

LOWMAN BEACH RACKET COURT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON | AUGUST 2021



Seattle
Parks & Recreation



Seattle
Neighborhoods



SEATTLE
SPORTS COMPLEX
FOUNDATION





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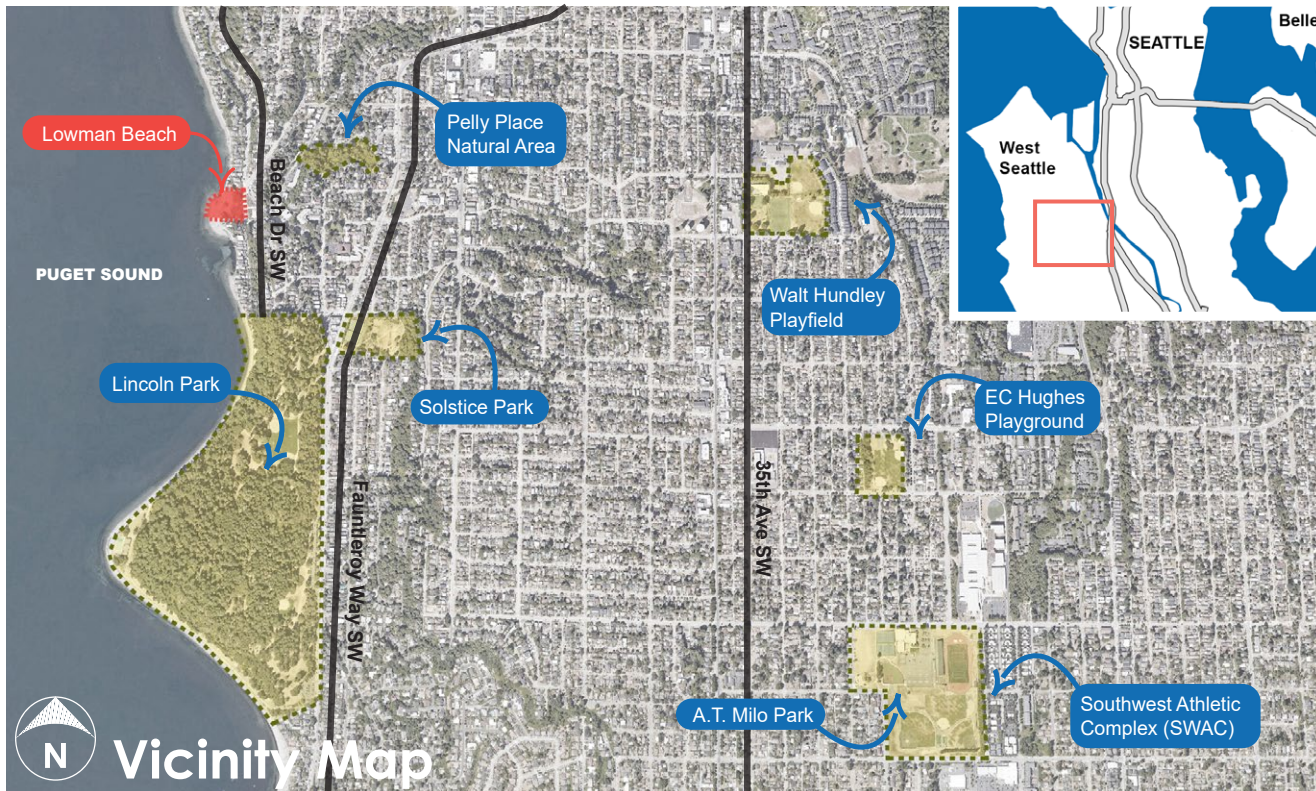
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HBB Landscape Architecture

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Executive Summary



Lowman Beach Park is a small waterfront park in West Seattle on Beach Drive SW, located just North of Lincoln Park. The park has a unique, natural character and features a publicly accessible beach, tennis court, swing set, open lawn, benches, gravel pathways and mature trees. Given its small size and proximity to other large parks, it is used primarily by residents of the immediate neighborhood.

The site was previously owned privately by the Yesler Logging Company and was gifted to the City of Seattle in 1909. The original seawall along and tennis court at Lowman Beach were constructed in the 1930s by the Works Progress Administration. The court is well-known in the local tennis community due to its unique waterfront location.

The existing tennis court at Lowman Beach will be removed in 2021 as part of a separate project to remove the existing failing seawall and restore the shoreline. In response to this planned removal, the Seattle Sports Complex Foundation (SSCF) initiated this project through a grant from the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (DON) to evaluate feasibility and develop concepts for a possible new racket court at Lowman Beach.

Three goals guided the project:

1. Explore options and feasibility of providing a new racket court at Lowman Beach Park;
2. Create a concept for possible future improvements at Lowman Beach Park; and
3. Minimize disturbance to existing park features.

Three virtual Open House meetings were held and two surveys conducted to engage the community in providing input and feedback on possible future improvements to the park. The two public surveys a total of 883 responses and 684 comments. Based on community and Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) responses, five possible options were considered:

- Concept 1: Full Size Multi-Sport Court
- Concept 2A: Pickleball Courts and Swings
- Concept 2B: Pickleball Courts and No Swings
- Concept 3: Lawn and Amenities, No Court
- No Additional Construction

After reviewing these options along with public feedback, the goals of the Seattle Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan, and other key factors, SPR determined that a new tennis court would not be the best fit at Lowman Beach Park.

