



The City of Seattle

Pioneer Square Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649
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PSB 257/23

MINUTES for Wednesday, September 20, 2023

Board Members

Maureen Elenga
Tyler Hall
Sage Kim
Karl Mueller
Jose Lorenzo-Torres
Lindsay Pflugrath

Staff

Genna Nashem
Melinda Bloom

Absent

Kianoush Curran
Steven Sparks
Henry Watson

Chair Maureen Elenga called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

092023.1 PUBLIC COMMENT

092023.2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

June 21, 2023

MM/SC/LP/JLT 5:0:1 Minutes approved. Mr. Hall abstained.

July 19, 2023

MM/SC/JLT/SK 3:0:2 Minutes approved. Ms. Elenga and Mr. Hall abstained.

092023.3 BOARD BRIEFINGS

092023.31 3rd and Yesler Ave Public Right of Way

Proposed safety improvements

Aditi Kambuj provided an overview of three SDOT projects, each with objectives unique to their context but with an overlap of staff and resources. She said projects

proposed to improve safety, address public life and vitality, and improve access, safety, and connection to transit.

Ian Macek proposed expansion of pedestrian space, improved bike and pedestrian crossing and incorporation of art into the project. He said the sidewalk would be expanded and repaired, the bike lane raised, new curb ramp, tree and pedestrian light added in a comprehensive approach.

Laurentiu Dusciuc went over current conditions and proposed to widen the sidewalk near the fountain, install concrete bike buffers, and to reconfigure crossings to avoid cross movement. Curb ramp accessibility, tree pit and heaved sidewalks would be improved. He said curb ramp, light fixtures, and street tree would align with district guidelines. The curb ramp will be cast iron and tree pit surface will be chestnut.

Mary Chiu said they are at 100% design and proposed to start construction in March 2023.

Ms. Elenga asked if any existing lights would be removed or relocated.

Mr. Macek said none would be removed, they will add one.

Ms. Kim appreciated the presentation but wanted documents with greater detail.

Ms. Kambuj said she would work with Ms. Nashem to bring information to the board.

Board members wanted more detailed documentation and suggested scheduling another briefing.

092023.32 Fortson Square Redevelopment Project

Proposed redesign of the open space

Joshua Gawne, SDOT said it is time to upgrade the park design.

Duane Dietz presented. Fortson Square is at a nexus of cultural and civic reawakening. Spurred by the construction of the Chief Seattle Club's *ʔalʔal*, the Square has an opportunity to have its own concurrent revival as a gathering place of peoples since time immemorial. It is important, given the Chief Seattle Club's proximity adjacent to the Square, to honor the Coast Salish people who still call this place home. As a key crossing point from Downtown into Pioneer Square, Fortson Square offers the opportunity to welcome and celebrate Salish peoples and cultures. Key to creating a culturally resonant sense of place will be the Grandmother Frog Welcome Figure by artist Andrea Wilbur-Sigo. The Welcome Figure will reflect the roots and stories of the Coast Salish people while also bringing a new story as she overlooks Fortson Square and protects the surrounding areas. In addition to the Welcome Figure, there are number of design challenges at Fortson Square, among them the north-south slope of Second Avenue crossing the and east-west slope of Yesler Way creating a need to improve universal accessibility and clear sightlines across

the site. Additionally, root zones of existing trees at sidewalks will need to be considered.

The Coast Salish People are comprised of nearly seventy tribes or bands who speak fourteen languages. The term “Salish” was used by ethnologists to denote their linguistic ties to a root language. Salish People have been occupying contiguous territories along the Salish Sea in present-day British Columbia and western Washington State. The region was rich with varied food sources—including five types of salmon, shellfish, deer, root, bulb, shoots, berries—that were preserved for use in the winter, the prime time for art-making and spiritual ceremonial activities. Extended families lived in large plank houses in permanent winter villages and married into different villages, thus creating valuable networks of kinship, and increasing access to territories and resources. Cooperative work under the guidance of respected leaders solidified the high ranking of certain families. Lush goat wool robes and carved house posts, rattles, masks, and ritual paraphernalia were expressions of status but also of the power conferred on families and individuals by spirit entities. Despite devastating incursions into Salish lifeways in the modern era, distinctive Salish arts, oral traditions and ceremonies have endured and nurtured a vital sense of Salish identity.

