

Seattle Parks and Recreation  
Viewpoint Advisory Team  
Meeting minutes

October 10, 2018

Viewpoint Advisory Team  
Seattle Parks and Recreation Administration Building  
Park Board Room  
100 Dexter Ave. N, Seattle  
6:00 pm- 8:30 pm

<b>Members:</b>	<b>Present (bold)</b>	<i>Absent (italic)</i>
	<b>Michael Austin</b>	<b>William Lowe</b>
	<b>Weston Brinkley</b>	<b>Joanna Nelson de Flores</b>
	<i>Suzie Burke (invited)</i>	<b>Laila Pajimula</b>
	<i>Bruce Carter</i>	<i>Dorian Savon Magee-Petty</i>
	<b>Karen Daubert</b>	

6:00 pm Call to order

Introductions

**Kathy Nyland, SPR, Facilitator**

Started with a recap and a check-in Group is at half way mark- two meetings held and two more to go. Up to this point, have learned about the history of our viewpoints, the criteria, the baseline of operations and some basics about maintenance. SPR is facing a situation where response is quickly becoming routine. Practices have evolved as far as maintenance: we can restore and enhance as well as preserve and protect. SPR wants to be mindful of the environment as well as approaching the work with a lens of equity.

Check-in: How are people feeling about where this groups is as far as the directive given. Are you feeling ready about developing recommendations? And do you have a big idea?

Round table discussion followed

- Feels comfortable starting discussions around high-level recommendations. Has one idea about maintenance costs, especially around one park in particular.
- Referred to a communication that was sent to group (open up designation process). Felt we weren't talking about a lot of money and bottom line should be able to do this. Generic VMP, in agreement about the contents. Approve some model of plans. A-ha moment came with the Equity Map, none in highest disadvantaged neighborhoods. Have great opportunity to take a step back. The other a-ha was about Magnolia and their desire to add two parks and comparing it to their designated which is essentially an empty parking lot (Ursula) prompted me to review history. Thinks we need to take a step back and review the 16 designated sites and maybe that requires more time, more meetings. Make sure aligned with Olmsted process and the Park Board. Will be strongly advocating for the second phase of the conversation because the list of 16 is absurd.
- Feels prepared for broad policy discussions. Likes the idea of developing a model of a VMP, way to talk policy and applicability- how it would work on the ground. Interested to hear more about the money. While sees value in Equity Map, and perhaps viewpoints are not where they should be, but

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we are not tasked with that front. Don't think this group should determine what is magnificent and what is not. That's a bigger process, and different. Goal to achieve something valuable and set-up for next piece, whatever that may be.

- Feels prepared to have a discussion and start making recommendations. Thinking about the directive, recommendations and framework. And part of the recommendations may be what's next. We could advocate for a part two. But focus is doing proper upfront restoration care so long-term care is more effective.
- Applauds groups efforts. Mentioned morning news of viewpoint story. Interesting challenge is to look our neighborhoods and how they define viewpoints. Spirited conversation narrowed down to action. Solid input part of the process.

KN: 16 was SPR's starting point. Future conversations could accommodate that. SPR currently cannot manage the 16 we have, and they want to. The desire is to develop recommendations that will to success and then scale that effort out. Budget is not associated with this effort. The effort is focused on actions based on the recommendations, budgets will be developed.

Q: Restoration costs, are these CIP? Is column a tool to determine which sites need additional expenditures?

A: This are quick estimates. Could be CIP, General Fund, Park District?

**Patti Bakker, SPR, Green Seattle Partnership (GSP)** GSP is focused on restoring city's forested parklands. Will talk about managing that in conjunction with city's viewpoints. 11% of city's land is in parklands, more than 6,500 acres. Of that, 2,500 acres are forested or natural areas that are slated for restoration under GSP. GSP is a public-private partnership with City of Seattle and Forterra. Managing restoration for health of the forest as well as health for the residents. There are many benefits associated with natural areas.

The program was formed in 2005. Goals of strategic plan include restoring 2,500 acres by 2025, as well as engaging public. Work of GSP guided by strategic plan and 2017 update. Best management practices and field guides help guide work.