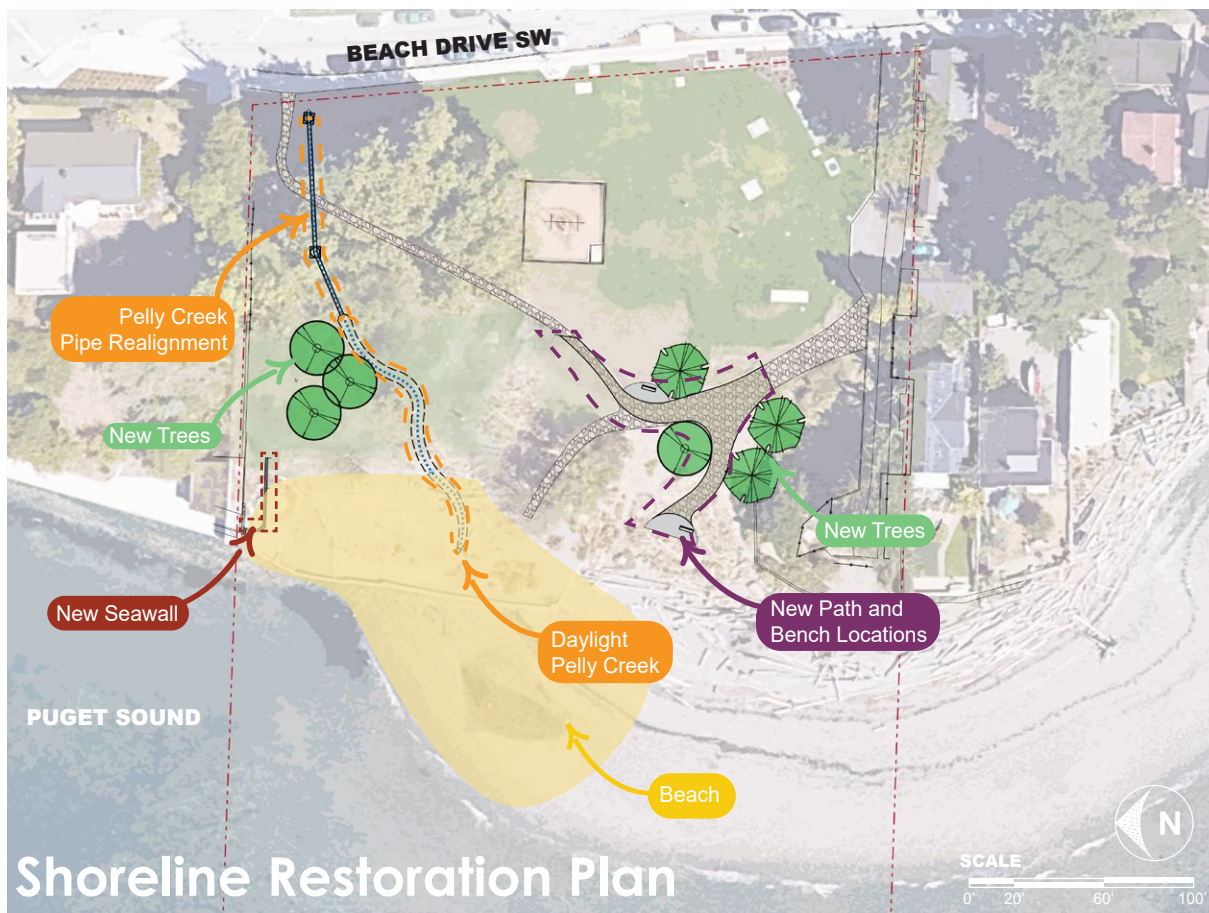
SPR did agree to give further consideration to pickleball courts (Concept 2A) should the community be interested in pursuing this option. As SPR does not have funding available for additional design or construction at Lowman Beach, community funding would be required to pursue this further. If pickleball courts are not pursued, no additional improvements will be considered at Lowman Beach Park, and only the improvements associated with the Seawall Project will be implemented.

Throughout the process, the community expressed appreciation the natural character of Lowman Beach Park and support for more racket courts in West Seattle. As a result, SPR and SSCF worked with Seattle Public Schools to re-open six tennis courts at the Southwest Athletic Complex to public use.

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to investigate the feasibility of providing a new racket court at Lowman Beach Park.

The existing tennis court at Lowman Beach will be removed as a part of the Seawall Project. Planned to begin construction in 2021, the Seawall Project will continue restoration work that began in the mid-1990s. The existing seawall will be removed, a portion of Pelly Creek will be daylighted, and the shoreline will be restored to a natural gravel beach condition. This project will be expanding the beach area and improve public access to the water. To perform this work, the existing tennis court at Lowman Beach must be removed.

