



The City of Seattle

## Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649

Street Address: 600 4th Avenue, 4th Floor

LPB 627/19

### REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Name and Address of Property: **liq'təd (Licton) Springs Park**  
**9536 Ashworth Avenue North**

Legal Description: Licton Springs Park Addition, all of Block 9, together with Licton Springs Reservation, together with the North ½ of the vacated North 95<sup>th</sup> Street adjacent and together with the South ½ of said vacated street adjacent to Lots 1, 2, and 3, Block 15, less a portion thereof defined as, beginning at the Northeast corner of said Lot 3, Block 15, then North along northly produced of East line of said Lot 3, 15.84 feet, then north 88°33'33" West 75.01 feet, more or less to Northly produced of East line of Ashworth Avenue North, then South 00°40'07" West along said Northly produced 27 feet to Northwest corner of Lot 1 then Easterly along Northerly line of said Lots, 1, 2 and 3 to point of beginning.

At the public meeting held on October 16, 2019 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of Licton Springs Park at 9536 Ashworth Avenue North as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

- A. *It is the location of, or is associated in a significant way with, an historic event with a significant effect upon the community, City, state or nation.*
- C. *It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, state or nation.*

*Contributors to the nomination presented by Matt Remle and Spencer Howard, include: a coalition of individuals, both Native and non-Native: Native youth, members, and elders from the Tulalip, Snoqualmie, Muckleshoot Tribes, and other Native American tribes; Individuals whose ancestors have been directly tied to Licton Springs for generations; Seattle residents, educators, and historians; Clear Sky Native youth council; the Tulalip Tribes Board of Directors Youth Council; and the Licton Springs community council.*

**Administered by The Historic Preservation Program**  
**The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

"Printed on Recycled Paper"

*The following text has also been adapted by Historic Preservation program staff.*

## **DESCRIPTION**

### ***Neighborhood Setting and Site***

Located in the Licton Springs neighborhood, Licton Springs Park is sited on a 7.57-acre parcel. The park is bounded on the east by Densmore Avenue N, on the west by Ashworth Avenue N, on the south by N 95<sup>th</sup> Street and single-family housing, and on the north by N 97<sup>th</sup> Street. Single and multiple family housing surrounds the park. The park is approximately 1,200 feet east of Aurora Avenue N and 700 feet west of the North Seattle College campus (established 1999). The park is one block north of the Robert Eagle Staff Middle School / Cascadia Elementary School / Licton Springs K-8 (built in 2016, formerly the site of the Woodrow Wilson Jr. High School/Wilson-Pacific School / Indian Heritage School).

### ***Licton Springs Park***

Licton Springs Park contains the iron oxide and magnesium sulfide springs that are associated with traditional cultural heritage. There may be other springs that are not currently mapped. The following description addresses the springs as a water feature within the park.

### ***Spatial Organization***

Park spatial organization follows general landform conditions arising from the stream channel through the park. The park is oriented lengthwise north to south. The overall organization consists of a central riparian area that follows the stream alignment from north to south through the park with a small pond at the south end. A lawn, comfort station, and children's play area occupy the central west portion of the park, along Ashworth Avenue N. Lawn areas extend along the length of the park's east side along Densmore Avenue N. A network of trails traverses the park, with sidewalks around the park perimeter.

### ***Topography***

Site topography generally slopes from a high elevation of 295 feet at the north end to 270 feet at the south end. The shape of the park's ground plane generally relates to the park's spatial organization. The children's play area and comfort station occupy a level area, with the lawns consisting of gently sloped grade. The approximately 10-foot drop in grade from the children's play area to the stream occurs steeply at the north end of the park and gently at the south end. This steeper topography at the north end constrains the stream flow and then broadens out to the south for a more expansive riparian area and pond.

### ***Vegetation***

The park consists of different groups of plants based on spatial area. The riparian area contains a range of trees, ferns, perennials, grasses, and shrubs related to the stream edge and standing water. These include but are not limited to red alder, cedars, willows, western skunk cabbage,

currants, and ferns. The lawn areas consist of mown grass with Tulip trees along the park perimeter as street trees. The play area has a wood chip play surface.