Some of our work in forest zones does fall within the designated viewpoints which means doing the work differently in those areas. It means no trees, it means implementing restoration on those slopes without trees so need to apply different practices. Guidelines and practices include a native plant palette. This is a list of native plant species - trees, shrubs, ground covers. We pull from plant palette when we're working on any restoration site. There are a number of considerations that go into plant selection: identified target forest types, topography, hydrology, etc. In the case of viewpoints, we are mindful that we can't plant something over a certain height. Pull shrubs and types that are most appropriate, within height limitations, but also need to pay attention to the need to stabilize slope. Habitat also plays a role in vegetation selection. That said, viewpoints can have a different restoration focus such as providing habitat for pollinators and for birds. Within last few years, Seattle has become a Bee City and an Urban Bird Treaty City which are official designations. City has agreed to put these lenses on all of our actions. GSP has started considering which restoration sites would be good candidates for pollinator projects. Viewpoints are ideal candidates. Can also focus on bird habitats for shrub and ground nesting species. In process of developing BMPs for pollinators and incorporating bird habitat into our restoration efforts. This is an opportunity to dovetail efforts with viewpoint management.

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Q: Clarification. Is there an established GSP approach for viewpoints?

A: Not that has been written. Not as a separate best management practice.

Q: How many viewpoints has GSP worked on? Or areas managed for views

A: Have not mapped that out. Betty Bowen. Some worked at Kerry. In 13 years, 1,500 acres. In early years, we were figuring out how to do this. Seattle is first city of nation to do undertake this work, scale and type so fair amount of learning- ramping up of knowledge, staff and funding. Started with low hanging fruit, the easiest. Areas with least slopes. Now faced with more challenges, how to work in areas that are steep slopes.

Q: As take out invasive plants or remove trees, how does that work in conjunction with restoration efforts? Talking about steep slopes.

A: This is tricky and a big task on our plates- restoration on steep slopes, like Duwamish Head Greenbelt with 70% slopes, dominated by ivy which is threatening trees. Ivy is a threat but removing all of that ivy in one time is a threat as slope could fail. Examining how. We know there are ways to do but requires a lot more funding. Phases of restoration: 1: removal of invasives. 2: plant natives. 3: work on establishment 4: final closing stage

Q: Colman Park; If we take out invasives on steep slope, how do justify one action as an improvement or another?

A: Try to restore and minimize the risks. Colman proposal includes two areas- below and above path. Thin maples and treat stumps (deaden roots) below trail. Thin maples but not treat stumps above trail until established for slope stability.

Comment: GSP use volunteers but not on steep slopes. Workers who do that are professional crews so that work has a budget component.

Matt Stemple, SPR, Arborist (VMPs)

Q: Yellow areas on PPT, is that the view corridor? Or examples? Is Matt's work restricted?

A: The corridors are examples. We only focus on park property and there are times when obstruction is on private property.

**Goals:** Remove and replace current vegetation to;

- Reestablish and maintain the view.
- Reduce vegetation maintenance intervals.
- Preserve stability of the slope.
- Improve safety for workers maintaining vegetation.

Don't want to create a situation that would enhance a slide potential. Summary includes basic location, slope description/percentage, and past maintenance practices.

Proposal includes action over course of multiple years. With restoration efforts, could reduce our vegetation maintenance needs. Action needs to be done over a long period of time, to restore and transition.

Q: What is a long process? Two years? Five years?

A: That depends on the viewpoint. Some viewpoints like Hamilton are at 66%. Dr Jose Rizal has 40% so not as steep and not as susceptible to slides. Transition could be quicker.

Q: Dr Jose Rizal Park isn't one of our 16, correct?

A: That is correct. The idea was to do a draft VMP because it poses some unique challenges and its location is an area that is underrepresented (equity index).

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Comment: Agree to unique challenges, but this inclusion seems problematic from a policy standpoint because it's outside the 16 pick and choose outside the category of 16. Encourage us to draw lines and stick to them.

Comment: Desire for universal language. Continue to hear references to thinking and topping. And we do not top trees.

Thinning: general term used when doing restoration to increase light penetration down to ground floor to establish new plants. Thin canopy to allow for more light. Could be done through thinning, tree removal or pruning.

