

LITTLE SAIGON NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

DESIGN NARRATIVE

January 2022

CONTEXT

The Little Saigon neighborhood park site was purchased by Seattle Parks and Recreation in 2013 to create open space in a high density urban area. The long and narrow site (50' x 235') is located at 1224 S. King Street and extends to S. Jackson Street on the north side. On the south end, the site is positioned between Nisei Vets Hall and the Victorian Row historic apartment block and across the street from Lam's Asian Market. Two commercial buildings are built to the property lines on the north end. The site is currently leased by Lam's Asian Market for use as a gravel parking lot. The site has a 21 foot grade difference from S. King Street on the low side to S. Jackson Street on the high side, with 12 feet of grade change taking place close to the north property line.

ENGAGEMENT

Special attention has been given to engaging with the multiple ethnic communities located in the neighborhood. There has been targeted outreach with presentations and questionnaires provided to multiple groups, including but not limited to: Nisei Vets, Seattle Indian Health Board, Urban League, Pac Rim residents, Summit Sierra high school students, Garfield Community Center Vietnamese Senior Lunch, VFA Afterschool Program, and Seattle World School. Information tables were also set up at Little Saigon's Festi-Roll Festival, Tet in Seattle Festival, and Parking Day. The public comments were analyzed to provide ideas and direction for the final design.

THE DESIGN CONCEPT:

Working with the Friends of Little Saigon Park, the community, and the Seattle Parks Department, Murase Associates developed a design plan that strives to achieve the community goals on a very complex site. The public had concerns about park safety and the proposed design follows basic principles for designing safe public spaces.

Starting at the north end at S. Jackson, there is a concrete plaza (12' x 32') adjacent to the wide sidewalk. This plaza is the location for artist Kalina Chung's gateway feature which is inspired by the multicultural makeup of the neighborhood. Patterns present on the feature will be carried down through the park on the front face of concrete seat walls. The plaza overlooks the entire park and is at the top of a concrete ADA accessible ramp and set of stairs. Pedestrian pole lights are located in the bamboo planters and light the stairs and ramp. The pole lights extend down the east and west sides of the site to King St.

At the bottom of the ramp and stairs is the play area with brightly colored blue rubber safety surfacing and seating along the north side. The play feature is composed of a low mound of two-toned gray rubber steppers with a scattering of golden yellow rubber balls. The golden yellow color is carried through the park in the bench motifs and site furniture. Yellow is a culturally relevant color with positive connotations including prosperity and happiness.

Below the middle concrete plaza there is a set of stairs with three rows of amphitheater style seating on one side. A 5 foot wide concrete accessible ramp connects the top and bottom of the amphitheater/stair on the east side.

South of the amphitheater, there is a gently sloping lawn area. The lawn has concrete paths on both sides connecting to a larger concrete plaza off of S. King St., with moveable tables and chairs where small community events and performances can occur. The SDOT parking strip on S. King St. can provide space for Seattle Park's maintenance truck access and temporary parking for a food truck. In the



recent past, a very large Weeping Willow tree overhung the south end of the site from the Victorian Row apartment building. This tree fell down in a wind storm near the end of 2021. A 4" caliper Chinese Elm tree is planned to be planted east of the lawn area to replace the willow. In time the tree should grow to a similar grand scale.

ARTIST STATEMENT FOR THE GATEWAY FEATURE (KALINA CHUNG):

This work is inspired by our shared conceptions of home, and how they are constructed by our community and our surroundings; both the built and natural environment. When I first arrived in Vietnam, I visited my aunt's home. She lives in a tube house, to me it seemed seven stories tall. These homes were built this way to extend space upwards, adding generational space, flow, and typically, a storefront on the ground floor. I saw a connection between this architecture and the space in Seattle allotted for the park. The space holds the anticipation of buildings to come; reminiscent of the versatile ways Vietnamese people adapted to their space in a growing city. While the purpose of lattices is to create security for storefronts, they also hold aesthetic charm, each culture has varying traditional shapes and designs. In many traditional Pan-Asian homes, these open windows create a flow and connect us to the natural world outside. In this case, the facade will create the infrastructure for a row of tube homes, and entry into a garden oasis. Drawing from the many cultures, histories, and people that have shared the site's space, I chose 3 varying designs to display. The structure is to appear light in its presence and create an openness in, what will eventually be, a rather dense space.

The green echoes the garden, with particular connection to the Willow Tree that recently fell down near King Street. Its significant memory to the community will be imbedded in the structure through color. The desired two tones of green are inspired by the Willow. A lighter green on the interior of the panel cuts creates further dimensionality.