

# Morgan Junction Park Development

**Jenny A. Durkan**  
Mayor

**Samuel Assefa**  
Director, OPCD

**Ben de Rubertis**, Chair

**Brianna Holan**, Vice Chair

**Justin Clark**

**Rikerrious Geter**

**Laura Haddad**

**Mark Johnson**

**Rick Krochalis**

**Amalia Leighton**

**Vinita Sidhu**

**Elaine Wine**

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## Commissioners Present

Ben de Rubertis, Chair  
Brianna Holan, Vice Chair  
Justin Clark  
Rikerrious Geter  
Laura Haddad (excused at Noon)  
Mark Johnson  
Rick Krochalis  
Amalia Leighton  
Vinita Sidhu  
Elaine Wine

## Commissioners Excused

## Project Description

The project is one of 14 landbanked sites acquired by Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) to provide additional open space in urban neighborhoods throughout the city. The project site is located in the Morgan Junction neighborhood, north of the existing Morgan Junction Park along California Ave SW. The site is located along a neighborhood commercial corridor that includes mixed-use, commercial, and residential buildings and surface parking lots, while single family residential area is located immediately west of the project site. The park concept will connect the existing park to the expanded area, to include event space, active and passive recreation facilities. The park concept reflects initial community outreach conducted in 2018.

## Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the Morgan Junction Park Development. The purpose of this meeting was to review the concept design phase for the project. After the presentation and discussion the SDC approved, 10-0, the concept design for the Morgan Junction Park Development with several recommendations.