Topping: Bigger discussion needed. But for the sake of tonight, topping is when you cut the top of a tree off. It is not a practice that we use. May contemplate for a veteran tree still has value and purpose but in current situation may pose threat or risk, if we reduce height, reduce leverage and overall load and topping could be acceptable to retain tree and continue to provide benefit to eco-system. Topping in viewpoint, we use height reduction pruning to thin, help retain tree for short period of time. Helps benefit with stability and with establishment, would eventually remove the tree. Risk to employees is site specific.

Q: Understand we do not want to set precedent about topping trees within viewpoints, for view purposes.

A: It is against city policy to top trees, via ECA Ordinance, updated and then adopted in January 2018. It is not an industry standard or practice due to risk of health of tree and staff.

Q: Have you looked at estimates or budget figures per square foot?

A: No, this is strictly draft plan for more management of viewpoint. Cost, time, budget, staff.

Q: Reduce vegetation maintenance intervals, is this consistent with the recommendations provide by geo-tech consultants?

A: Yes, if we had proper inventory and species, reduce time needed to prune/touch tree to maintain view. Example Dogwood- require little, if any, maintenance.

Q: With resilience lens, have there been discussions about redesign or realignment of boundaries to allow for natural erosion to occur before embarking on restoration? Keep people safe but allow possible slides to occur.

A: No. Would need to consult with Geo-Tech engineers to see how feasible that is.

Q: Is there a differentiate made within these plans between areas within designated view corridor and areas that are not? Are there other intersecting management plans, such as areas that are GSP-management? And areas outside GSP?

A: That could be next steps. If these draft VMP are the right direction, we could delve deeper and make those distinctions. Have plans that include various overlaps, that are detailed and site-specific. Need to also determine, what is the view. One for natural area and section for area that is part of view.

Q: Admiral Way VMP, are goals in priority order? Admiral doesn't list reestablish as top goal?

A: I don't think goals are in priority order.

Q: With Hamilton, there is a restoration costs (\$196K), did the VMPs take that into account?

A: No, figures associated with square footage.

Break: Reconvene

Conversation to daylight ideas about viewpoint maintenance ideas. Recurring themes heard thus far include VMPs, site specific and overlays (different areas have different needs). Access needs and align with plant inventory. Do we treat viewpoints differently than we do other parks? It sounds like we don't but is there an opportunity to call that out, and create specific approaches? There's nothing off limits.

Universal rules:

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Looking for recommendations. We know we have these 16 designated viewpoints. Think big picture, not editorial.

Conversation: *running comments*

- For organizing purposes, maybe we have themes.
  - Resources.
  - VMPs
  - Best Management Practices
  - Hold space for recommendations for future.
- Highlight the use being about views. Understand that SPR is supposed to treat viewpoints differently but is not currently able to do so.
- Agree with themes brought forward. Would add resilience under BMPs. Would also add revenue generate, find alternative mechanisms under resources (sub heading)
- Are we prioritizing viewpoints? Or looking at parody? Treat all 16 or prioritize within? What's criteria?
- Should we prioritize viewpoints over other parks? Or prioritize within 16?
- There are three viewpoints that stand out as far as maintenance costs and safety to employees/visitors.
- I don't think we should prioritize viewpoints over other parks that have health and safety issues. It sounds like viewpoints are not being taken care of to the level because there are health and safety issues that take up time and money.
- Pros and Cons with prioritizing. We have 16.
- How long does it take to create VMP?
- Can we find out about use? Which one are heavily used. Getting those numbers is a challenge (need a counter)
- Provided event revenue generated which was around \$4,600
- Struck me is the health and safety aspect for staff and visitors. Some parks efforts have extreme slopes and have required to step back on restoration efforts. Hamilton, Sunset and Kerry seem to stand out as far as risks with steep slope conditions. Consider looking into a study that is more proactive setbacks or managed retreated or realignment before restoration. Maintenance seems extreme and costly versus possible risks. By 2040, prepare for more extreme climate conditions. Restoration is even more important now and in future. At Hamilton, maintenance preserves current location and design (parking), maybe redesign to allow more natural erosion.
- Hamilton (concrete structure to stabilize slope) look outside box at alternative ways to stabilize. At Betty Bowen, gigantic retaining wall with stairs, incredible creative engineering.
- Bringing in Landscape Architect to bring in provide design lens to restoration best management practice that is written. We have elements being mentioned but not actual specs. To show what it would actually look like, what low growing shrubs would look like and where, what's at mid-slope, what's where as you move down. Compiling information to add to VMP. Something like what we do for trails, there are specs on how to build a trail. That rendering is beneficial, restoration and design element.
- Dogwoods were mentioned. Don't think of that as tree but that was different.
- Language needs to be defined. Viewpoint and parks with views. Create a glossary of terms. Within a site. Designated viewpoint, within designated viewpoint (corridor). Delineating that with separate policies for those areas, important distinction. Let's define because budget figures are associated with square footage so let's be specific.