“The southern portion of Occidental Square was once part of a tidal lagoon and island – very likely an island only at high tide. The Duwamish people built a winter village in this area, which included a longhouse used for shelter, celebration, and trade. A southern -flowing stream, now buried under city streets, provided fresh water, and emptied into the lagoon near where 3rd Ave S and S Main St intersect today. When early settlers arrived in the 1850’s the tribes welcomed and helped settlers build their city. Chief Si’ahl, or Chief Seattle, after whom the city was named, was the leader of both the Duwamish and neighboring Suquamish Peoples. Chief Seattle sought alliances for the prosperity of his people, but urbanization and city policies eventually pushed the Duwamish from the Pioneer Square area. Today the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center along the Duwamish Rivers demonstrates their ongoing presence and strong connections to this city. “

Time Immemorial

From: Trail to Treasure, Pioneer Square Historic Walking Tour - Trail2Treasure.org

Fortson Square was dedicated in 1901 in honor of Captain George H. Fortson of the United States Navy and other Seattle war dead, who were killed in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War. A plaque in recognition of Captain Fortson is embedded in the pavers toward the northwest corner of the site. The process is underway to rename the Square with an indigenous name, reflecting the important connection the site has to the historic and current connection to the Coast Salish people. Archival research note that the Square was planted and paved around 1907. The shape of the Square was impacted by the 1928-1929 Second Avenue Extension, likely responsible for ensuring the triangular shape of Fortson Square. In 1968, the same area was again planted, and five streetlamps were installed. The last major improvement was completed in 1999 when artist Elizabeth Conner and landscape architect Cliff Willwerth redesigned Fortson Square, adding a “sculptural ruin” of art that referenced the period between 1890 to 1950. The site is bound to the west and north with healthy street trees in the oak family. Two oaks also currently stand in the interior of the site. These interior oak trees receive inadequate sunlight due to the shading of the street trees; they limit light to the site during winter and evening

hours, and they are sited in planting beds that contribute to challenging grading conditions across the interior of the site.

Fortson Square should be redesigned to optimize usability of the site by neighbors (i.e., Chief Seattle Club and the indigenous peoples of this area), provide safe and legible circulation routes, and to offer a compelling space for cultural engagement and positive visitor experience. Native people in urban areas face unique challenges; by remaking the Square to embrace the diversity of Native cultures, languages, and traditions of American Indians and Alaska Natives, it recognizes their presence here and gives the “white settlers” a chance to experience and honor the original inhabitants on an important location in their history. Fortson Square will be a place to embrace and honor the indigenous presence here, becoming a place that is resonant of meaning and a source of pride to the Native community as well as our community at large. Design inspiration for the Square will be true to Salish culture: its art, music, story, food, plants, and animals.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Create the first native-focused public space in Pioneer Square.

Honor the site and use water as the theme - it was a marsh on the edge of the Salish Sea. Water is the original medicine and gives life.

Utilize native plantings and native art installation(s).

Review regrading options to create flat area for desired programming

Study the urban tree canopy in immediate area to determine locations for new street trees to improve the canopy of the area

PROGRAMMING

Determine neighborhood’s programming desires for the Square

Design a cultural performance space to accommodate for following:

- Drumming and Singing Space: Fortson Square programming would include
- drumming and singing, consisting of approximately 4-8 drummers, and 4-10 singers circling them. Additional space would be needed for singers and audience.
- Prayer Ceremonies: Last October the Club conducted a Mayan smudging ceremony with more than 10 members, staff and community circled on the pavement and were blocking pedestrian space. Additional smudging might occur as well.
- Native Works café space (Café at new building would put chairs and tables out on Square)
- Native Works Kiosk
- Place for eating lunch and possibly Food trucks to park (along Yesler Ave – not in the
- Square)

SECURITY

Improve the public safety of the space.

