

Yesler Terrace Pocket Park III

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Commissioners Present

Justin Clark, Acting Chair
Kim Baker
Elizabeth Conner
Azzurra Cox
Amalia Leighton
Elaine Wine

Commissioners Excused

Mark Johnson
Vinita Sidhu

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 privately owned 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) second review of the Yesler Terrace Pocket Park III (also referred to as Block 7 Pocket Park) project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the design development phase (90% design phase) for the project. The SDC voted, 6-0, to approve the design development phase with three conditions and several recommendations. The project will be reviewed again during a subcommittee meeting.

Recusals and Disclosures

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

March 18, 2021

1:00 - 3:00 pm

Project Type

Street Vacation

Phase

Design Development

Previous Reviews[9/3/2020](#)**Presenters**Brian Bishop
SiteWorkshop**Attendees**Beverly Barnett
SDOTClayton Beaudoin
SiteWorkshopJoy Jacobson
FASRyan Moore
SHALily Pan
SiteWorkshop**Summary of Presentation**

Brian Bishop, of SiteWorkshop, presented the updated design proposal for the Yesler Terrace Pocket Park III project. The team provided information about the project's location within the Yesler Terrace Neighborhood (*see figure 1*) followed by information on site context and existing site conditions. The team then discussed responses to recommendations and concerns provided by the Commission during the previous project review in September 2020. Responses included information about the project team's coordination with Kaiser Permanente on the integration of the northern edge of the project, information on ongoing community engagement to develop stories, and information on the proposed art plan and integration strategy. The team stated that Kaiser Permanente has officially acquired the parcel to the north of the park site. Kaiser Permanente is considering using a portion of the property abutting the project site as a continuation of the park but has yet to finalize this decision as they are still resolving the building design and program. The northern edge of the design that abuts Kaiser Permanente's property will include an interim design condition (assuming Kaiser decides to move forward with informal extension of the pocket park on their site) as the park will likely be constructed prior to the development of their parcel (*see figure 2*).

The team then discussed updates to their community engagement process and art plan and integration strategy. The community engagement process includes collecting stories that address cycles of displacement and healing within each community. The collected stories will inform the both the art plan and planting elements within the park. The team then stated that they are committed to engaging with a local artist or artisan to develop art elements.

Responses to previous concerns also included information on the sustainability strategy as well as opportunities to update specific program areas and to address site circulation and accessibility.

The remaining portion of the presentation focused on the updated design proposal (*see figure 2*). The proposal includes refinements made to the play, gathering, and seating areas near the western edge of the park. The play area has expanded in size, while the trellis structure was updated to include a swing, a gathering a seating area at the west end of the park. The terrace, which provides a connection between the park and private access drive, was updated to include wall top seating with backs (*see figure 2*). The team then discussed updates to the planting and materials palette as well as the location of lighting, art, and signage within the park.

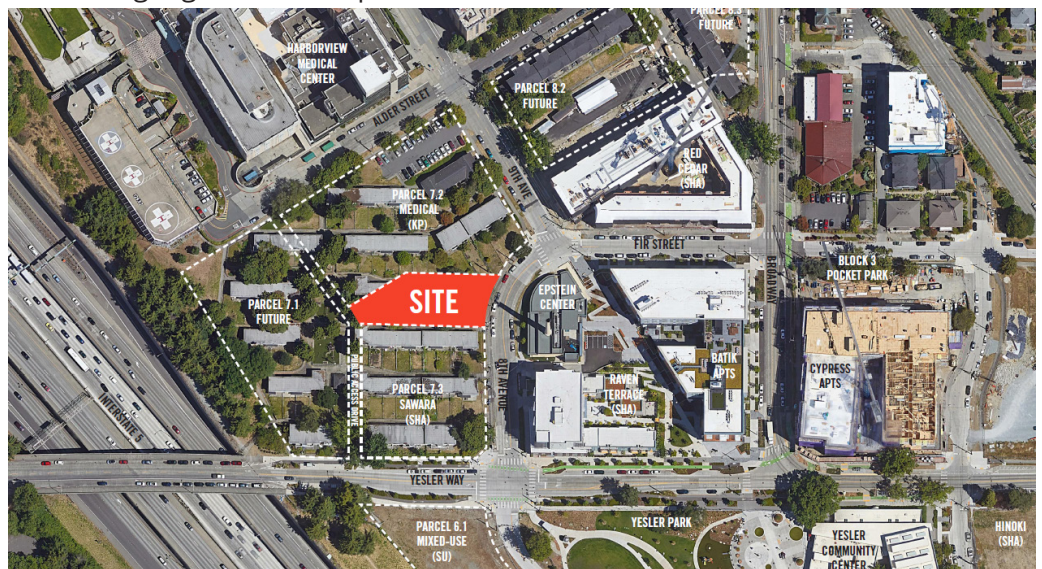


Figure 1: Project location



Figure 2: Updated design proposal (top), Image from Western Perch (bottom left), image of interim design (bottom right)

Agency Comments

Beverly Barnett, SDOT, appreciated how the project has continued to develop, stating that the updated design responded to the recommendations and concerns provided during the previous SDC meeting. Beverly stated that they updated design created a place that people will use rather than a pass through. Beverly also appreciated the project team’s development of a community engagement strategy since the previous SDC meeting.