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- Another term worth defining is portrait. Cut window into overgrowth. Keep hearing this term., narrow, define, eliminate term.
- Are these views so sacred that we could plant trees that can be part of view? Like view at Mt Baker that have trees growing that will be part of view? Is it an option to plant evergreens or something that can grow and be part of view? Is that an option? Or is the goal unobstructed view? In UFC, we are focused on maintaining viewshed, are there opportunities to plant trees (that could mitigate restoration/tree removal) in other areas like background, near street, or other? To retain tree canopy. Net neutral, if not gain. City has a 2-1 tree policy. Is replacement requiring on site? (need to verify).
- I feel comfortable at Sunset, planting tree on slope to help with stabilizing. Be open based on patterns and needs. Do planting in a way to still have experience view but with trees as part.
- Lots of works in 2005, has plant lists. Suggest utilizing and not recreating the wheel.
- In regard to revenue, encourage opportunities to examine model like City's EDI. Like looking at options that generate revenue somewhere and distribute equitably to support maintenance. P3 opportunities?
- Tour companies that have signature views of Seattle, and there are partnerships. Not talking about selling views, but maybe compensation for maintaining these perspectives. Good idea but concern is about funding maintenance that may not continue. Desire for steady stream.
- Not fond of renaming but interested in contributions that could be funding, volunteering, etc.
- Funding and budget- restoration costs. Seven are blank. Is the reason that there are no restoration costs? Or do we not have data? A: safe to assume zero for restoration.
- Is there a sense, restoration costs and labor costs, is there a way to breakout regular costs and what is because of view specific maintenance? Difficult to disaggregate? What is added costs of having a park and having a park as a viewpoint?
- Restoration dollars are to get to maintenance standard.
- Cost wanted for restoration, maintenance. Maintenance heavier in first initial years then wane. Initial investment higher to enact and through establishment.
- Difficult to establish plants on steep slope, especially exposed steep slope. Acknowledge costs typical establishment costs, plus technical crews, etc.
- Do we apply a level of restoration? If there's a cost, what is return on investment? Is it tangible?
- Initial investment needed but need ideal process. Likely expensive but we need to do this right. And do it right the first time. Let's lay out the ideal process and maybe it does need to be phased in sites and it takes five years to get started, or ten. Only one level that is acceptable.
- Agree. These sites are worth it.
- Knowing we don't have pot of gold to do this restoration unilaterally, maybe investment is phased in because of funds. We then have years of return with smaller maintenance.
- Charge is to come up with plan. Can then advocate with funding.
- Thinks restoration figures are low, an underestimate so want to verify. Again, do it right and needs to be resources.
- Phasing could be part of plan, recommendation.
- Estimate based on square footage which is based on view corridor. Need to have universal understanding of what we are taking about and funding estimates are aligned with recommended action.
- Should there be a line of demarcation (of view)? If so, we are putting a value on viewpoints. If we are doing that, doesn't it mean we are prioritizing viewpoints?
- We are prioritizing the nine that need restoration work.

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- There's also added or multiple needs. Appeal is double benefit, to meet other goals, like overlap with GSP efforts and goals.
- Trying to separate myself from other piece of competing needs (like swimming pool). I am not saying that this is a cost priority for other needs.
- Make sure what we are stating in policy can work for all viewpoints. These 16 are dissimilar. In theory, there may be additional viewpoints, so policy needs to be responsive to that diversity and those unknowns. Think about ideas of prioritizing and costs, need to be cross all viewpoints.
- Don't want any potential new money that's required for viewpoint that doesn't need restoration to get lost. We are still talking about those.

