

Portage Bay Park

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Commissioners Present

Shannon Loew, Chair
Ellen Sollod, Vice Chair
Brodie Bain
Lee Copeland
Theo Lim
Martin Regge
John Savo
Ross Tilghman

Commissioners Excused

Thaddeus Egging
Rachel Gleeson

Project Description

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) is proposing the development of Portage Bay Park, located along the north shore of Portage Bay in the University District. The 3-acre site, 1.65-acres of which is comprised of dry land, is west of the intersection of NE Boat Street and 15th Ave NE and is adjacent to Sakuma Viewpoint. The site was purchased from the University of Washington as mitigation for impacts from the SR520 expansion project.

The project proposal includes the removal existing structures, on-site remediation, and habitat restoration. The park will also provide passive recreation opportunities, community gathering space, water access, and shoreline habitat areas.

The design team is currently creating a cleanup plan for the site and as well as several design scenarios for park programming. SPR and the design team will hold four public meetings throughout the design phase of the project. The park will start permitting, bidding, and construction in mid-2016 and is planned to open in late 2018.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the project. The purpose of this meeting is to review the pre-concept design for Portage Bay Park and provide feedback to SPR and the design team. At the meeting, the SDC voted 8-0 to approve the Portage Bay pre-design with recommendations.

Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

October 15, 2015

9:00 - 10:30 am

Type

CIP

Phase

Pre Concept

Previous Reviews

None

Presenters

Chris Jones

Walker | Macy

Lara Rose

Walker | Macy

David Graves

Seattle Parks and Recreation

Attendees

None

Summary of Presentation

Chris Jones and Lara Rose of Walker Macy presented the pre-concept design proposal for Portage Bay Park. Mr. Jones began with providing background information about the project site. As previously mentioned, the site was purchased by SPR from the University of Washington as mitigation for impacts from the SR520 expansion project. The University's police department currently operates a building on site, which will be removed during construction. As part of the public engagement process, the project team held two community outreach meetings and met with the University of Washington's Landscape Architecture Department in order to define a program for the site design.

Ms. Rose then provided more information regarding site context (see figure 1), followed by presenting desired vision and goals for park programming. The project site is one of only a few waterfront parks within the city limits. The location lends itself to offering surrounding residents and visitors access to the water. Because of the parks size and location near the U-District, UW, and Burke-Gilman trail, it is expected most visitors will arrive to the park by walking, biking, or using public transportation. The project team has given much thought as to how visitors – students from the University, residents, hospital workers, and families – will travel to and move within the waterfront park.

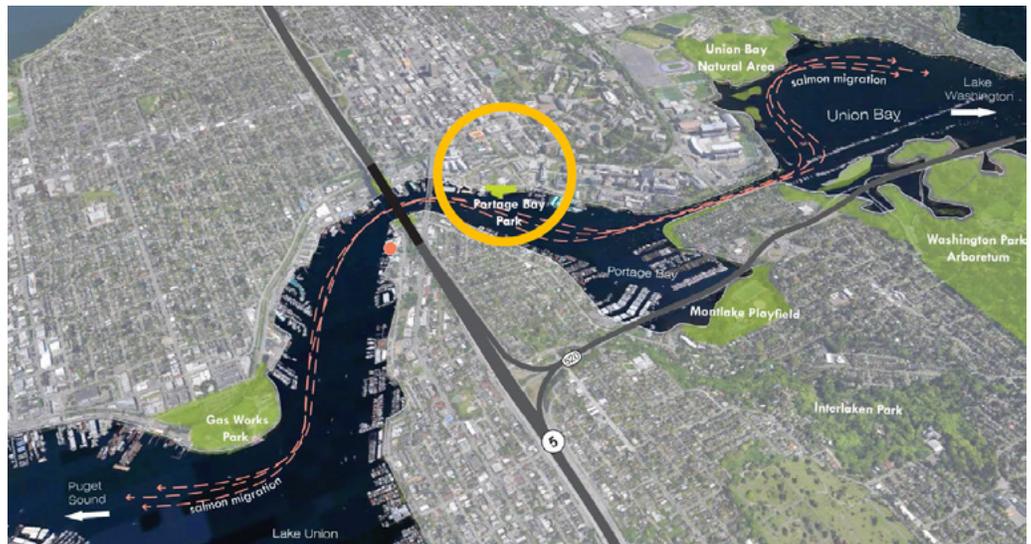


Figure 1: Proposed project context map



Figure 2: Proposed project site location

The 3-acre site, 1.65 of which is comprised of land, extends along Boat Street to the north, Portage Bay to the south, Sakuma Viewpoint to the east, and a commercial building to the west, as shown in figure 2. There is a 10-foot elevation change from Boat Street to the shoreline, which provides south facing views across the bay. The vision and goal of the site design is to reconnect visitors with the waterfront through the programming of gathering areas, passive recreation opportunities, and environmental restoration. The design team provided the following three design scenarios:

