

# Seattle Public Utilities - South Recycling and Disposal Station Redevelopment Project

## Summary of Community Tree Discussion and Mitigation Meeting

### South Transfer Station, June 29, 2016

#### **Project Background**

SPU will redevelop Seattle's former South Recycling and Disposal Station site (5th Avenue S and S Kenyon Street) beginning in 2017. This 10-acre site will be modified to include a recycling and reuse center, solid waste trailer parking and a dewatering facility, and will incorporate the existing household hazardous waste facility. Redevelopment of the site will require tree removal from the SPU-owned property, which also sits on the site of an existing landfill.

In an attempt to explore potential tree mitigation locations and options for the South Recycling and Disposal Station Redevelopment (SRDS) project, three members of the SPU project team met with Paulina Lopez of DRCC and Linn Gould of JHA on June 29, 2016.

#### **Existing Site Conditions**

The site includes 72 trees, 12 of which are considered "exceptional," four other are 2 feet or greater in diameter, and 12 other are considered to be in poor health. These findings are a result of an arborist's report on the property.

#### **Requirements for Tree Replacement**

- The Mayor's Executive Order 03-05 outlines tree replacement requirements, which can be summed up as a 2 for 1 tree replacement:
  - City departments "...replace every tree that is removed from City-owned land in Seattle with two new trees" and plant "...within two years of the removal."
  - "...make every effort to plant replacement trees in close proximity to the location of the original tree."
  - "...if planting is not possible at the same site or in the vicinity, replacement trees may be located elsewhere in Seattle."
- Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) Tree Protection Code (SMC 25.11.090) outlines tree protection code and permit requirements for removed trees. For trees approved for removal, new trees for mitigation are preferred to be placed in the public property.

#### **Overall Tree Mitigation Design Approach**

- As part of design of the redevelopment of the site, SPU will try to preserve trees where possible. High priority is placed on the grove of "exceptional" trees located near the existing Household Hazardous Waste facility on the site. Removed trees will be replaced with new trees that meet code requirements.
- There is site restriction associated tree replacement: New trees (and other deep-rooted plants) cannot be planted onsite because the site is on top of an existing landfill. A landfill cap is placed onsite to provide a protection barrier between the landfill and people/environment, in accordance with Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) regulations. Deep-rooted plants has the strong potential to damage the landfill cap, therefore Ecology restricts planting of new trees and other large plants onsite.

- As a result, SPU will research locations for tree replacement in the project site vicinity, using the following criteria:
  - An area in the vicinity of the project site, preferred on public property
  - An area where development is not scheduled to occur.
  - An area where there is least potential for tree damage or mortality.
  - An area accessible for watering and maintenance.
- SPU will work with other City departments and will seek community input from the project's community stakeholder group and others to help identify locations and identify the mitigation plan.

### **Tree Mitigation Exploration Work to Date**

- The SRDS Project team has met with other SPU project managers, Seattle Parks & Recreation, Seattle Department of Transportation, Office of Sustainability and Environment, and other agencies to explore potential tree planting locations in the South Park neighborhood
- Based on City contacts associated with urban forestry, the City has recently embarked in a campaign to increase tree planting within the South Park neighborhood. Most street locations for tree plantings in the neighborhood have been identified and planted with a tree or the location is considered infeasible (i.e. underground utilities, adjacent resident does not want a new tree in front of residence, inaccessible for maintenance, etc.)
- Project team has done a field reconnaissance and found some potential locations in the residential neighborhood, but also learned SDOT likely did not plant in these locations because the adjacent resident did not want a tree planted there.
- Project team met with SRDS Project community stakeholder group to discuss potential tree planting locations and mitigation options. Refer to Stakeholder Meeting #3 Summary.
- After speaking with a number of contacts within the City, a number of trees can be placed in various public areas in the neighborhood, including the South Park Community Center, right-of-way along West Marginal Way, and other public areas. Some existing trees in the neighborhood have also been identified as high risk and in need of restoration.

### **Discussion on Feasibility of Green Screens**

- JHA is working with DIRT Corp to construct a green screen at the CDL Recycling facility at Georgetown in summer 2016. This project is a pilot project for JHA. JHA has conducted project management for the work, including community outreach, contract negotiations, and procurement.
- JHA stated that CDL agreed to have the green screen at their facility, and DIRT Corp will maintain the green screen. Plant establishment for green screen is similar to tree establishment, per JHA. Maintenance is minimal after establishment.
- Is there an option to construct green screens on the SRDS project site?
  - Potential constraints to onsite green screens, including:
    - Community feedback was that they want to see what's going on inside the facility, have a fence that does not conceal what activities are occurring on site
    - Any potential green screen would be limited in terms of type (the roots wouldn't be able to grow down very far, for landfill cap-related protection reasons)
    - Cannot create wells in landfill cap for deep-rooted vegetation since stormwater will pool in these area.
    - Plant selection for the green screen is also restricted by the use of the site: need to avoid bird/vector attractants for a solid waste handling facility near an airport.

- The Project will review how high an approved plant will grow onsite that can create a modified green screen given all other requirements. Otherwise, green screens may not be feasible on the project site.
- Are green screens an option in other areas of the neighborhood?
  - Project is currently prioritizing planting new trees over installing green screens to meet code requirements. However, options are being explored at this time.
  - Linn and Paulina are in favor of green screens as a potential mitigation option, if enough trees can't be planted in the neighborhood.
  - They mentioned the South Park Library as a potential location for green screens. Linn previously contacted Seattle Public Library (SPL) about the idea, however idea has not been accepted.
- Project will need to assess the feasibility to contract out planting of trees or other work. Project's feasibility review will also include scope limitation.

### **Community-specific Tree Planting Strategy**

- Linn and Paulina want to be strategic when coordinating neighborhood tree-planting efforts around South Park. They will coordinate with each other and also Cari Simson at Urban Systems Design for overall preference (if possible) on tree planting locations. Their strategy will be focused on overall strategic neighborhood/future goals including public health, environmental concerns/pollution, health equity, and greenery
- Per Linn, there are specific corridors in South Park that have high rates of childhood asthma.

### **Happy/Scary Trail Feasibility**

- Paulina asked about reviewing the trail corridor between South Park Library and Concord Elementary School as a potential location for tree planting. There have been trail cleanup efforts in the past but work is not sustainable.
- Is this trail a potential site for tree mitigation/environmental improvements?
  - Parcels along this trail are owned by WSDOT, SDOT, and 2 private owners (needs verification)
  - Restoration, green screen, tree planting are all requested for review at this location
  - It is not known what plans, if any, there is for this area by property owners.
- Project will need to assess the feasibility to contract out planting of trees or other work. Project's feasibility review will also include scope limitation.

### **Next Steps**

- The Project is updating the design with input from community stakeholder group and others. Design is scheduled to be near complete by end of 2016, with construction currently starting sometime in 2017.
- Input from meeting will be used for further review for tree mitigation. Project will review its feasibility, scope limitation, and code requirements.
- Project will review feasibility of green screen on project site, or discuss its infeasibility to the group.
- The Project will reconvene with Linn and Paulina late summer/early fall 2016 to discuss updates on the tree mitigation prior to the next community stakeholder group meeting.

## **Meeting Invitees and Attendance**

- Kay Yesuwan, SPU Project Manager
- Rachel Ramey, SPU Communications
- Vicky Raya, SPU Environmental Justice & Service Equity Rep
- Paulina Lopez, DRCC
- Linn Gould, JHA

END OF NOTES