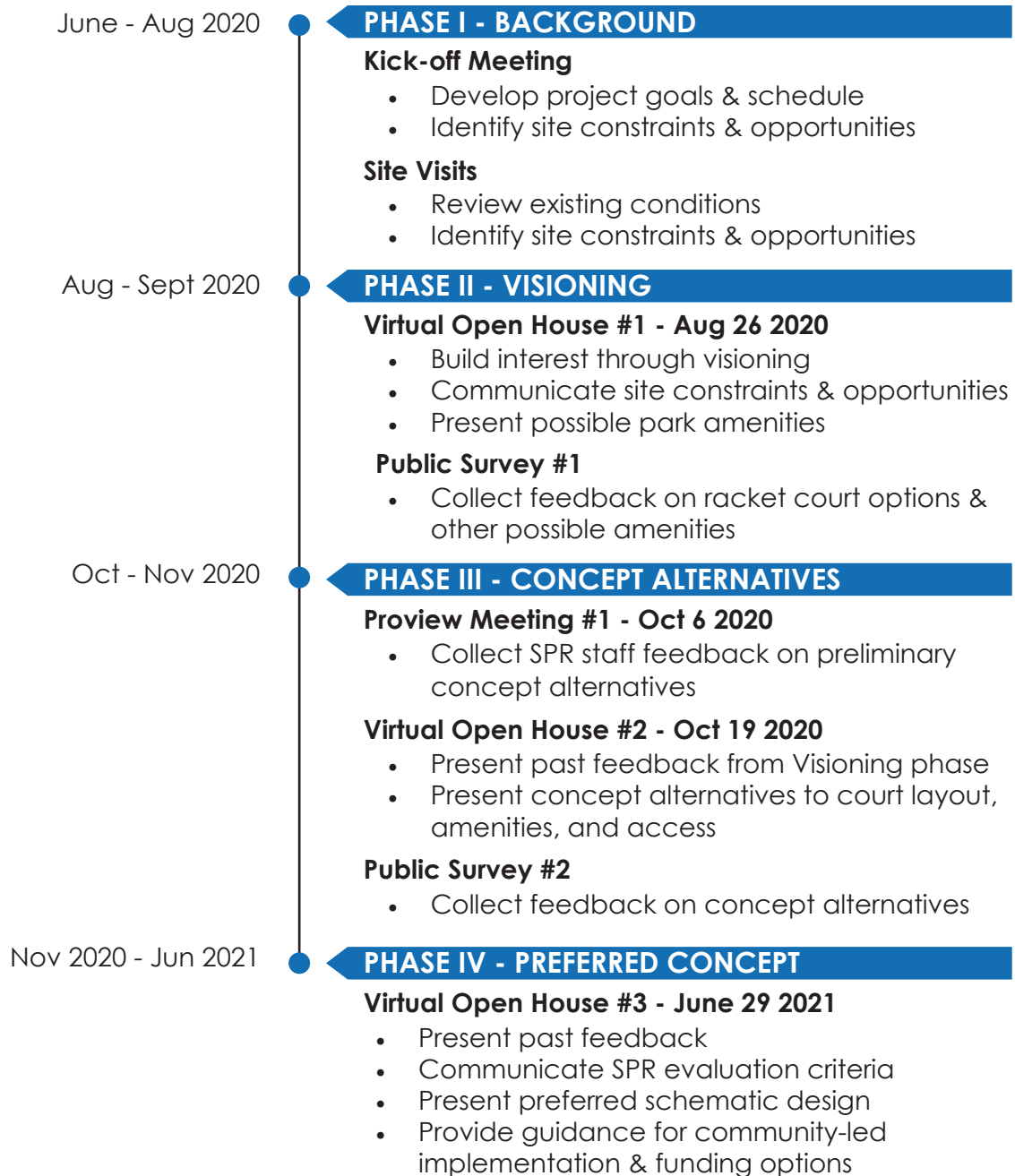


In response to the planned court removal, SSCF, a Washington non-profit dedicated to increasing access to tennis in West Seattle, initiated the Lowman Beach Racket Court project. SSCF applied for and received funding for this project through a Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (DON) grant and selected HBB Landscape Architecture through competitive bid as a consultant to perform this work.

PROJECT GOALS

1. Explore options and feasibility of providing a new racket court at Lowman Beach Park;
2. Create a concept for possible future improvements at Lowman Beach Park; and
3. Minimize disturbance to existing park features.

PROJECT SCHEDULE



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Due to the diversity of desires for Lowman Beach Park, effective community engagement was important to this project's success. Community outreach efforts included:

- Online public survey (through Survey Monkey)
- Virtual Open Houses with question/answer periods and recordings provided on SPR website
- Physical banner on site for announcements
- Flyers posted at the community bulletin board in NE corner of the park
- Department of Neighborhoods Monthly Newsletter email
- Department of Neighborhoods website and social media
- Seattle Parks & Recreation website and social media
- Mailers within mail radius of project site
- Flyers at local businesses (e.g. Starbucks, Thriftway)
- Updates provided at Morgan Junction Community Association meetings
- West Seattle Blog and other local news sources

In addition to the above, the community outreach strategy included reaching out to individual and stakeholder groups, including:

- Residents near project site
- Seattle Sports Complex Foundation (SSCF) email list subscribers
- Seattle Parks & Recreation Department
- King County Waste & Sewer Division (major stakeholder)
- Morgan Junction Association
- West Seattle Chamber of Commerce
- Friends of Lincoln Park
- Solstice Park Tennis Players
- Seattle Tennis Alliance
- Seattle Tennis Association
- Seattle Tennis and Education Foundation
- Rec Tennis (USTA Pacific Northwest)
- Fautleroy Community Association
- Arbor Heights Swim & Tennis Club Members
- Seattle City Council Lisa Herbold District #1
- Fautleroy YMCA
- Time for Pickleball!
- USAPA Pickleball