If we are to summarize, and without putting priority on 16, and if we are to have parody, we need to have some work done.

- We decided we are going to focus on 16 because they were designated. It is another conversation about the others. Is that conversation going to happen? Is it part of next conversation?
- Maybe a way to handle that is to say that future process could talk about new designations. And include removal of designation. State a process for adding/removing, especially those that are highly expensive (per use).
- Should we ask staff for draft VMP for remainder? We have three of nine. Do we want reports on viewpoints we may or may not be recommending? Should we ask for remaining reports? 7/16 don't need VMPs. Do we want remaining six report? If there's no costs associated with restoration costs, do we not have VMPs? (Do we call them Viewpoint Management Plans?)
- Mt Baker has no restoration costs but has maintenance costs. Doesn't feel figures are maintaining view. Don't jump to conclusion on blank spots.
- Interesting to explore policy that is more extreme management based off evaluation of safety considerations and in response to climate change. Second that. Safety is the main driver for deciding if it continues remains a viewpoint.
- Is that a standard? Or should it become a standard? Open for consideration.

Q for KN: Do you feel there are contradictions within what you are capturing?

A: Initial thoughts are validating and on point. You ultimately want a policy and a tool that provides a clear understanding. The VMPs seems a logical roadmap, a document where policies are captured and assists with decision-making. It captures standards, values, principles, and again, policies. The comments and thoughts build upon that for clarity sake. So, nothing seems or feel like a red flag.

Might not have a draft policy but the next meeting but could easily have a framework, with principles and themes, that lay the foundation-- the necessities for next steps.

Not reinventing wheel, but changing or updating. Refining definition of viewpoint. Criteria over elements. Possible Part 2 conversation, if recommended.

#### Public Comment:

- Thank you for having this discussion. Representing Ursula Judkins which has a signature view. 690 feet of view of which 80% is blocked by vegetation. Potentially unparalleled view of Seattle. It is iconic. In 2008, got involved with Friends of Ursula Judkins, received community grants. Worked to

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improve access and signage but weren't able to address view. We think this park is well worth any and all effort. Advocating which is, or could be, world-class.

- Returning commenter who is advocating to include Magnolia Park and Magnolia Boulevard to designated list. Looks like that is not going to happen here so ask is to include these two parks in any recommendations. They are deserving of additional maintenance funding to restore view. And recommend another round of designations, which should include these two parks.
- Have come to numerous board meeting to talk about Colman Park. Couple of recommendation to add. For parking lot items, be specific about plans to continue these conversations. As far as criteria, talk about what it takes to become a designated park. Add Olmsted Historic Park category. Work with recommendations from Olmsted Task Force. Look at equity issues and how they relate to a community. As far as vegetation, is it healthy and how can we establish that? How much community support. Colman has had several public meetings and the first one had over 100 people in attendance. With steep slopes, we wanted to hire a Geo-Tech engineer and received a clean bill, so need to be site specific.
- Conversation about terminology is important, so public understands. Conversation about certain plan to follow, around native plantings, slope stability, retain viewpoints while also lowering cost of maintenance. Don't want to recreate wheel. SPR draft plan in 2005 which may be helpful. In 1996, Starfire Foundation came up with plan for Colman Park. May need updating but general concept still relevant. This plus updated VMP is good start. As forester, we have limits with which slopes we can work on. Can't go beyond 40%. Not sure why, suspect it has to do with insurance companies. If labor costs is an issue, we have grandmothers in 1990s doing restoration work. Maybe can make recommendation to train volunteers who sign a waiver so we have volunteer labor to assist. And check in with Olmsted task Force.

#### Housekeeping:

- Approved the minutes for September 26 meeting

#### October 24 agenda:

- Will have someone with finance/levy knowledge.

#### Check-Out:

What else do you need between now and October 24?

- Written document that we can edit
- Respond to draft documents
- Budget figures reconfirmed, feel low and too narrow
- Include parking lot items

**Announcement:** Green Seattle Day is November 3. Sites throughout the city!

<https://www.greenseattle.org/get-involved/green-seattle-day/8-28-green-seattle-twitter-header/>