### *Circulation*

Concrete sidewalks extend around the perimeter of the park and provide linkage to the continuation of sidewalks along adjacent streets. Concrete sidewalks extend into the park to provide access to the comfort station and the play area. Gravel trails traverse the park, extending along and across the riparian area in a meandering fashion allowing users to immerse themselves in the park experience. Three wood frame bridges extend across the stream. The bridges have a wood plank walking surface with wood hand railings and metal mesh along the railings; styles vary due to later maintenance. A small stone bridge spans the stream at the south end of the park. A corrugated metal culvert with gravel built up on both sides provides a walking path over the stream at the south end of the park. A short set of stone steps near the play area traverses a step descent along the trail. Pressure treated wood posts and stacked rubble stones serve as retaining walls along a section of trail.

### *Water Features*

Water features are both functional and aesthetic components of the landscape. The springs and stream predate the park, although their alignment may have evolved over time, either naturally or by human intervention. The springs are connected to the area's natural hydrologic system and mineral deposits and contribute to the stream flow and alignment through the park. They consist of the main iron oxide spring at the north end of the park, two lesser iron oxide springs (lesser based on flow rate), and a magnesium sulfide spring at the south end of the park. The magnesium sulfide spring resides below and contributes to the pond water volume. The stone (or concrete) ring around the iron oxide spring directs water flow to a narrow channel that feeds the stream. Iron oxide is brought to the surface by the water flow in solution with the ground water and deposited in solid form in the spring basin, on the surface ring, and along the channel to the stream.

The stream flows from two culverts at the north end of the park that discharge drainage and groundwater. At the south end of the park the stream returns to a culvert, continuing its flow and eventually entering the piping of the City's drainage system at N 88<sup>th</sup> Street. Within the park the stream channel generally ranges from one to three feet wide. The wetland area at the south end of the park accommodates increased standing water volumes during periods of heavy rains and area drainage. Plant material across parts of the stream help to slow the rate of stream water flow through the park. The stream channel is natural in character, meandering along its course with vegetation, rocks, exposed tree roots, and decaying tree branches extending down to the water edge with mixed rock and soil stream bed.

The pond consists of a shallow basin in the south portion of the park that fluctuates in depth based on seasonal water flow rates, and may not always be visible due to vegetation and the amount of water present. The shoreline is natural in character, organic in shape with vegetation, rocks, exposed tree roots, and decaying tree branches extending down to the water edge. Water-tolerant vegetation grows throughout the pond basin.

### ***Structures, Site Furnishings and Objects***

The park's structures, site furnishings, and objects are associated with recreational use of the park. A ca. 1974 comfort station north of the play area provides restrooms and interpretive signage related to the park's history. The building consists of a log posts with dimensional lumber panels framed between the posts and clad with lap siding. A standing seam metal clad hip roof with broad eaves shelters the interior spaces. Heavy timber beams provide the roof framing with exposed beam ends along the eaves. A concrete slab floor extends throughout the building. The building is open on the southwest corner, enclosed with screens on the northeast corner, with restrooms and utility spaces in the northwest and southeast corners. Play equipment within the play area includes several slides, a merry-go-round, and other equipment and stems from ca. 2016 upgrades to the park's equipment. A low, plywood formed concrete retaining wall is located to the northwest of the play area. Refer to circulation for information on the bridges. Interpretive signage is located at the comfort station, the iron oxide spring, and along the riparian area and pond to educate visitors on the cultural and natural history of the park.

### ***Character Defining Spaces and Features***

**Líq'təd** (Licton Springs) cannot be re-located, replaced, or re-created, and is a sacred site for the Duwamish and other Coast Salish people. The site remains in active traditional cultural use since time immemorial by the Duwamish and other Puget Sound tribes for place-based spiritual practice. The following list identifies the essential physical features related to traditional cultural use.

- Four springs (iron oxide, two lesser iron oxide, and the magnesium sulfide springs)
- Flowing mineral water from the springs

The location of the springs is inseparable from the land and ongoing traditional cultural use patterns. The springs are dependent on the unique mineral and hydrological conditions of this location with only one other such location in the state. This is the only publicly known location, which enables a greater interpretive and educational role for this unique site. Native plants extant within the park, particularly those that relate to the riparian and wetland site characteristics strengthen the integrity of setting, feeling, and association relative to the traditional cultural use of the springs.

