

# Northwest Native Canoe Center

**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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Strategic Advisor

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## Commissioners Present

Brianna Holan, Chair  
Justin Clark, Vice Chair  
Kim Baker  
Elizabeth Conner  
Azzurra Cox  
Rick Krochalis  
Amalia Leighton  
Elaine Wine

## Commissioners Excused

Mark Johnson  
Vinita Sidhu

## Project Description

United Indians of All Tribes Foundation and Seattle Parks and Recreation are proposing to build an approximately 2,860 square foot canoe carving building (Carving House) in Lake Union Park. The Carving House is the first of two buildings, which will be located on this site in the northwestern corner of the park. The second building, a Welcome House, is not being developed at this time.

The building will be a contemporary Coast Salish, one-story, timber post and beam structure with cedar cladding. It will have some operable and some inoperable large glass doors and windows, and a living roof. The building will be placed near the water so that canoes can be moved in and out easily. The roof will extend over the beach. The building and site will be used for carving and other cultural educational activities. A modest 120 square feet of multi-purpose back-of-house space is planned. The building includes restrooms for the general public.

## Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the Northwest Native Canoe Center Carving House project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the concept design phase (30% design phase) for the project. At this meeting, the SDC voted 7-0 to approve the concept design for the Northwest Native Canoe Center Carving House project with several recommendations. The SDC will review the Carving House one more time before it reaches design development phase (90% design phase). They will review the Welcome House when it is developed.

## Recusals and Disclosures

None

**February 18, 2021**

10:30 am- Noon

**Project Type**

CIP

**Phase**

Concept Design

**Previous Reviews**

None

**Presenters**

Bruce Arnold

Jones &amp; Jones Architects

Johnpaul Jones

Jones &amp; Jones Architects

Jessica Juarez-Wagner

United Indians of All Tribes Foundation

**Attendees**

Connie Combs

OPCD

Colleen Echohawk

Chief Seattle Club

David Graves

SPR

Joy Jacobson

FAS

Rachel Kitigawa

Jones &amp; Jones Architects

Mario Madayag

Attendee

Cale McPherson

Office of the Waterfront

Owen Oliver

Attendee

Steve Pearce

Office of the Waterfront

Ruri Yampolsky

Office of the Waterfront

**Summary of Presentation**

Jessica Juarez-Wagner, United Indians of All Tribes Foundation, and Bruce Arnold and Johnpaul Jones of Jones and Jones Architects presented the concept design of the Northwest Native Canoe Center Carving House. The decades long history of developing a Native American canoe center in Seattle was described. The team explained the value of the project for supporting the thriving canoe culture and providing a visible Indigenous presence in the center of the city. The facility will provide a place for cultural learning and for educating both the Native and non-Indigenous communities of the region.

The team presented the conceptual designs that were developed in the 1970s and 2000s and 2015 to secure space at Lake Union Park and to procure funding. They then presented the current concept design. The building features large round timber posts and beams with cedar clad exterior walls having areas of fixed windows and operable overhead doors. For the exterior cladding, modern materials will be configured to represent large cedar planks that were used traditionally on Coast Salish longhouses. The high end of the building is oriented toward the water as is traditional with longhouses, such as Old Man House, which was located in Suquamish. Canoe carving is traditionally done outside, but in bad weather there was a structure that provided shelter and space for carving.

The team explained that the roof would be solar ready. It will be a living roof and the plantings will include culturally relevant plants such as camas. Camas was a staple in the diet of Indigenous peoples across Cascadia, and it was cultivated historically in areas south of Lake Union and toward the Salish Sea.

A fire pit is located outside. It is needed to heat rocks, which are placed in water inside the canoe to widen them. To the west of the building will be a small plaza with seat walls.

A major challenge for the project is the poor geologic conditions of the site. There was a lumber mill here, so there are layers of debris and waste below the surface that form unstable conditions 50 feet deep. Foundations will likely be very costly, which may impact the design of the building.

The team explained that the project is fully funded, after many years, and that the Department of Parks and Recreation is glad to see it is moving forward.

**Agency Comments**

None

**Public Comments**

None

**Summary of Discussion**

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Access, circulation
- Character of building and spaces
- Sustainability
- Siting and configuration of program elements

**Access and Circulation**

The SDC noted that the park master plan could not have anticipated the growth in population of this neighborhood. While they appreciated the team striving to provide a space for non-Natives and Natives to gather as well as a space



Figure 1: Project location (top left), site plan (top right), and rendering of proposed Northwest Native Canoe Center building (bottom)

for non-Natives to be exposed to the living canoe culture, Commissioners wanted to better understand the logistics of circulation, gathering, and programming. The Commission also wanted to understand how people would reach the center by transit or from other parts of the park. While not many canoes are anticipated to arrive by vehicle, Commissioners wanted additional information about where unloading would occur as well as information on how nearby canoes could reach the Center by water. The Commission then discussion the need for wayfinding signage.

### ***Character of Buildings and Spaces***

Commissioners were supportive of the character of the buildings and spaces and were interested to hear about the historic underpinnings of the design. Commissioners were glad that the Coast Salish building would be the central focal point in this location within the park and surrounding neighborhood. Commissioners also noted the positive relationship between the building and adjacent Waterfront. The Commission requested additional information about maintenance and the desire to see clear areas of responsibility when the project returns for review.

***Sustainability***

Commissioners expressed appreciation that the roof will be designed to support solar panels (solar ready). They strongly supported the living roof, especially that it would be planted with camas, an Indigenous food plant.

***Siting and Configuration of Program Elements***

Commissioners discussed the programming of the space and expressed support for the configuration that allows indoor/outdoor carving and educational activity. They also agreed that the traditional angle of the roof, with the higher side toward the water was optimal.

Commissioners were concerned about the geotechnical challenges both for this project and for the Welcome House. They expressed support for finding the best solution and concern that the other aspects of the project may be compromised. They recommended that the budget for the Welcome House be updated as needed to reflect the true cost of building it, even if it is increased due to the poor ground conditions.

**Action**

The Commission thanked the project team for the presentation of the concept design of the Northwest Native Canoe Center Carving House. Overall, the Commission appreciated that the project was able to finally move forward despite many challenges. Commissioners were glad to see a contemporary Coast Salish facility at this location in the rapidly growing downtown, and the opportunities for non-Natives to learn about thriving Indigenous culture. They expressed support for the cultural elements of the project, including the design of the building, features of the site design, and choice of plant and building materials. The Commission declared continued support as the project seeks City funding for the next phase and offered to provide a letter of support.

The SDC voted, 7 to 0, to approve the concept design of the Northwest Native Canoe Center Carving House and provided the following recommendations:

1. At the next review, provide information on:
  - a. Circulation and connections within the site, to transit, to the rest of the park, to the neighborhood, and parking lot.
  - b. Maintenance plans
2. Consider how the Canoe Center will relate to the rest of the park and neighborhood. Explore how signage or other measures might support desired interactions.
3. Explore whether any other edible plants might be included in the planting palette.
4. Continue to explore solutions for the poor geotechnical conditions. Update the Welcome House budget and funding needs to reflect realistic estimates for addressing these challenges.
5. The City should consider allocating funds toward solving the unanticipated geotechnical challenges posed by historic use of the site. Funding should also be provided toward achieving the Welcome House phase of the project.