

Smith Cove Park

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Commissioners Present

Ross Tilghman, Chair
John Savo, Vice Chair
Lee Copeland
Ben de Rubertis
Rachel Gleeson
Thaddeus Egging
Evan Fowler
Laura Haddad
Brianna Holan
Rick Krochalis

Commissioners Excused

Project Description

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) is proposing to develop Smith Cove Park, located along Elliott Bay between Magnolia Hill and 23rd Ave. W, and south of the Magnolia Bridge. The site, acquired by SPR through the Pro Parks Levy, was initially developed as an open play field. The current proposal expands the park from 4.9 acres to 10 acres, through the acquisition and development of a parcel between 23rd Ave. W and Pier 91, and will include space for active and passive recreation. A King County combined sewer overflow (CSO) facility is located on the eastern portion of the site and will be fenced from off from the park. The fenced site includes an underground tank, equipment building, service roads, and planting beds.

In 2014, the Friends of Smith Cove Park (FoSCP) community group received a matching fund grant from the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) to develop conceptual plans for the park site. FoSCP retained Berger Partnership to conduct community outreach and develop conceptual design plans for the park. SPR is using work generated by Berger to create a framework for the park programming and design. In 2016 SPR hired Gustafson, Guthrie, Nichol (GGN) as the design consultant for Smith Cove Park. The budget for the project is \$6 million, with \$3.9 million reserved for construction. The park plan developed by GGN includes shoreline restoration, access to the waterfront, restoration of playfields, and active and passive recreation opportunities.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) third review of the Smith Cove Park project. During today's meeting, the SDC reviewed the schematic design phase of the project. The SDC voted, 6-4, to approve the schematic design phase with several conditions and recommendations.

Recusals and Disclosures

There were no recusals or disclosures.

February 1, 2018

9:00 - 11:00 am

Type

CIP

Phase

Schematic Design

Previous Reviews[01/19/17, 10/01/15](#)**Presenters****Tess Schiavone**

GGN

David Graves

SPR

Attendees**Steve DeForest**

Resident

Nanxi Dong

GGN

Rikerrious Geter

GGN

Alex Johnston

Resident

Kathryn Miller

GGN

Sara Zewde

GGN

Summary of Presentation

Tess Schiavone, of GGN, and David Graves, of SPR, presented the schematic design phase of the Smith Cove Park project. The project team provided an update on the current site conditions, design, phasing, budget and community outreach. The current project site includes two parcels, referred to as the west and east parcel, which are bisected by 23rd Ave W. The west parcel includes an existing playfield area and is accessible to the public, while the east parcel is currently fenced off and inaccessible to the public. The project site also includes shoreline along the eastern and southern edge. Due to budget constraints, the project will be constructed in two phases. The phase I design will focus primarily on the development of the west parcel, while the east parcel will be developed during phase II. This will allow more time for the project team to design and secure funding for shoreline restoration as well as for King County to do maintenance on their CSO facility, which is located on the east parcel. Funding has been secured for phase I of the park development. Funding for phase II of the design is still uncertain, but will potentially include a partnership between the City of Seattle and the Port of Seattle to provide shoreline restoration on the eastern and southern edge of the project site.

The team then provided a brief overview of the updated design for the project vision as well as the proposed design for phase I. The project vision includes the design and construction of the entire project site and includes elements such as sports fields, off-leash area, volleyball courts, vegetated berm, shoreline habitat restoration, non-motorized boat launch area, and water access. Phase I includes developing elements on the west parcel such as the sports fields, off-leash area, volleyball courts, small vegetated berm, and walking paths. Phase I design will also provide stair access to the shoreline and water near the southeast corner of the east parcel. The remaining portion of the east parcel will not be redeveloped until phase II. *See figures 1 & 2*

As a part of the sustainability strategy, the team will use reclaimed logs and eco blocks throughout the site. Reclaimed will hold pathway edges and will serve as a seating element throughout the park. Eco blocks will be used as low site walls and will include a cedar top to double as benches.

