



45th Ave SW Culvert Replacement Project

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Background

What is a culvert?

A culvert is a tunnel-like structure or pipe that allows water from a creek or river to flow under a roadway, trail, or railroad. Culverts are typically made of pipe, reinforced concrete, or other materials, and they come in a variety of shapes to match the road and existing stream.

Why does the culvert need to be replaced?

The culvert at 45th Ave SW is deteriorating due to age and wear. This means that the culvert may not work properly, which increases the risk of flooding and can even lead to the culvert collapsing. Repairing the culvert is not possible due to the culvert's age and condition. The current culvert is also an obstacle for fish swimming up and downstream. Replacing the culvert is an opportunity to improve drainage in Fauntleroy Creek and ensure native fish can successfully swim or pass through.

What is "fish passage" and why is it important?

Fish need to access upstream habitats. Some culverts, especially those built a long time ago, are an obstacle for the fish. By replacing the culvert, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) is helping improve the habitat for fish to ensure their passage in the area. Fish passage is also a crucial part of respecting Tribal treaty rights, as many Tribes rely on fishing for cultural, spiritual, and economic purposes.

Project overview

What are the project goals?

The primary goal of this project is to prevent the failure of the roadway culvert and the associated potential impacts to public safety and the environment.

Replacing the culvert will also:

- Improve creek resiliency to higher flows from anticipated climate change
- Restore fish passage, which supports Tribal treaty rights and SPU's commitment to racial and social justice
- Enhance the community's connection to the Fauntleroy Creek Watershed
- Provide safer working conditions for SPU maintenance crews

What is the timeline for this project?

Early planning for this project occurred between 2016 and 2019. The project is currently in the middle of the design phase, which will continue through 2025. Construction is tentatively scheduled to begin in spring 2026 and anticipated to last 24 months. The project timeline may change depending on feedback from the community and other related parties, permitting, and other factors.

How is the project being funded?

This project was paid for in part by the King County Flood Control District.

Questions or comments? We want to hear from you! Please contact:

Jonathan Brown | Project Manager | Jonathan.Brown@seattle.gov | (206) 561-2581

What to expect

How will surrounding businesses and residents be affected by this project?	During construction, residents, businesses, and visitors will experience more noise, light, road closures, dust, and traffic than usual. SPU will take steps to lessen potential inconveniences to the surrounding community. Residents and businesses will be notified about potential impacts in advance of construction activities.
Will the roads be impacted by this project?	During construction, there will be road closures and increased traffic near the project area. SPU is committed to minimizing disruptions as much as possible during construction and will work closely with residents and businesses to communicate any planned closures, detours, or alternative routes during construction. More information will be provided as the project nears construction.
How will this project impact parking?	There will be temporary parking restrictions near the project site for the duration of construction. These restrictions will be communicated to the community beforehand, allowing people to plan accordingly. As the project approaches final design, SPU will share any permanent parking changes with the public.
Will this project impact trees?	Yes, the construction of the culvert will impact trees, some of which are currently in poor condition. Once the project is complete, SPU will restore any areas that have been disturbed by construction with a mix of native coniferous trees as well as evergreen and deciduous understory plants. The use of predominantly coniferous trees will help jumpstart the forest's natural succession process and encourage longevity by adding sturdier and more durable trees to the ecosystem.
What will the project look like when it is finished?	<p>The roadway improvements, such as paving, sidewalks, and street trees, will be replaced in a manner generally consistent with existing conditions. Impacted parking lots on the east side of 45th Ave SW will be restored.</p> <p>On the east side of 45th Ave SW, the current fencing at the end of the SW Barton St public right-of-way will be replaced in a similar fashion. On the west side of 45th Ave SW, the project proposes adding a small and informal amenities area (the "45th Ave SW Landing").</p> <p>The design team has created illustrative graphics representing the proposed conditions from street level that can be viewed on the project website.</p>
What will neighbors see from the street level?	The new culvert will not be visible from the street, but the wing walls and ends of the culvert may be visible from adjacent residences. Some portions of the maintenance access may be visible from street level initially. Over time, the new plantings will grow to help obscure the maintenance access and culvert.
How will this project center public safety in its design?	Access to the creek will be restricted on both ends of the culvert for SPU maintenance only. The 45th Ave SW Landing has been designed to take into account feedback we received during previous public outreach efforts. Further, SPU is working with the Seattle Police Department to seek design recommendations using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles. For more information about CPTED, please visit: www.seattle.gov/police/crime-prevention/CPTED

Other SPU projects in the area

What is the status of the California Ave SW Culvert Replacement Project?

SPU previously collected feedback from several community groups and completed a preliminary review of design options for the replacement of the California Ave SW culvert. SPU will be replacing the existing, deteriorated culvert crossing the public right-of-way and adjacent Fauntleroy Church space with a new culvert structure and recommended alignment that supports public safety, environmental stewardship, fish passage, and long-term facility maintenance.

With a preferred option and in partnership with the Fauntleroy Church, the project is preparing to continue the design phase starting in early 2025. SPU is working to select and onboard a consultant firm to design the project.

Community involvement

What did we hear from the community?

During our previous outreach efforts, we heard mixed support for the 45th Ave SW Landing. Some community members expressed their concerns for public safety, proximity to the adjacent properties, and possible impacts due to construction. Other community members shared their excitement about the landing and opportunities for educational features that shared more information about the culvert and salmon moving through the area.

How has community feedback informed the project's design so far?

The 45th Ave SW Landing has been re-designed to take into account feedback we received in previous public outreach efforts. The size of the area has been reduced, additional screening has been added to lessen visual impact to adjacent properties, and ornamental fencing was added for security purposes. SPU is proposing that the space includes signage, low maintenance planting beds, lighting, and boulders.

How can I stay informed about the project's progress?

Please sign up for email updates at www.seattle.gov/utilities/FauntleroyCreekCulverts to stay informed about the project and learn about upcoming opportunities to engage. SPU will communicate with residents and businesses through the project webpage, mailers, and email updates. Additionally, SPU will host events to share project information, answer questions, and gather feedback.

Who do I contact with questions?

Have questions about the project? SPU is happy to answer questions and provide information about the project, including the anticipated impacts to the neighborhood. Please reach out to the SPU Project Manager, Jonathan Brown, at Jonathan.Brown@seattle.gov or (206) 561-2581.



Seattle Public Utilities

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Wixii turjubaan afka ah ku saabsan,
Fadlan la soo xariir taleefoonka
(206) 561-2581

Para servicios de interpretación por favor
llame al (206) 561-2581

Para sa serbisyo ng tagapagpaliwanag,
tumawag sa (206) 561-2581

Về dịch vụ phiên dịch xin gọi
(206) 561-2581