### ***Alterations***

The following provides a reference summary of known alterations to the park.

- The greater area was once forested with cedar, Douglas fir, hemlock, alder and willow trees along with an understory of ferns and salal. The local terrain included numerous mineral springs, bog, and marshes.

- Time immemorial: periodic burning of vegetation within the broader landscape to aid in cultivating wild plants and the construction of sweat lodges in proximity to the springs for ceremonial purposes.
- 1870: David Denny 160-acre land purchase, inclusive of Licton Springs. Denny had the water tested in 1883, and constructed a summer residence near the springs by the 1890s.
- 1909: C. R. and Pearl M. Harold and the Licton Park Mineral Springs and Land Company, a Washington state corporation, purchased and platted the area as a residential subdivision named Licton Springs Park. Within the 1909 plat, the majority of the park area was designated the Licton Springs Reservation and was not included in the dedication to the public, instead reserved by the above plated landowners. W. M. Elliott was president and T. Jerome secretary of the Licton Park Mineral Springs and Land Company. The plat was filed for record at the request of land developer Calhoun, Denny and Ewing, Incorporated on May 29, 1909.
- 1920s through ca. 1934: development and use of the site as a picnic area.
- 1931: City diverts water from the springs into storm drains due to pollution from septic systems (and presumably outhouses) in the area.
- Ca. 1935: development of the magnesium sulfide spring as a bathing area.
- 1950s to 1960s: silting in and discontinued use of the bathing area.
- 1960: Seattle voters approve the creation of a park.
- Ca. 1961: site purchased by the City and used for depositing soil excavated from Interstate 5 grading, including filling in of the former bathing area. The City demolished Jensen's building, the shed at the iron oxide spring, and the concrete ring at the magnesium sulfide spring.
- 1974: park renewal including removal of fill to create the pond and existing topography within the site. The pond was developed as filtering mechanism for drainage water entering the park. Development of the existing circulation systems, comfort station, and vegetation within the site. Installation of the existing surface ring around the iron oxide spring.
- 1987: additional improvements made to the park using Seattle 1-2-3 bond funds. These included planting of trees and replacement of the play structure.
- Ca. 2016: reforestation and improvements with considerable volunteer assistance from the Licton Springs Community, and upgrades to the play area equipment.

## SIGNIFICANCE

*The following text is adapted from writings by Thomas Speer, Duwamish Tribe member, and Matt Remle, Hunkpapa Lakota Tribe member with their permission; The Schooner Project (funded by Seattle Department of Neighborhoods) and HistoryLink.org.*

*The following text has also been adapted by Historic Preservation program staff.*

Licton Springs Park is in the present-day North Seattle neighborhood of Licton Springs. Both the park and the neighborhood take their name from the Lushootseed word for the red-ochre mud (iron oxide) flowing from the main iron oxide spring, **líq'təd**. The pronunciation sounds close to “LEEK-teed”, but “Licton” came into use as a pronunciation simpler for, and favored by, English speakers.

### *Land Use*

#### Native American History of this Area

The area around and including Licton Springs Park was once heavily forested, with cedar, Douglas fir, hemlock, alder, and willow trees along with understory of ferns and salal. The local terrain included numerous mineral springs, bogs, and marshes. According to Indigenous oral history, the area known today as Licton Springs Park had three springs used by Coast Salish people for their mineral content. The site analysis from landscape architecture firm Jones and Jones done prior to the design of the current Licton Springs Park in 1974 shows four springs, three iron oxide and one magnesium sulfide. The water flowed from the springs south towards Green Lake. Coast Salish people identify the main iron oxide spring as **líq'təd**, meaning red, colored, or painted, due to the iron oxide laden mineral water that bubbles up from the ground.

Collectively, these springs are an important place in the **dxw'dəwʔábš ʔálʔaltəd** (Duwamish ancestral homeland) and for that of the Coast Salish People. Native people used and continue to use this site and the derived minerals for sacred and therapeutic activities, described in more detail in the next section. The springs served as a location for spiritual gatherings, where they would gather annually to build a **wúxwtəd** or “sweat-lodge” to cleanse and revitalize a person’s spirit and their body. The iron oxide derived red-ochre pigment was also collected from the springs and used as face paint for different ceremonies and to decorate longhouses and other items with spiritual imagery. The red-ochre pigment derived from the iron oxide spring mud was also utilized as an ointment by traditional healers.