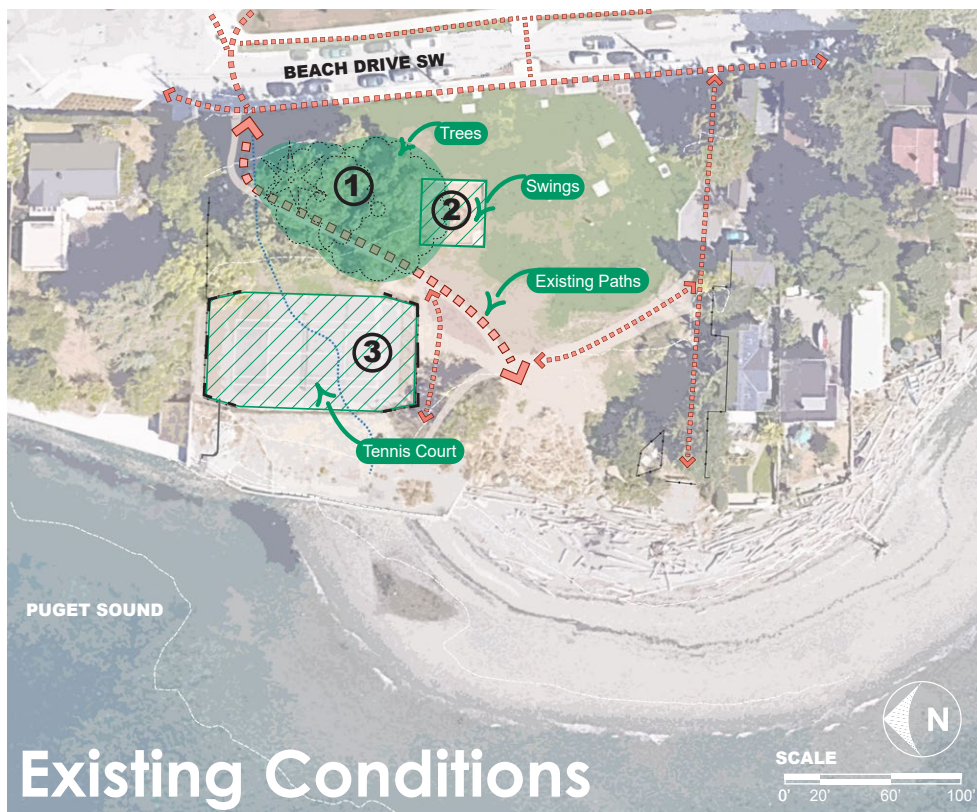
Phase I - Background

KICK-OFF MEETING

A virtual kick-off meeting between SSCF, SPR and HBB was held on July 8 2020. The purpose of this meeting was to review and discuss existing site conditions and impacts of the Seawall Project, identify community stakeholders and outreach strategies. The full agenda for this meeting can be found in the appendices.

SITE VISITS

Prior to the Virtual Open House meeting, site visits were performed by HBB Landscape Architecture on April 2 2020, May 12 2020 and July 14 2020 to document existing site conditions and identify potential site opportunities and constraints.



SITE CONSTRAINTS

During site inventory and analysis, the following were identified as major constraints in providing a new racket court at Lowman Beach Park:

Grades: steep slopes at the Northeast corner of the site limit the potential use of this area.

Accessibility: new courts and other park program improvements requires paved access that adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Utilities: King County has Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO), including a large below-grade vault and at-grade hatches located at the Southeast corner of the site. Based on discussion with King County staff, modifications to this infrastructure should be avoided and any new courts should be located outside the footprint of existing hatches. Refer to the appendices for additional information on the existing CSO utilities located on the site.