## Recusals and Disclosures

None

August 1, 2019

9:00 - 10:30 am

**Type**

CIP

**Phase**

Concept Design

**Previous Reviews**

None

**Presenters**

Taylor McNeill

Board &amp; Vellum

Zack Thomas

Board &amp; Vellum

Ed Pottharst

SPR

**Attendees**

Deb Barker

Morgan Junction Community  
Association

Natalie Williams

Neighborhood Resident



Figure 1: Context map for proposed project

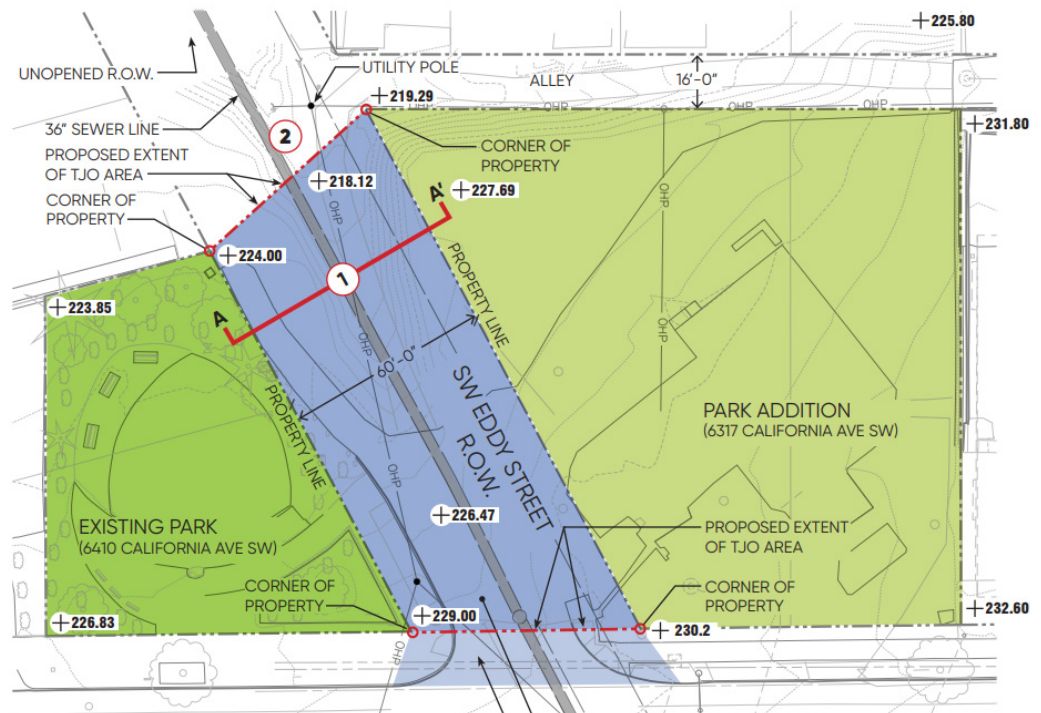


Figure 2: Existing site conditions

**Summary of Presentation**

Zack Thomas and Taylor McNeil, of Board & Vellum, and Ed Pottharst, of SPR, presented the concept design phase for the Morgan Junction Park Development. The presentation began with a brief overview of the project site, neighborhood context, and background information. The project team mentioned that this project would provide additional access to parks in a neighborhood that currently lacks green space. See figure 1

The existing park is roughly .20 acres in size and includes pathways, seating, open lawn, and vegetation.. The proposed park addition is approximately .28 acres in size. The existing and proposed parks are currently separated by unimproved right-of-way along SW Eddy St. The proposal assumes that the





Figure 3: Preferred designs from community outreach- Option 2 (top) & Option 3 (bottom)

segment of SW Eddy between California Ave SW and an alley west of the project parcel will be improved as part of the park design. To allow the ROW to be used for a recreation purposed, SPR is working with Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) to transfer this segment of SW Eddy from SDOT to SPR through a transfer of jurisdiction ordinance (TJO). See *figure 2 for more information*

The project team then explained how ongoing community outreach has influenced the proposed concept design alternatives. During initial outreach, community members expressed their desire to have design that would connect the proposed project with the existing park and would include community event space, play area, large planting areas, and active and passive recreation. The project team then presented three concept design options that reflected community responses. While each option included a different design approach,

all of the alternatives included connections to the existing park, gathering space, play area, an open lawn, and active recreation.

The project team presented the three options to the community for feedback. Overall, the community preferred options 2 and 3. Community members were also able to provide feedback on specific programming elements within each design. Elements such as an event promenade, iconic landform, loop path, nature play and integration with the existing park received the most positive feedback. The project team did not present a refined concept design during this meeting. Rather, they asked the Commission for ideas and feedback on how to best integrate the overall concept alternatives and preferred programming into a cohesive concept design. *See figure 3 for more information.*

### Agency Comments

None

### Public Comments

**Natalie Williams**, Resident, commented on small businesses located within the Morgan Junction neighborhood. Natalie Williams then asked if would be a way to mitigate the potential impacts, specifically noise, the project will have on adjacent small businesses during the construction phase. SDC staff then provided her with information on the appropriate City department to contact.

**Deb Barker**, Morgan Junction Community Association, is excited that the existing park is expanding. Deb Barker stated that the community hosts one large festival per year, Morgan Junction festival, and that they were excited to have design team participate as part of their community engagement strategy. Deb Barker then provided a brief explanation of previous planning efforts such as the Morgan Junction Neighborhood Plan, and Green Crescent Parks linkage idea and how the proposed park would serve as a key connection identified in the for mentioned previous planning efforts. Deb Barker also mentioned several issues with the existing project site such as soil contamination, semi unimproved ROW, and steep grades, and then expressed her appreciation for the project team addressing these issues. Deb Barker then stated that the association fully supported connecting the proposed park with the existing park.

### Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion of the pedestrian land bridge around the following issues:

- Design response to community engagement
- Scope, program, and circulation
- Design concept and response to site conditions
- Sustainability, materials, and art

#### *Design response to community engagement*

Although the SDC appreciated the project team's commitment to public outreach, Commissioners strongly recommended that future outreach and engagement opportunities include a more diverse group of community members. Commissioners reminded the project team that there is an expectation for them to engage with Race and Social Justice Issues, which should be a collaborative effort between SPR and the consultants. The Commission then commended the project team for providing outreach materials that are visually engaging and intuitive for participants. Specifically, commissioners appreciated the project team highlighting both overall concepts as well as specific programing elements preferred by community members. The SDC then encouraged the project team to use their expertise to create a concept that will integrate the most important program elements into a coherent design. The commission also strongly encouraged the project team to understand what tradeoffs will have to occur as a result of budget constraints. Commissioners then mentioned the possibility of providing phasing strategy for the park design.