Native American tribes from the surrounding region visited the springs to collect the red-ochre pigment derived from the iron oxide spring water for use as paint for ceremonies and spiritual activities. West of the springs, beyond the boundary of Licton Springs Park, there was a marsh approximately 85 acres in size, called **sluq'wəč** or “bald head.” Native Americans from around the region harvested cranberries from the nearby marsh.

Euro-American colonists arrived to the **ʔálʔaltəd** (Ancestral Homeland) in 1851 at Alki Point and set up settlements in what is now Seattle. In 1855, the Treaty of Point Elliott created a Government-to-Government relationship between the United States and the Native American tribes of the greater Puget Sound region. In 1859, The Treaty of Point Elliott was ratified by the United States Senate, guaranteeing hunting and fishing rights and reservations to all Tribes represented by the Native signers.

In return for the promise of a reservation and other benefits promised in the treaty by the United States government, Native American tribes exchanged over 54,000 acres of their

homeland. Today those 54,000 acres include the cities of Seattle, Renton, Tukwila, Bellevue, and Mercer Island, and much of King County, including the site of Licton Springs Park. Traditional cultural use of the springs continued following the Treaty of Point Elliott despite the ceremonies and practices associated with traditional cultural use of the springs becoming illegal through the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

#### Euro-American History of this Neighborhood

*(This section adapted from the HistoryLink.org essay)*

In 1870, settler David Denny (1832-1903) purchased 160 acres of land in north Seattle from the US government for \$1.25 per acre, including the current Licton Springs Park. David Denny and his family built a summer cabin on this property and spent time there. Denny had the water at Licton Springs tested in 1883 and it was determined to be healthful. There were two springs in the area at that time; the iron oxide spring to the north, and a magnesium sulfide spring at the south end, pooled as a large bathing area. Denny constructed a two-story frame house at Licton Springs and contemplated building a health resort for invalids and pleasure seekers. Following her father's death, Emily Inez Denny offered the 81-acre Denny property, which included the current Licton Springs Park to the City of Seattle for development as a public park. The City declined this offer. In 1909, C. R. and Pearl M. Harold and the Licton Park Mineral Springs and Land Company acquired the site and Calhoun, Denny and Ewing, Inc. developed the property.

The Olmsted Brothers of Brookline Massachusetts were retained by Calhoun, Denny and Ewing, Inc. to prepare plans for the new subdivision and a park around the mineral springs. The Olmsted Brothers proposed an organic layout with a park, rustic drives, paved streets and home sites. It included rustic shelters over the two spring basins, bridges, paths, and clearing the reserve around the springs as well as preservation of the original, rustic Denny cabins. The Olmsted Brothers plan for the subdivision and park were not built.

Instead the C. R. and Pearl M. Harold and the Licton Park Mineral Springs and Land Company platted 600 building lots, retaining only a smaller area as open space within the development. One remnant of the Olmsted proposal that was built, however, is a portion of the street network, where Woodlawn Avenue curves to connect with N 95<sup>th</sup> Street.

The water from the springs within the current Licton Springs Park drained southward to Green Lake via Becker's Creek. In 1920, Becker's Creek was enclosed in a buried pipe to Green Lake, presumably to protect the lake's water supply. In 1931, the City of Seattle diverted water from the springs into storm drains because of pollution from septic systems (and presumably outhouses) in the area.

The area which is currently Licton Springs Park was a favorite picnic spot in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and its healing waters attracted Euro-American use.

In 1935 Edward A Jensen opened a spa at the mineral springs, offering thermal baths that purportedly included 19 minerals. He bottled the water and sold it. Jensen died in 1951 before

he realized his dream of developing a sanitarium. His widow, Mabel M Jensen, sold the property to A.R. Patterson who planned a \$500,000 sanitarium.

In 1960 voters approved the spring site for a park, and the City bought the property in 1961. The City purchased the 6.3-acre property for use as a park. Since the City did not have funds for development at that time, the only immediate improvements were the demolition of Jensen's building, the shed at the iron oxide spring, and the concrete ring at the magnesium sulfide spring.