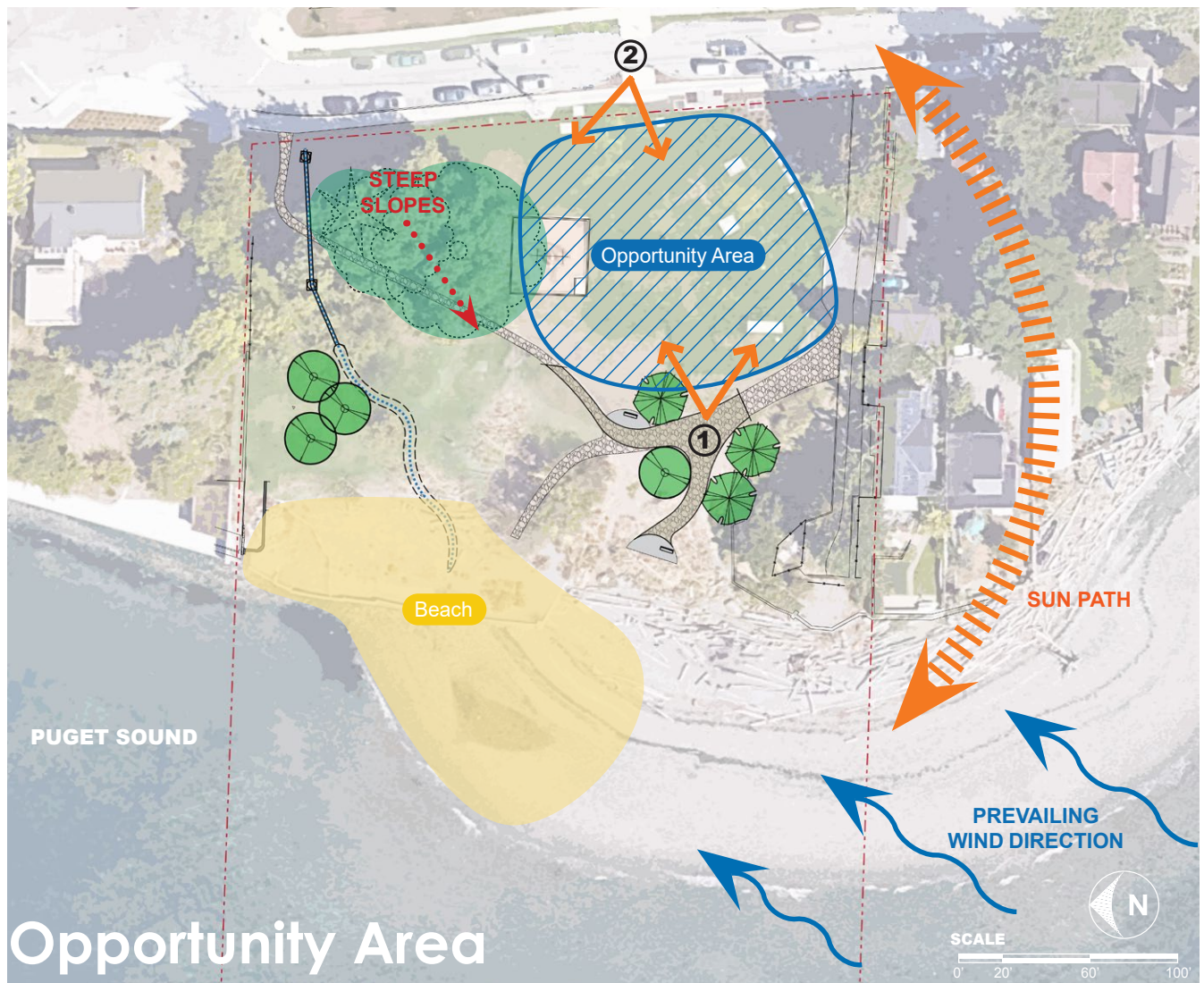


Environmental Resources: due to their ecological significance, direct impacts to the restored shoreline and creek areas should be avoided and indirect impacts minimized. This includes minimizing clearing and grading, preserving existing trees and vegetation, minimizing proposed impermeable surfaces, and treating storm run off on site. The three existing significant trees located near the swings should also be protected from impacts.

Racket Court Siting: the proposed location must be large and flat enough to accommodate the proposed court type. Wind direction should be considered and courts should be oriented in a North-South to prevent glare from the sun.

OPPORTUNITY AREA

Based on site constraints, the opportunity area for a possible future court was identified within the existing lawn area, uphill from the beach. This location minimizes impacts to the shoreline and creek restoration area, including minimizing the amount of clearing and grading required, while still providing an appropriate site for a racket court.



Phase II - Visioning

VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE #1

Virtual Open House #1 was held on August 26 2020. The meeting was hosted by SPR, SSCF and DON and was advertised to the public via e-mail distribution lists, websites, social media, newsletters, on-site flyers , and mailer distribution.

The purpose of this meeting was to:

- Introduce project, goals, and schedule
- Build momentum and interest through visioning and collection of shared memories
- Communicate the constraints and opportunities in locating a new racket court
- Present possible park amenities and racket court features
- Ask for feedback on park amenities and racket court options

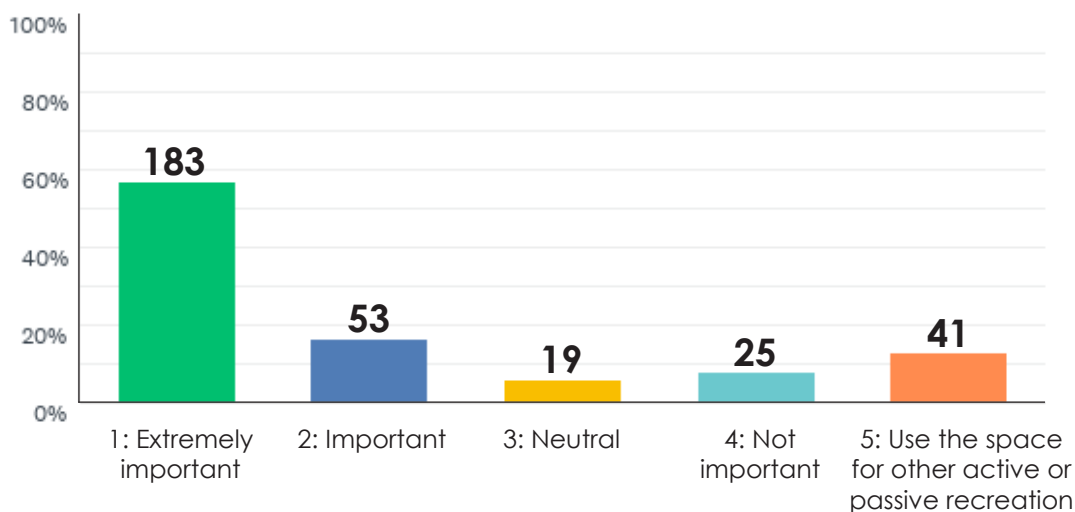
The full presentation slides and chat log can be found in the appendices.

PUBLIC SURVEY #1

At the conclusion of Virtual Open House #1, the community was invited to participate in a public survey to provide input on significant of existing features and possible future improvements to the park. 322 individuals responded to this survey and 174 written comments were received.

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of a new racket court at Lowman Beach:

