



Capitol Hill Park Project

June 9, 2008

In 2000, Seattle voters approved a \$198.2 million levy for Parks and Recreation. A portion of the Levy was allotted to purchase and develop two park sites on Capitol Hill. The original targeted site for one of the parks was a Group Health parking lot but the property was unavailable. The 16th Avenue East & East Howell Street site came under consideration as a result of a suggestion from a member of the community. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to identify all the issues and ideas raised during the planning and design process, key themes and decisions are summarized within.

Pro Parks Planning

In November 2007, Parks held a joint open house for this park as well as nearby John & Summit Park – another property that was purchased at the same time for park development. The people of these neighborhoods came primed to discuss gardening because a person in each community had taken the initiative to begin their own planning process: they hoped to have these parks developed into individual plots for p-patch gardening.

Much discussion ensued -- including the issuance of many e-mails and letters from the public. Many people wanted a flexible urban park at this site – a large, open area with limited program elements that allowed for a variety of uses. Over time, it became clear that people in the Capitol Hill Park neighborhood were willing to compromise on the gardening topic: an area of the park would be designated for gardening as long as it was managed as a collective garden rather than as personal garden plots. Second and third community meetings were held in March and May 2008.

Final Design

The essence of the final concept is that it creates a canvas for unstructured use. A major component of the design is a large, level turf area in the middle of the site which is bordered by a walkway and collective garden to the north and a plaza and trees to the south.

- **Collective Garden** – Located at the north end of the site where the sun is most favorable, this 3,200 SF area will be managed by the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) P-Patch program. DON and Parks will be holding a series of community meetings to flesh out the specifics of the garden's design. A MOU will formally detail expectations.
- **Garden Walk** – Existing use patterns indicate there is considerable traffic across the site between the alley and 16th Avenue E. A crushed rock path located at the north end of the site, between the lawn and garden, accommodates the pedestrian traffic and serves as an excellent location for picnic tables, barbecues, and benches. A proposed trellis is intended to shelter the tables from the sun.
- **Steps** – Large steps on the east and southwest edges of the park effectively deal with grade while providing informal seating and easy access into and out of the park.

- Plaza and Benches – A plaza, benches, and an allee of trees are highlighted at the south edge of the park. Ipe tropical wood is proposed for the plaza planking. Crushed rock, like the path at the north end of the site, is another, less expensive, option.
- Playful Gathering Element – This art element will allow for creative play and small gatherings. It includes a small circle of pavers and seven boulders representing the seven hills of Seattle. The feature plays on the fact that the site is near the highest elevation in the City.
- Pedestrian Lighting – Lighting is proposed in the form of four pole lights; two are proposed in the vicinity of the picnic tables and two at the south end of the park at the edge of the proposed wood planking.
- Alley – The alley serves to visually and physically enlarge the size of the park. The park's west edge will abut the alley and effectively include it as viable play space.

Current Status

As of this writing, the designers are detailing design specifics (i.e., Design Development). The community is fundraising in order to increase the project budget. Construction will likely be delayed until late 2009 in order to accommodate fund raising,