FOREST TO SHORE

- Conceptually mimics the transect of a Puget Sound shoreline - from beach to bluff
- Provides visually distinct spaces
- Creates active and passive places
- Existing Street Trees to remain, would be underplanted with native plants
- Existing Below Grade Utilities to remain
- Maintain minimum sidewalk clearances
- Maintain flexibility within Fortson Square for future TBD renovation
- Relatively low slope grade
- Will coordinate final location & base details with artist and design/engineering team
- Will go through SDOT SIP permitting process to finalize location

TO SHORE

- the site slopes in two different directions – the Yesler slope to the north and the Second Avenue slope to the west
- These slopes create universal accessibility challenges
- Create spaces that are accessible
- Maintain minimum sidewalk clearances
- Use planting areas and low walls to absorb grade changes
- Will go through SDOT SIP permitting process

Mr. Dietz said there is an infilled abandoned areaway underneath the Contessa. He said beach patterns would be sandblasted there.

Ms. Elenga appreciated the proposed ADA accessibility and noted the native plant selection is good. She liked the pattern embedded in the seating.

Ms. Kim appreciated the details and said it is a great upgrade. She said the park will be more inviting and engaging. She suggested introducing the indigenous context with signage or a plaque to explain the context of the shoreline.

Mr. Dietz said there are other areas in Pioneer Square where the history of the waterline is explained but noted this is a good place as well.

Mr. Lorenzo-Torres appreciated the way the design is developed and noted the complexities of grading. He noted the interpretive panels that will explain the nature of the landscape, meaning of patterns to convey to visitors.

Mr. Mueller said he was 99% in support but noted concerns about creating a barrier for traffic flow to light rail and forcing pedestrians to detour their route. He noted the narrowed path for high traffic area and the public space that would benefit for-profit business. He asked if the public space would benefit all or just the businesses there. He asked if the Chief Seattle Club would 'own' the space. He advised being mindful to make this space accessible to all.

Mr. Dietz said the public space is not reservable – it is public space. He said the hope is that people will no longer sit on the existing stairs and will be out of the pedestrian flow.

Mr. Gawne said the space is open to the public and there is no claim of ownership and there will be interpretive signage to explain the Native-focused design.

Mr. Mueller said the walkway is narrow.

Mr. Dietz said it is 8' now and at the Contessa it is 14' across. Making the walkway any wider would lose seat walls which will relocate gathering and sitting on stairs to the seat walls.

Ms. Elenga noted the grade challenge and how it is addressed will convey it is an open and welcoming public space.

Mr. Mueller appreciated the direction the design is going.

Mr. Hall appreciated what has been accomplished.

092023.33 **3rd And Main Street Public Right of Way**
Proposed bus stop improvements

Janet Loriz said a series of improvements are proposed at this site including bus shelters and seating, ORCA reader, new concrete pavement. She said parking will be maintained. She said they would repair SPU storm sewer and noted there would be no impact to areaway or granite curb. She said there would be no impact to existing historic elements. Paving extent was provided on plan; a full reconstruction will be done from Washington to Yesler with partial reconstruction on S. Washington. She went over plan showing proposed channelization changes.

Ian Kowalski, Metro proposed expanding the bus zone including upgraded shelters and amenities. He said signage would follow the aesthetics of Alaskan Way shelters that the board approved. He said there is an opportunity for art, a site-responsive sculpture and the process is underway. He said there is a light in the area and the shelters will be lit.

Mr. Mueller said that given the social climate at this site and the need to circulate based on changing conditions the shelter should not have a back on it. He suggested aiming light from globe fixtures downward so as not to impact adjacent residents. He noted the noise from hydraulic brakes on the bus. He said there are a lot of creative ways to add art and that he didn't think a statue was wise in this location due to circulation issues. He noted art in Chinatown International District (CID) – dragons on light poles and art built into sidewalk.

Joshua Gawne said that City Light has specified a conical light deflector that works to shine lights downward.

092023.5 **BOARD BUSINESS**

092023.6 **REPORT OF THE CHAIR:**

092023.7 **STAFF REPORT:** Genna Nashem
Administrative Review report

Adjourn 11:04 am.

Genna Nashem
Pioneer Square Preservation Board Coordinator
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