#### *Scope, program, and circulation*

The SDC discussed park access points as well as how the proposed design will address the street edge along California Ave SW. The Commission then recommended the project team provide further analysis of how the street alley edges will serve as access points to the park. Specifically, Commissioners acknowledged the importance California Ave SW serving as a park edge and encouraged the project team to think about how

people will enter the park from the street edge.

The SDC then recognized the effect a limited budget will have on the overall project scope and proposed programming. Commissioners recommended the project team understand the cost and limitation of each programmable element and prioritize important elements. Although Commissioners then acknowledged the important and value added from overall programming as well as physical connection to the existing park, the commission recommended the project team provide a backup plan or strategy to address how the proposed design would change if the alley needs to be improved or the TJO fails to happen. Commissioners encouraged the design team to understand how this will affect the overall budget and program costs as well as ways to explore alternative ways to use the SW Eddy St ROW. The SDC then strongly recommended City Council waive or modify development standards relative to alley requirements as part of the TJO to reduce the overall mitigation costs while increasing the budget for design and programming.

The Commission then recommended the project team provide an adequate space for large festivals and gatherings within the park.

#### *Design concept and response to site conditions*

The SDC commended the project team for understanding the positive changes that can result from incorporating small design moves. Specifically, commissioners appreciated the use of landforms and recognized the potential positive effect it can have on the overall design. The commission encouraged the project team to continue to explore how other small design moves can help deliver a thoughtful and well integrated design concept.

The Commission then commented that they believe there is clear logic in how to combine elements from both design concept 2 and design concept 3 to form a positive event space. Commissioners then discussed the location specific elements such as the nature play and event space. Commissioners did not provide a specific recommendation but recommended the project team consider reviewing design studies and precedents on ways to best combine desired elements from concept 2 and 3. The commission then recognized that the term nature play has a broad definition and encouraged the project team to think about their definition of nature play and how it could best fit within the concept design. The Commission then recommended the project team provide a location for the nature play area based on their understanding of what nature play will be in this park development.

#### *Sustainability, materials, and art*

The SDC was excited to hear that the project team was open to including art. If they are not able to hire an artist, the Commission recommended the project team integrate artistic elements into the park design.

The Commission then discussed ways to incorporate sustainability. Although it might be difficult to infiltrate the soil due to remediation, the Commissioner recognized there are other ways to incorporate sustainability measures and strongly encouraged the project team to explore those opportunities as they relate to materials and plantings. Specifically, commissioners recommended the project team consider phytoremediation as a way to clean up the site and to serve as an educational message to the community.

#### **Action**

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation on the concept design for Morgan Junction Park Development. Overall the Commission appreciated the project team's prioritizing small programmable elements to elevate the overall value of the project as well as the team's commitment to public outreach and are looking forward to hearing about the next round of engagement. The SDC voted, 9-1, to approve the concept design for the Morgan Junction Park Development with the following recommendations:

1. To support the park concept, alley development standards should be waived or modified either before or concurrent with the TJO. SPR should work with SDCI and SDOT on the appropriate path to waive or modify alley development standards, so that the issue is resolved when the TJO is considered by Council
2. Ensure public engagement includes voices from diverse group of community members
3. Provide further analysis of how the street and alley edges will serve as access points to the park
4. Provide cross sections through park to communicate design and landforms

5. Provide a backup plan or strategy to address how the proposed design would change if the alley needs to be improved to code standards or TJO fails to happen.
6. Consider reviewing design studies and precedents on ways to best combine desired elements from concept 2 and 3
7. Think about the costs and limitation of program elements and prioritize important elements
8. Provide a site location of nature play based on your definition of nature play and how it can best fit within the concept design
9. Study adequate space for large festivals and gatherings
10. Consider phytoremediation to help with soil remediation
11. If an artist is not added to the project team, consider ways to incorporate artistic elements within the landscape

The following are statements from commissioners who voted against the concept design phase for the Morgan Junction Park Development:

**Rick Krochalis** – There are too many site issues constraining the design team right now that have yet to be resolved. Given the uncertainty around alley improvement requirements, use of the SW Eddy St. right of way, and soil remediation, I cannot vote to approve the concept design at this time.