Beaudoin
SiteWorkshop

Ryan Moore
SHA

Attendees

Beverly Barnett
SDOT

Beau Gunderson
Neighborhood resident

David Kelley
Ankrom Moisan

Joy Jacobson
FAS

Li-Yu Pan
SiteWorkshop

Summary of Presentation

Ryan Moore, SHA, and Brian Bishop and Clayton Beaudoin, SiteWorkshop, presented the concept design for the Yesler Terrace Pocket Park III project. The presentation began with a brief overview of the project and how it fits within the larger Yesler Terrace Open Space Plan (see figure 1). The project is one of three pocket parks that were identified as a public benefit for the Yesler Terrace Redevelopment project. This pocket park is located near the northwest area of the neighborhood along 8th Ave. The parcel to the south of the project is owned by SHA and will be developed into a multifamily housing development, while the parcel north of the project site will be owned by Kaiser Permanente and will be developed as a medical facility (see figure 1). The project team is coordinating with both property owners to potentially integrate areas outside of the project boundary into the park design.

The proposed design concept and program elements were influenced by the project teams attempt to preserve four mature trees as well as their ability to integrate the site with additional areas outside of the project boundary. The proposed concept is meant to detach the park from the adjacent developments, which will enhance the overall public feeling of the park,



Figure 1: (top) Yesler Terrace Open Space Plan. Project site is outline as #2. (Bottom) Current site context



Figure 2: Proposed concept design



Figure 3: Proposed interim concept design

provide a series of interior open spaces, and provide views along the edges of the park. The proposed design focuses active programming along the northern edge of the site and includes a gathering area with seating, open lawn, and play area. The southern portion of the site, which includes the preserved trees, will include vegetated areas with a mature tree canopy, smaller gathering spaces, and walking paths. The western edge of the park is located adjacent to a public access drive and will include a gathering space, swing, and terrace with seating opportunities. Seating opportunities and Lighting located on poles, bollards, wall, and within handrails will be located throughout the park (*see figure 2*).

The pocket park will be built prior to the development of the medical facility. The project team has provided an interim design to address the area located on the adjacent parcel. The interim design for this area will include a meadow with seating located along the pathway edge. (*see figure 3*)

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, SDOT, provided background on the development and approval of the pocket parks as a public benefit for the redevelopment of the Yesler Terrace Neighborhood. Beverly then discussed issues about public access, stating that both signage and design elements should work together to ensure each pocket park is publicly accessible. Beverly mentioned that signage should be consistent across each pocket park and that the public have the same access and rights within the pocket park that they would have in other public spaces throughout the City. Beverly then stated her appreciation for the overall design concept, but acknowledged the design included a disproportionate amount of impervious surfaces. Beverly also stated that they need to ensure the entire park, including property located on the adjacent SHA and Kaiser Permanente sites, are managed together and that the public access and rights will be extended across property boundaries.

Public Comments

Beau Gunderson, Yesler Terrace resident, provided feedback about block 7 park design. Beau then discussed a previous issue regarding park signage, located in another pocket park, that prohibited pet access. Beau appreciated the City explicitly stating that it was not legal to prohibit pets from any of the pocket parks. Beau then mentioned that this pocket park should include signage to ensure public access is preserved.

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Public outreach
- Partnerships with adjacent developments
- Site access and response to surrounding context
- Sustainability
- Art
- Overall design and programming

Public outreach

The SDC expressed their concern with the limited information provided on neighborhood history and public outreach. Commissioners acknowledged the rich history of Black and Immigrant communities within the Yesler Terrace neighborhood and strongly recommended the project team reflect those stories through the design and programming of the park. The Commission then stated that these communities are still a part of the neighborhood and encouraged the project team to work with community members as the design concept continues to develop. The SDC recommended the project team provide information about ongoing community engagement with surrounding communities as well as information as to how the design as changed due to outreach efforts.

Partnerships with adjacent developments

The SDC commended the project team for their partnership with the adjacent property owners. While the Commission is excited to see how the partnership continues to develop, commissioners stressed the importance of continued coordination with Kaiser Permanente to ensure the design concept is aligned with how they plan to design and develop their project site. The Commission then recommended the project team provide an update on the coordination with Kaiser Permanente as the concept design continues to develop.

Site access and response to surrounding context

The SDC stressed the importance of having universal access into the site along 8th Ave as well as access through the project site. The SDC recommended the project team develop a defined ADA accessible pathway across the park site, from 8th Ave to public access drive.

The Commission then expressed concern with the limited activation along the edges of the project site, specifically along the northern edge abutting the Kaiser Permanente property. Commissioners were also concerned with the limited explanation of the design elements and programming within the western edge of the park along the public access drive. The Commission acknowledged the limited programming identified for this area as well as its location adjacent to an access drive, which will primarily be used by the adjacent property, and are concerned it will result in an inactive space. The SDC recommended the project team show how design elements in the public access drive can better serve the programming within the western edge of the park.

Sustainability

Although the SDC recognized that the project is still in the early planning and conceptual design phase, they encouraged the team to think about additional opportunities for the inclusion of sustainability measures other than tree preservation and the reuse of materials. The Commission recommended the project team provide a more robust sustainability and resiliency strategy that will better incorporate practices into the design and programming of outdoor spaces within the park.

Art

The SDC recommended the project team engage with a local artist as soon as possible to incorporate art within the design concept. The commission encouraged the project team to use existing plans and organizations such as the Yesler Terrace Master Art Plan and the Seattle Housing Authority as leverage to include a local artist on the project team.

Overall design and programming

The SDC appreciated the overall design concept. Commissioners appreciated the collaboration with adjacent property owners to loosen the design from the surrounding parcel edges. The Commission then commented on the balance of green space and pathways throughout the site. The SDC recommended the project team consider opportunities to create more green space by reducing the amount of area dedicated for pathways.

Commissioners then reiterated their concern with the design and connectivity between the western edge of the park and the adjacent public access drive. Commissioners restated the recommendation for the team to consider how design elements within the public access can better serve the design and programming along the western edge of the park.

The SDC then commended the project team for their proposed materials palette. Specifically, commissioners appreciated the simplicity of the materials, which will place more emphasis on the planting and vegetated areas, as well as the common design language used between different elements such as the handrails, lighting, receptacles, and stairs. Commissioners recommended the project team to continue to think about the materials this way as the design develops.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation of concept design for they Yesler Terrace Pocket Park III. The Commission appreciated the overall concept of loosening the park shape from the defined park edges to create a unique identity as well as the team's ability to partner with the adjacent property owners to create an integrated design. The Commission also appreciated the simplicity of materials. The SDC voted, 7-0, to approve the concept design for the Yesler Terrace Pocket Park III project with the following recommendations:

1. Provide an update on the coordination with Kaiser Permanente as the concept design continues to develop
2. Integrate community stories and histories within park design and programming, specifically those that relate to the Black and Immigrant community
3. Provide information on current communities living within the neighborhood and how they are influencing the overall design concept

4. Consider the integration of art within the design concept
5. Consider engaging with a local artist
6. Provide a sustainability and resiliency strategy that will better incorporate practices into the design and programming of the park
7. Consider opportunities to increase green space and to reduce pathways within the design
8. Develop a defined ADA accessible pathway across the park site, from 8th Ave to public access drive
9. Show how design elements in the public access drive can better serve the programming within the western edge of the park
10. Continue to develop material elements with a common design language