Scenario 1: Roll – This scenario includes a naturalized shoreline with a generous and gradual descent to the shoreline from Boat St. The proposed programs areas include soft edges, allowing for the different areas to blend together. Gathering space would be located near Sakuma Viewpoint along the eastern edge of the site, while passive recreation and shoreline habitat areas are located in the middle and western edge of the site. This scenario includes water access along the southeastern edge of the site as well as a small non-motorized watercraft put-in along the northwest edge of the site. The design will also retain a small, existing parking lot located on the northwestern edge of the site along Boat Street. See figure 3 for more detail.

Scenario 2: Fold – Unlike the previous scenario, scenario 2 offers a distinct relationship between programmable areas, which are separated by topography. Gathering space would be located near the northwest corner of the site along Boat Street and shoreline habitat areas are located on the eastern edge of the site, while passive recreation areas are located throughout the project site. Water access is located on the southwestern edge of the site and includes a small accessible beach as well as non-motorized watercraft put-in and tie-off areas. This scenario also proposes an option for an extended pier with a shade structure, which will provide more opportunities for water access. See figures 4 & 5 for more detail.

Scenario 3: Step – This scenario design provides programming that will step down to the water. The design provides a singular experience where programmable elements are not distinguished or separated. Instead, pathways will direct visitors to a gathering space at the center of the park, passing through several areas designated for shoreline habitat and passive recreation on both the western and eastern edges of the park. Water access is located along the southwestern edge of the site, while a non-motorized watercraft launch will be located along the northwestern edge of the site. The small vehicular parking lot will not be retained in this scenario. See figure 6 for more detail.

The design team emphasized they do not anticipate choosing one scenario. Instead, they will combine several positive design programs and elements from each scenario to create a preferred plan.



Figure 3: Proposed scenario 1 - roll



Figure 4: Proposed scenario 2 - fold option 1



Figure 5: Proposed scenario 2 - fold option 2



Figure 6: Proposed scenario 3 - step

After the presentation, David Graves, the project manager at SPR, stated that this is an exciting project for the city. Mr. Graves said that it isn't often SPR gets to develop a new shoreline park. He then said that the park will be a great piece of south facing shoreline property and SPR is excited to develop it.

Agency Comments

None

Public Comments

None

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Vision
- Circulation
- Programming

Vision

The Commission expressed its concern with the lack of clarity of the project team's vision for the park. Commissioners understand the park design, but feel there is a lack of hierarchy regarding the five vision statements that were presented. Some commissioners suggested that the Vision is about the connection of people to the water, and that the other vision statements are effectively sub-sets of that theme. In order to create an overall vision for the park design, Commissioners asked the design team to prioritize the vision statements, provide more information about who the park is being designed for, and to then develop a design plan.

Circulation

Although the Commission appreciated the variety of circulation options presented in each design scenario, they encouraged the design team to continue to think about the best way for visitors to move throughout the site. Commissioners suggested providing circulation options that encourage movement into gathering spaces and along the waterfront. The Commission appreciated the mid-block crossing along Boat Street, which will serve as an important connection between the park and university facilities. The Design Team and some Commission members also clarified that a continuous waterfront trail connection between the park and the Montlake Cut is not currently possible, due to private property ownership.

Programming

The Commission agrees the park programming should be guided by an overall vision for the project site. Commissioners stated the park should not be heavily programmed and that the park should be an active place. There was discussion about the size of gatherings the park is likely to serve, and general agreement that the park will most frequently serve multiple small groups (2-5) of people as opposed to large events. The commission encouraged the team to think critically about how the design of the programmable areas will influence the ability for visitors to gather and access the water. The Commission also encouraged the team to continue thinking of ways to incorporate publicly accessible restrooms as well as designing a shade structure that can be used year round.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for the Portage Bay Park pre-concept presentation. The commission appreciates your presentation of three alternatives and the scope of the program, all of which have various positive aspects. The SDC approved the pre-concept design for Portage Bay Park, 8-0, with the following recommendations:

- Refine vision to include a hierarchy of programmable goals for the project
- Consider reclaiming a portion of boat street and adding it to the park
- Continue to consider the feasibility of including public restrooms in the park programming
- Encouraged the continued design of a shade structure along the water front
- Recommend access to water via the pier, beach, and shoreline include the potential of swimming
- Include a mid-block crosswalk along Boat Street that connects current and future university facilities with the park
- Look for ways to increase physical and visual access to the lower beach