Agency Comments**None****Public Comments**

Steve DeForest, FoSCP, Stated the FoSCP group includes members who have differing opinions about the development plan for the park. Mr. DeForest said he is disappointed that phase I does not include major elements and that he is also very skeptical there will be funding for phase II. Mr. DeForest then stated that the different groups soliciting support for elements that will be a part of the phase I plan will not spend their time to help raise funds for the development of phase II. Mr. DeForest also voiced his concern that future plans for habitat restoration will be delayed due to King County conducting maintenance on their CSO facility. Mr. DeForest had envisioned this as a signature park due to its location north of Elliott Bay. He then voiced his disappointment in the project, which he feels does not rise to the vision presented earlier in the design phase.

Alex Johnston, FoSCP, commented that a group of FoSCP members are concerned with the development of the sports field. Mr. Johnston claimed that the majority of public comments received addressed the redevelopment of the sports field. Mr. Johnston then commented that while he understands the disappointment members have with not developing the east parcel, the majority of the public supported the design and construction of the sports field during phase I. Mr. Johnston also commented that the proposed plan provides for a better playing surface and more playing time.



Figure 1: Updated vision plan



Figure 2: Updated phase I plan

Summary of Discussion

The commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Phasing, prioritization, programming, and funding
- Overall design and integration
- Sustainability and accessibility

Phasing, prioritization, programming, and funding

The SDC is very concerned with having 23rd Ave W bisect the park site. Several commissioners stated their disappointment that the road cannot be moved, which is owned by the City, to the west of the park site. The commission then agreed that the location of the road resulted in many accessibility, safety, and circulation issues they had with the design of the park including the location of drop off points, proposed fencing, and potential conflicts with people chasing sports balls into the road. The SDC then agreed it should review the design based on how it responds to the constraint of the road. Commissioners agreed the road should be designed to appear much more integrated with the park design and should include traffic calming measures, such as raised crosswalks and pedestrian scaled materials and textures, along the entire section cutting through the park site. The Commission is also concerned with the current placement of crosswalks along the road, which do not align with many elements in the phase I design. Commissioners agreed the crosswalks should align with park elements on both sides of the road. The Commission also thought it unfortunate the proposed fencing for the sports fields aligned with the road, which would reinforce the edge between the two parcels.

The SDC is also concerned with funding issues for all future phases of the park design. Commissioners agreed they still did not have a clear understanding of the funding and work plan for the design of phase II. The SDC then made a condition that the project team provide a work plan of phase II for review that includes schedule, scope and potential funding with an emphasis on seeing the entire park completed

The commission then discussed how the design of phase I aligns with the proposed vision that was approved on January 5th, 2017. While commissioners were excited to hear about a potential partnership between SPR and the Port of Seattle to fund shoreline restoration during phase II of the project, they agreed the updated design for phase I lacked sufficient access to the water and surrounding views, which were highlighted as major elements in the overall vision for the park. The commission felt the absence of water access and access to views in phase I underdelivered on the previous vision approved by the commission. They also commented that it is difficult to understand why two major elements such as water access and access to views would not be a part of phase I of the design. Commissioners then commented they would feel better about including water access and views in phase II of the design if future funding was already secured.

Overall design and integration

The SDC had several comments regarding the overall proposed design and integration within the surrounding area. The Commission recommended the project team return with more information on bicycle circulation and parking. Commissioners were encouraged to hear the project team is working with Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to include traffic calming measures along the entire road instead of focusing on smaller areas along 23rd Ave W. Several commissioners encouraged on-street parking be relocated from the westside to the east side of the road during phase I of the design. The SDC then recommended the project team provide more information on how to provide traffic calming measures along the roadway in phase I of the design. The commission is concerned with the height of the proposed fencing in areas between the field and road. Commissioners encouraged the project team to consider reorienting the south playfield, which would eliminate the need for a 15 ft. high fence between the field and road and while also reducing the potential for sports balls going into the road.

