

Meeting Notes

Madrona Beach Play Area Renovation - Meeting #1

August 28, 2019

6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Madrona Beach Park – 853 Lake Washington Blvd., Seattle

Attendees: Approximately 20 participants

Project Team	Libby Hudson, Planner; Shwu-jen Hwang, Sr. Landscape Architect; and Kent Scott, Capital Project Coordinator
Project	Madrona Beach Play Area Renovation will renovate the existing sand and water play area by restoring play features at the popular Lake Washington beach park. The renovation will enhance the water sand play experience and improve accessibility to the beach from the parking lot in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
Budget & Schedule	Budget: \$550,000 for planning, design and construction Schedule: Planning, Design & Bidding: Through Early Summer 2020 Construction: Later Summer through end of 2020 (beginning after Labor Day)

Introduction & Project Presentation

Libby Hudson presented the project overview explaining that the purpose of the renovation is to restore the play area functions, maintaining the theme of water, sand and wood play, and the important connection to the lake, and improve access to the play area for children of all abilities, including improving the accessible path of travel from the parking lot into the play area. During the meeting we will share ideas for enhancing the play area and discuss these. SPR also put out a survey on Survey Monkey for the community to share their thoughts and ideas about the renovation project. Libby showed the results of the survey so far (115 responses), noting the following:

- Play Features people liked best: Free sand and water play first, the open lawn second, and the big driftwood log third
- Landscape features liked best: Views of the lake were highest, with trees and plants and the seating wall (next to the walkway), a close second and third
- Activities people liked best: Swimming and playing in the lake is number one, followed by playing in the sand and enjoying the views, along with sitting and socializing
- For renovation, people ranked the following: Enhancing water and sand play at the beach was clearly top priority, followed by enhancing the natural plantings and providing accessible route to the water and beach play area.

Libby showed the original beach play area design overlaid with a “word cloud” derived from the open-ended question from the survey. (Please see the 3rd graphic in the presentation.) This summarizes people’s desire to:

- Retain the theme of natural rock, stone, wood and water play at the beach
- Make a larger sandy beach; maintain lines of sight and views of the lake and
- Keep the play connection with the lake

For those that were not able to attend the meeting, the online survey will remain open for another two weeks, until September 13th.

Shwu-jen Hwang presented the site analysis, explaining the original design concept involved a shoreline enhancement project incorporating a natural play beach of sand, rocks, logs and water. She described the original design components of the beach play area:

- Original concrete steps were removed, and a beach created with the play area blending into the shoreline environment
- The water pump and swale were a structural play component of the play area design
- Sand, rock and wood logs are natural play elements – including concrete-log crawl, polished basalt slide and long driftwood log

Existing Site Issues:

- Parking and pathways to the play area do not meet standards of the American's with Disability Act (ADA)
- The water pump has not worked in years
- The swale design is too shallow to function properly
- Pathway rock "islands" are overgrown with grasses and are a maintenance issue
- The play area beach is disconnected to the northern beach; boulders form an edge where the more formal concrete stairs lead to the old bathhouse
- SPR needs to study ADA access to restroom as part of the project to be sure that the renovation does not preclude future ADA pathway construction; cars overhand pedestrian walkway & impede travel

Site Observations/Opportunities:

- Views are enjoyed and valued by users year-round
- Beach is well used by all ages
- The grass area and big shade tree are well used and valued by visitor's
- Dance studio patrons use the main pathway to access the old bathhouse; the dance studio does performances in the grass under the big shade tree

Shwu-jen described design ideas for the play area renovation and showed image boards:

- Restore and enhance the water play activities; provide a new water pump – several images were presented to show ideas for enhancing water-play
- Provide accessible path to the play area and to the lake from the accessible parking spaces and improve these parking spaces to meet ADA standards
- Retain seating wall, add additional seating (along the main walkway leading to the Bathhouse); add more picnic tables closer to the water
- Replenish the sand and gravel to improve beach condition and area for sand play
- Add a few ornamental shade trees and incorporate native plantings along the shoreline
- Other ideas include:
 - Incorporating some musical play element into the play area – for children's play and also to enhance use by the neighboring dance studio, which performs in the grass area occasionally
 - Adding a wood boat play feature
 - Incorporating a water table to provide water play for kids of all abilities- near water pump
 - Relocating some logs and increasing the area for free sand play
 - Adding wheel stops to protect pedestrian walking space
 - Potential, if budget will allow – Consider removing more of the existing concrete stairs and create more beach area for sand play near the north end of the project site, just south of the bathhouse

Questions and Comments

Maintenance Concerns

The group discussed maintenance of the existing play area. Several people were involved in the original project and pointed out that it appears that SPR has not maintained the park as it was designed.