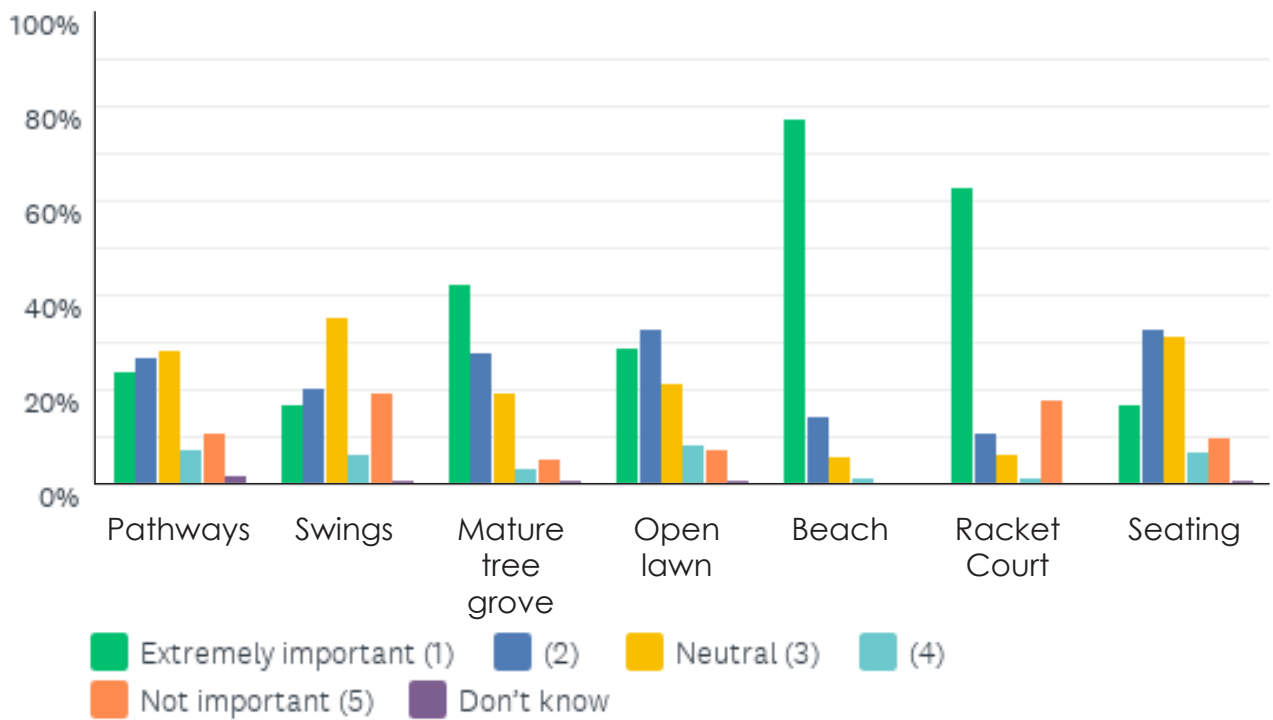
On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “extremely important” and 5 means “not important at all”, how important is it to provide a new racket court at Lowman Beach Park?



The majority of respondents did support a new racket court (tennis, pickleball, or both), but a significant minority of respondents (25%) ranked a new court as neutral, not important, or preferred no court. Many respondents wanted to keep or replace the existing swings and add new amenities, such as additional seating.

Many of the comments received from participants expressed a strong desire to preserve Lowman Beach Park's natural character, views, open space and beach access. In rating the importance of existing park amenities, 80% of respondents ranked the Beach as extremely important. The court, lawn and mature trees also ranked highly.

The following is a list of existing features in the park. Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means "extremely important" and 5 means "not important at all," please tell us how you would rate each feature at Lowman Beach Park. You can also select "don't know" if you are unsure.



A complete document containing all results and comment responses from Public Survey #1 can be found in the Appendices.

Phase III - Concept Alternatives

PROVIEW #1

Following Open House #1 and Public Survey #1, HBB worked with SSCF and SPR to develop concept alternatives informed by the community feedback received during the Visioning Phase.

On October 6 2020 a virtual review session was held via ProView to allow SPR staff to provide comments and feedback on the preliminary concepts. These comments addressed site programming, public safety, site accessibility, environmental considerations, and preservation of the existing character and views at Lowman Beach. This feedback was used to further refine the concepts prior to Virtual Open House meeting #2.

A full list of the comments and responses can be found in the Appendices.

VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE #2

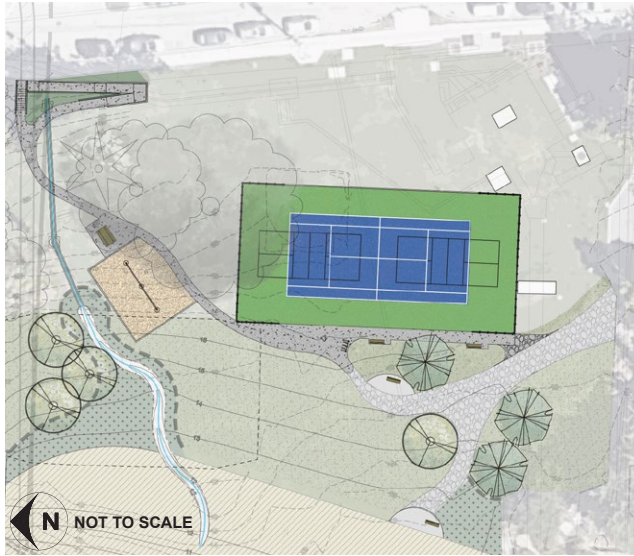
Virtual Open House #2 was held on October 19 2020. The meeting was hosted by SPR, SSCF and DON and was advertised to the public via e-mail distribution lists, websites, social media, newsletters, on-site flyers , and mailer distribution.

The purpose of this meeting was to:

- Summarize the results of Public Survey #1
- Present four possible design concepts for future improvements

The four design concepts on the following pages were presented for public comment. The full presentation slides and chat log can be found in the Appendices.