In 1968, the Forward Thrust bond issue passed, providing funds to build Licton Springs Park. The park was designed by Jones and Jones in 1974, with work completed in 1975.

### *Traditional Cultural Use*

**Líq'təd** (Licton Springs) has been a sacred site to the Duwamish and other Coast Salish people since time immemorial. It is a sacred place within the **?ál?altəd** (Ancestral Homeland) that has special meaning and significance for history and traditions.

Traditional cultural use sites, referred to as a sacred places, derive their status from their association with specific activities and historic events of the Coast Salish spiritual, communal, and cultural traditions. Traditional cultural use sites are intrinsic to a continuing body of practices and beliefs emanating from historic teachings, traditions, and oral history. Traditional cultural use sites give meaning to the natural landscape of the **?ál?altəd** (Ancestral Homeland). They anchor cultural values and spiritual and kinship-based relationships in the land. They are inseparable from the cultural fabric and heritage of the **dxw'dəw?ábš ?ál?altəd** (Duwamish Ancestral-Homeland) and that of other Coast Salish People.

For countless generations, Coast Salish people gathered at Licton Springs, together with their relatives by marriage, in the proper season for harvesting sacred red-ochre pigment, necessary for spiritual celebration and renewal. This site hosted and continues to host significant cultural practices and ceremonial activities in accordance with traditional culture.

From Bellingham to Olympia, **líq'təd** (Licton Springs) was known to Native American tribes along Puget Sound as a source of sacred red-ochre pigment, necessary for spiritual ceremonies, healing, and celebrations. Neighboring tribes consider **líq'təd** to be a **ǰá?ǰa?ali** (sacred place), a tangible cultural property inherited from their ancestors. Because of inter-marriage, neighboring tribes have an interest in the access to - and the preservation of - the sacred place **líq'təd**. Licton Springs is one of the last sacred sites remaining in the **?ál?altəd** (Ancestral Homeland).

**Líq'təd** (Licton Springs) was a therapeutic resource for Coast Salish people, who built a **wúxtəd** (sweat lodge) near the springs. A **wúxtəd** was used to cleanse and revitalize a person's spirit, as well as their body. The red-ochre (**líq'təd**) derived from the iron oxide spring was a sacrament and an essential component of their annual religious traditions.



For spiritual gatherings and ceremonies, people painted their faces and other parts of the body with red-ochre pigment, derived from the iron oxide spring. The red-ochre pigment was also used to decorate their longhouses and other objects with spiritual images. Native American doctors administered herbs and soothed aching bodies with the healing mud from the springs. It was a highly valued and highly desired trade commodity.

The *liq'təd* red-ochre spring itself has been preserved throughout history and is a prominent feature in the current design of the Licton Springs Park. The springs define both the name and establishes an authentic character-defining feature of the park. The flowing waters and iron oxide minerals comprise a rare cultural and spiritual feature of traditional significance that have survived intact, continuing to flow from the ground as spring water and continue in traditional cultural use by Native American people.

The magnesium sulfide spring to the south, although a character-defining feature of the property, ceased from traditional cultural use when it was covered. This spring is believed to remain under the pond.

Generations of Euro-American redevelopment of the region have drastically altered the former hydrological network of springs and streams in this area. Urban development has eliminated most of the forests, creeks, wetlands and natural springs that once defined the natural terrain and hosted the traditional cultural practices of this region. The springs at Licton Springs Park are the only remaining components of this cultural landscape that remain intact. They have long been a sacred site for prayer, medicine, and nexus for Native American gathering. The springs exists today as a persistent presence connecting our current generation of Duwamish and other Coast Salish people to the ecosystem and sacred/cultural life.

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**The features of the Landmark to be preserved include:** *the park site; excluding the existing shelter and play equipment on the west side.*

Issued: October 29, 2019



Sarah Sodt  
City Historic Preservation Officer

Cc: Matt Remle, nominator  
Spencer Howard, NW Vernacular  
Susanne Rockwell and Kevin Bergsrud, Seattle Parks & Recreation  
Jordan Kiel, Chair, LPB  
Nathan Torgelson, SDCI  
Maria Cruz, SDCI  
Ken Mar, SDCI