- Many shared concerns about continuous maintenance and the need to replenish the sand
- Original design was installed in 1995, and included sand only from the edge of walkway to the lake was all sand – no grasses
- For the first 2 to 3 years after installation in 1995, the area was maintained by volunteer group per agreement, then it was handed over to SPR for maintenance and the original design was not maintained as well – as a result, the stream bed filled in with sand and soil
 - During the last 15 years, this beach area has not been well maintained; grasses have popped up because the area was not maintained; SPR replenished the sand periodically, but quit doing it
- Whatever the design, be sure that maintenance is incorporated into the project, and make sure that the maintenance needs can be accommodated by the SPR crew
- Include sand maintenance as part of the project

Q: Has there been a study as to why the sand washed away?

SPR Response: Our maintenance crew has replenished the sand in the past and the SPR Aquatics section is concerned about the deposition of material at the foot of the diving platforms, but it's not clear if this is the reason. Staff will check to see if any study has been done regarding this issue.

Q: Can the sand be raked occasionally?

SPR Response: Maintenance is considered as part of the renovation project, and we will work with our maintenance crew to develop a design that the crew can maintain, which might include raking the sand during the high-use summer months

- Make sure that the design incorporates maintenance needs

Friends Group

- There is no “Friends of Madrona Beach” group and there needs to be one to help with maintenance Ideas were suggested for Madrona work group, Friends of Beach, etc.
- There are examples of volunteer groups supporting the nearby lakeside public spaces - Leschi community helped with plant restoration along the shore through volunteer work
- This area was included in the “String of Pearls” water access points along Lake Washington street ends

Environmental Concerns

Q: What is this project's role in salmon habitat & fish habitat? Have you considered improvement for salmon habitat? (tree overhang, woody debris stuck out, gravel) It doesn't show up in drawings that SPR is presenting for this renovation.

SPR Response: The primary objectives for this project are to renovate the existing beach play area and provide ADA access. For small maintenance projects like this, SPR tries to incorporate habitat improvements where we can, recognizing that this is intended to be a swimming beach. We are looking at whether we include some shoreline vegetation along the southern portion of the play beach where the pathway leads from the upper parking to the beach.

Play Elements Considerations

- Many did not support incorporating a play boat if it was contrived; they preferred natural play element
- There was a mixed response to introducing music to the site
 - Some did not like the music element and thought it would be better to spend money for maintenance
 - Others liked the idea of a music element and the opportunity to collaborate with dance performance
 - Some felt that the music element needs to be a natural component reflecting the lakeside location

Beach Use

- The beach has multiple use during different hours and times of a day. There are bonfire-gatherings during winter
- Need better location for garbage etc.

Plantings

- Native plants should be incorporated into the design
- Q: Can you plant Madrona trees for Madrona Park?
SPR Response: Yes, we will incorporate appropriate trees and will consider where Madrona trees would be most appropriate.
- Q: Can you restore the area to sand with no grass?
SPR Response: We always consider maintenance needs as part of our process. We will review the design and consider appropriate planting locations and work with our maintenance crew on how sand can be maintained.

Overall Design Comments/Suggestions

- Do not want items that are not natural; Keep it natural and encourage kids interaction with nature
 - Keep the play area elements – sand, water and wood; keep it natural and don't include structures that are not natural
 - Best beach in the central area – used by people from all over; people come by bus to visit this park
 - This park does not get much graffiti, and partly due to the materials, which are more natural and do not lend themselves to graffiti; keep it that way
 - Keep the design clean and functional
 - Focus of the play area should be natural play with minimum built elements
 - The priority is to remove more concrete and restore the shore. The music element is not the priority
- Q: Will SPR consider consolidating the upper (wider) path and lower path into one?
SPR Response: This suggestion requires more study of grades (accessibility), prioritized items, and budget feasibility.
- Q: Can SPR preserve the tiles made by kids along the curb and embedded in the water channel?
SPR Response: We will try to preserve these, but depending on the construction, some may get damaged during the process.
- Removing more concrete steps and creating more beach area would be wonderful; that was our vision in 1995 Neighborhood Matching Funds (NMF), but did not have the dollars
 - It's nice! Thank you for doing this.

Next Steps: The next community meeting is planned for Wednesday, October 30, 2019 from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Spectrum Dance Studio in the old bathhouse next to the play area – 800 Lake Washington Blvd.