The SDC appreciated the use of a berm to provide views of Elliott Bay, Downtown, and Mt. Rainier. Commissioners also appreciated the plant palette and use of logs to provide low impact seating areas near the field. Several commissioners then commented that they are seeing a rise in the inclusion of off-leash areas in park designs. The commission questioned the location of the proposed off-leash area and encouraged the project team to consider moving the element away from the shoreline. The SDC then expressed its desire for additional elements in phase I that would provide greater access to views. Commissioners encouraged the project team to give consideration to the shaping and length of the proposed berm. Several commissioners provided additional encouragement for the project team to extend the berm further to the southeast of the west parcel if phase II of the development never

occurs in order to provide adequate space for park users who want to enjoy passive recreation opportunities.

Sustainability and accessibility

The SDC agreed with the project team's sustainability strategy. Commissioners commented that while grass lawns are the least sustainable elements of park designs, they appreciated the proposed drainage plan for the lawn area. The commission then discussed potential accessibility issues. Commissioners voiced their concern with the limited access to the water. Commissioners are also concerned with the lack of proposed ADA parking and strongly encouraged the project team continue to work with SDOT to provide an adequate number of ADA parking spaces.

The SDC then addressed access to views of the surrounding area. Commissioners are concerned the amount of proposed elements that promote active recreation and, again, discussed the opportunity to expand the berm in order to provide greater access to views of the surrounding area. The SDC then discussed if the project team should remove at least one programmed element from the phase I design to provide more space for non-sport opportunities. Commissioners initially discussed having the project team move either the proposed off-leash area or volleyball programming from phase I to phase II of the park design, but then agreed that the off-leash area should be moved to phase II of the park design. The SDC then developed a condition for the project team to move the off-leash area programming element to phase II of the park design in order to enhance park access for non-sports activities during phase I. The SDC also made it a condition for the project team to eliminate the proposed netting around the volleyball area in order to enhance park access for non-sports activities during phase I. Commissioners agreed this would allow greater flexibility and increased cohesiveness in the design of phase I of the park.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation of schematic design for Smith Cove Park. The commission appreciated the project team's effort to capture views of Elliott Bay, Downtown, and Mt. Rainier. The SDC voted, 6-4, to approve the schematic design phase of Smith Cove Park with the following conditions:

1. Prior to returning to the SDC, provide a work plan of phase II for review that includes schedule, scope and potential funding with an emphasis on seeing the entire park completed
2. Move the off-leash area programming element to phase II design and eliminate the proposed netting around the volleyball area in order to enhance park access for non-sports activities

The SDC also providing the following recommendations:

1. Provide more information on bicycle circulation and access as well as vehicular parking
2. Better analyze how to provide traffic calming measures along 23rd Ave W in phase I of the design
3. Explore reducing the fencing along the along 23rd Ave W at the soccer fields

The following are statements from commissioners who voted against the schematic design phase for Smith Cove Park:

John Savo - The priorities are all wrong for phase I. In terms of budget and design, the project didn't get there, which might have been for reasons that are outside the control of the design team. I think it is very unfortunate if only phase I, as we see it today, were built on the project site. I am very concerned there is no guarantee that phase II will be built.

Rick Krochalis - I was not on the commission when it reviewed the concept design. There seems to be too much in flux here for me to support it. I appreciate the conditions set by the commission during today's meeting, but I cannot support it at this point.

Ben de Rubertis - So far the project does not deliver on a cohesive vision nor an implementation plan that delivers on the vision the SDC voted on in January of 2017. I think city residents deserve a park that delivers on the vision we saw last time.

Rachel Gleeson - I agree with everything that has been said so far. I think the presence of the road through the site creates many of the unsatisfactory elements we are responding to. It is very unfortunate the road has not been integrated in the design in a way that it isn't noticeable. I also agree that the programming in phase I is so factionalized that we are missing the benefit of having a full park.