Public Comments

None

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Overall design
- Design refinements
- Community outreach & art integration
- Sustainability

Overall design

The SDC commended the project team for addressing previous recommendations and concerns. The Commission acknowledged the challenges of the existing site topography, but commended the project team for how the updated design addressed site circulation to create a park that is accessible. The Commission recognized the importance site circulation and access will have on drawing users to the western edge of the park. Commissioners also appreciated the approach of designing the park edges to not appear as an extension of the adjacent developments as well as the continued development of the interior spaces throughout the park.

The SDC then discussed the development of specific areas. Commissioners appreciated the team's integration of mature trees along the southern portion of the park. Commissioners also appreciated the use of durable materials throughout the park, including the lighting and paving materials, as well as the long-term maintenance plan. The Commission expressed concern with the use of artificial turf in the play area and recommended the team consider using an alternative. Commissioners then recommended the team consider adding topography to the open lawn.

The SDC continued to have questions about the integration of the northern edge of the park with the adjacent development owned by Kaiser Permanente. The Commission conditioned the project team return for a subcommittee meeting to discuss Kaiser Permanente's commitment to integrate their property with the adjacent pocket park.

Design Refinements

The SDC commended the project team for their continued refinement of the design throughout the development process. Commissioners agreed that the updated size, location, and connectivity of programming elements work well to create a cohesive design. Specifically, the Commission commended the project team for refinements made to the western edge of the park. Commissioners agreed the refinements to the layout, programming, and materials strengthened this area of the design and that it will serve as a well activated gathering space. The Commission encouraged the project team to continue to think about the flexibility of the space as details and materials are finalized. Commissioners also encouraged the team to consider providing additional shade below the trellis. Commissioners provided differing comments on the development of the trellis and play structure. Several commissioners appreciated that both structures would include similar design features, while others thought that both structures did not need to fully relate to each other. The Commission then encouraged the project team to continue to design the trellis and play structure to be strong design elements, regardless of whether the two structures are related or designed independently of each other. The Commission discussed a condition that the project team return for a subcommittee to review the development of the play structure.

Community Outreach and Art Integration

The SDC commended the project team for their ongoing community engagement. The Commission appreciated the project team spending time to meaningfully engage with the community and to process their stories for the development of an art plan. Commissioners recognized that this is an ongoing process and are excited to see how the art plan and integration strategy continues to develop. The SDC then discussed the art integration strategy. Commissioners had questions regarding the funding source, budget, and artist selection process as well as the process for the implementation of a final design within the park. Commissioners strongly encouraged the team to engage with an artist as soon as possible to help develop the art plan and integration strategy. The SDC then recommended the project team think about artist involvement, development process, and final product in order to define the project budget for the art plan. The Commission also recommended the project team continue to develop an art plan that can evolve over time and to consider using technology for better engagement with park users.

The SDC discussed a condition that the project team return for a subcommittee to review the proposed art integration strategy and to show how art and cultural elements will be integrated into the site.

Commissioners also appreciated the overarching theme of migration, displacement, and health as well as the team's use of a vessel to collect stories but cautioned the team from using a medicine bag as a specific example of a vessel. The Commission recommended the project team use examples of vessels that emerge

from ongoing engagement with communities.

Sustainability

The SDC agreed the project team adequately addressed sustainability issues.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation of the design development phase for the Yesler Terrace Pocket Park III project. Overall, the Commission appreciated the team's response to previous recommendations. Commissioners commended the team on responding well to the challenging site topography while providing a variety of programming elements, capitalizing on views, and ensuring that all areas are activated. Commissioners also appreciated the detail provided for the planting and material selections as well as the detailed graphics and visuals used to describe the proposed design. The SDC voted, 6-0, to approve the design development phase of the Yesler Terrace Pocket Park III project with the following conditions:

1. Return for a subcommittee meeting to review the following:
 - i. Art integration strategy to show how art and cultural elements will be integrated into site
 - ii. Kaiser Permanente's commitment to integrate with the northern edge of the park
 - iii. The design of the play structure

The SDC also provided the following recommendations:

1. Reconsider using artificial turf material in the play area
2. Consider adding topography to the open lawn
3. Think about artist involvement, the development process, and final product in order to define the project budget for the art plan
4. Create an art plan that can continue to evolve over time; consider the use of technology
5. Think further about the vessel for collecting art elements; consider letting the type of vessel emerge from community engagement.