1. FULL SIZE MULTI-SPORT COURT



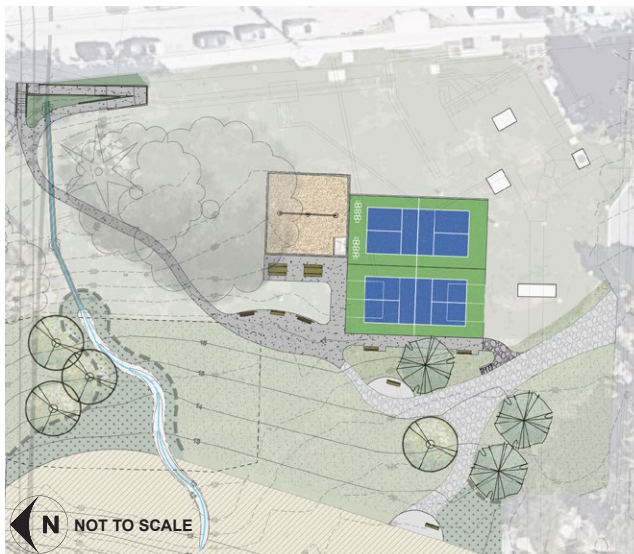
- New court with striping for tennis and pickleball courts
- New benches and picnic tables
- New ADA-compliant access from Beach Drive SW
- Relocated swings with ADA access

2A. PICKLEBALL COURTS AND SWINGS



- Two new pickleball courts
- New benches and picnic tables
- New ADA-compliant access from Beach Drive SW
- Re-surfaced swings with ADA ramp

2B. PICKLEBALL COURTS, NO SWINGS



- Two new pickleball courts
- New benches and picnic tables
- New ADA-compliant access from Beach Drive SW
- Swings removed

3. LAWN AND AMENITIES (NO COURT)



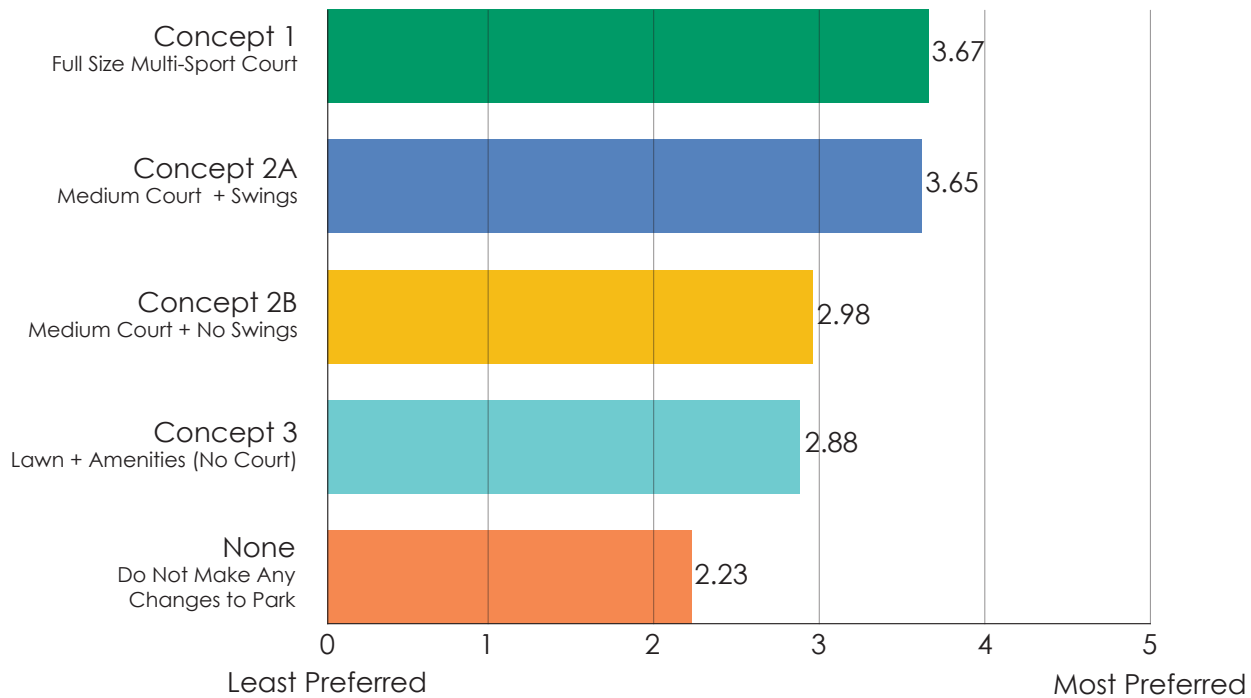
- No court
- New benches and picnic tables
- New ADA-compliant access from Beach Drive SW
- Re-surfaced swings with ADA ramp

PUBLIC SURVEY #2

At the conclusion of Virtual Open House #2, the community was invited to participate in a second public survey to provide input on the possible design concepts. 561 individuals responded to this survey and 510 written comments were received.

Respondents were asked to rank each of the concepts, plus a no change option, in order of preference. The results showed no single option as being widely supported by respondents. While Concepts 1 and 2A ranked the highest in a virtual tie, there was also substantial support for the two “no court” options: Concept 3 and for the no construction option.

Please rank the concepts in order of preference:
1 being most preferred, 5 being least preferred



A complete document containing all results and comment responses from Public Survey #2 can be found in the Appendices.

Phase IV - Preferred Concept

OPEN HOUSE MEETING #3

Virtual Open House #3 was held on June 29 2021 . The meeting was hosted by SPR, SSCF and DON and was advertised to the public via e-mail distribution lists, websites, social media and flyer distribution.

The purpose of this meeting was to:

- Review project history and context
- Summarize the results of Public Survey #2
- Share SPR's comments on the concepts presented Fall 2020
- Present preferred concept design
- Provide guidance on next steps if park improvements are to be pursued by the community

The full presentation slides and chat log can be found in the Appendices.

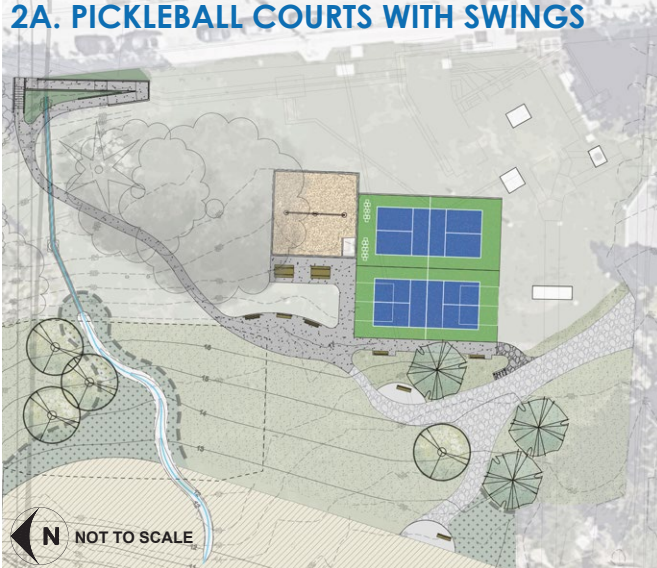
SEATTLE PARKS & RECREATION EVALUATION

SPR performed an internal review of the four design concepts that were presented to the public. Along with the community feedback received, SPR evaluated the four concepts based on the following criteria:

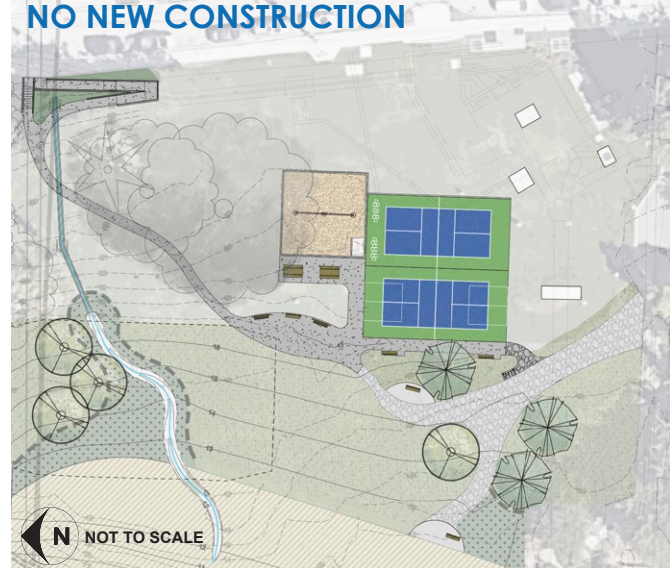
- Consistency with the SPR Strategic Plan goals to balance active and passive recreation
- Potential environmental impacts (e.g. grading & retaining walls)
- Park size, context and unique characteristics
- Preservation of water views and safe beach access
- Local availability of tennis and other sports courts nearby
- Infrastructure and maintenance requirements
- Minimizing park impacts while maximizing recreational benefits (e.g. multi-use pickleball court designs)

Through this evaluation SPR determined that a new tennis court at Lowman Beach Park, as shown in Concept 1, was not the best fit for Lowman Beach Park, and would not be supported. SPR would also not support any concept that removes the existing swing set, eliminating Concept 2B. SPR is open to further discussion and development of Concept 2A (Pickleball with Swings) or the No New Construction option.

2A. PICKLEBALL COURTS WITH SWINGS



NO NEW CONSTRUCTION



At this time, No SPR funding available to pursue detailed design, permitting or construction of any additional work at Lowman Beach Park. However, SPR would support community efforts to pursue Concept 2A using private funding, and will provide guidance to any interested community group.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND NEXT STEPS

Given SPR's decision on the Future of Racket Courts at Lowman Beach Park, there are 2 possible options for implementation:

Option 1: Pursue Concept 2A (Community-led Action)

If a community group chooses to pursue further development of Concept 2A to add pickleball courts at Lowman Beach Park, community fundraising will be required to fund additional phases, which would include:

- 1) Additional community outreach;
- 2) Additional reviews by SPR;
- 3) Detailed Design;
- 4) Permitting and approvals; and
- 5) Construction of an approved site plan.

The estimated total cost to implement this option is approximately \$450,000. This includes costs for design, permitting and construction. An alternate, option that excludes non-essential improvements such as furnishings and planting has a total estimated cost of approximately \$300,000. See appendices for the detailed cost estimates for each of these options. As SPR has no available for this project, alternative funding sources could be pursued by the community, including private donations, grants and partnerships with non-profits.

Option 2: No New Construction (No Action)

If the community chooses not to pursue a pickleball court, no additional construction will occur beyond the scope of the Seawall Project. The remainder of Lowman Beach Park will remain as an open lawn area with swings and gravel pathways. No cost is associated with this option.

OTHER PROJECT OUTCOMES

Throughout this project SPR heard community support and demand for racket courts in West Seattle. In response, SPR has partnered with SSCF to find other opportunities to increase local access to tennis and other racket sports at other locations in West Seattle. To date, this partnership has resulted in the following:

1. SPR has reached an agreement with Seattle Public Schools to re-open the six tennis courts at the South West Athletic Complex to public use.
2. Should the community raise the required funding to perform the work, SPR is open to considering the renovation of the two damaged courts at Lincoln Park, which are currently used for park operations and materials storage.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community response and participation on this project was overwhelming. Public surveys 1 and 2 received a combined 883 responses and 684 comments, and over 50 participants attended the final Virtual Open House. Additionally, over 150 additional comments were made across 12 blog posts hosted on the West Seattle Blog. The amount feedback generated by this project clearly demonstrates the significance and community passion for Lowman Beach Park.