

Bitter Lake Reservoir and Park Improvement Project

Focus Group #2 Summary

Project Overview

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) is replacing the existing Bitter Lake Reservoir with a new concrete reservoir that has a smaller footprint. The new reservoir provides additional open space for an expanded park to better serve the adjacent community. Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) is leading the park and open space design in coordination with SPU, the Office of Arts and Culture and the Department of Neighborhoods. This project will incorporate elements of the existing park together with new recreation amenities, public art, and a P-Patch expansion.

Engagement Process

This first phase of engagement focused on sharing the project and hearing from community members about their current experiences with the Bitter Lake Reservoir Park, what they would like to see in the future, and what concerns and priorities they have. Community feedback helped shape the three park design concepts that the project team developed. During this second phase of community engagement, the community had another opportunity to provide feedback and input on the three park design concepts to help refine them. The project team will use feedback from the focus group, along with feedback gathered from other engagement events and an online open house survey, to help create a final preferred master plan for the park.

Focus Group

The focus group was held on Thursday, February 22, 2024, from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. at the Bitter Lake Community Center in the Multipurpose Room. See Appendix A for a list of participants. The focus group provided an opportunity for community members to learn about the three conceptual designs the design team created based on feedback from the first phase of community engagement. See Appendix B for the three conceptual designs and reference images.



Figure 1. Reviewing park concepts during the focus group

Through a facilitated conversation, participants shared what they liked most, liked least, concerns, and additional ideas to help inform the preferred concept design.

Focus group participants liked:

- Continuous paths around the park
- Openness around the entire park
- Addressing safety, openness along N 138th St and bluff area
- Pulling playground to the south, away from N 143rd St
- More lighting, especially around the P-Patch and south end of the reservoir
- Shelter near the P-Patch, especially for the gardeners to protect them from the sun
- Multiple tool sheds for the P-Patch expansion
- Plan/provide an option for a restroom in the future, especially near the P-Patch for the gardeners and to prevent people from relieving themselves in the gardens
 - Consider portable restrooms in the meantime or as another option
- Having a line of sight between the playground and the P-Patch (like in the Whirl and Flow concepts) so people can watch their children while they are gardening
- Slope play options
- No plans for through traffic or increased traffic from the existing N 138th St cul-de-sac
- Planting more trees and plants in the park while keeping in mind the need for open space, especially for the P-Patch

Focus group participants liked least:

- Sand volleyball courts, but could see basketball courts
- Fences of any permanent structures/barriers around the P-Patch, even to deter people from taking plants and vegetables; P-Patch community values the openness of the P-Patch
- Time it will take to activate the south end of the reservoir because it will take time for plants and vegetation to grow around an outdoor classroom or for the board walk
- Do not re-do the P-Patch, leave it as it is and expand it; it has taken years to improve the soil there and starting it again after a remodel (like in the Wave concept) would remove all that previous work done to build up the soil

Focus group participants shared several concerns:

- Concern around the food forest not being open or visible enough to deter illicit behaviors or activities
- Concern around the safety of a children's area (i.e., an outdoor classroom) at the south end of the reservoir because people are currently seeing needles and concerning behavior in this area; may need a more active rather than passive solution in this south part of the reservoir
- There are many emergency calls to the Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) North Star Permanent Support Housing (North Star) building (east of the park)
 - The City needs to provide more support to the residents there and to mitigate safety challenges that arise from drug use and break-ins

- Need to consider accessibility for any staircase elements, like the grand staircase in Flow

Focus group participants shared several ideas for consideration:

- Alternative ideas for sports courts areas:
 - Large chess board
 - Table tennis
 - Badminton
 - Sunken field area (i.e., the field at Yesler Terrace)



Figure 2. Streetview of Yesler Terrace Park showing the sunken field

- More natural/temporary barriers around the P-Patch to discourage people from taking things from people's gardens
- Youth garden area in the P-Patch or the outdoor classroom area
- Add more art over time, it does not have to be all added at the time of construction; consider temporary art or sculptures
- Turn the fence around the maintenance yard into art or incorporate art in some way
- Art and lighting integration, especially for the southwest corner of the reservoir and near the P-Patch; can consider light that activates a pathway or turns on when there is motion
 - This can serve as both art and as a safety feature
- More lighting and deterrents for illicit behaviors along N 138th St
- SPU is exploring adding solar panels to the top of the new reservoir
 - Consider solar panels on the pump station and storage building?

- One of the project team members responded that it is not currently planned
- More P-Patch control and access to water (there are two points to turn on water access for the gardens and SPU needs to turn on water access on their side before the P-Patch has access to water)
- P-Patch community would like to partner with DESC's North Star community to share some garden space so people at North Star can also benefit from gardening

Overall, participants like the activation of the park, flow of activity and movement of people, variety of play and open spaces, increased plants and art, improvements in safety, and expansion of the P-Patch. Participants were excited about the park concepts, proposed park elements, and looking forward to the final preferred concept design.

Next Steps

The project team shared the next steps would be to analyze and consider all the feedback gathered from this phase of engagement to inform the final preferred concept to move forward. Participants were encouraged to stay updated on the project via the project website.

Appendix A: Focus Group Participants

Jon Clark, P-Patch representative

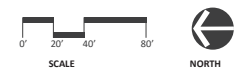
Gail Coskey, neighborhood resident

Sue Jensen, neighborhood resident

Cathy Moore, Seattle Councilmember

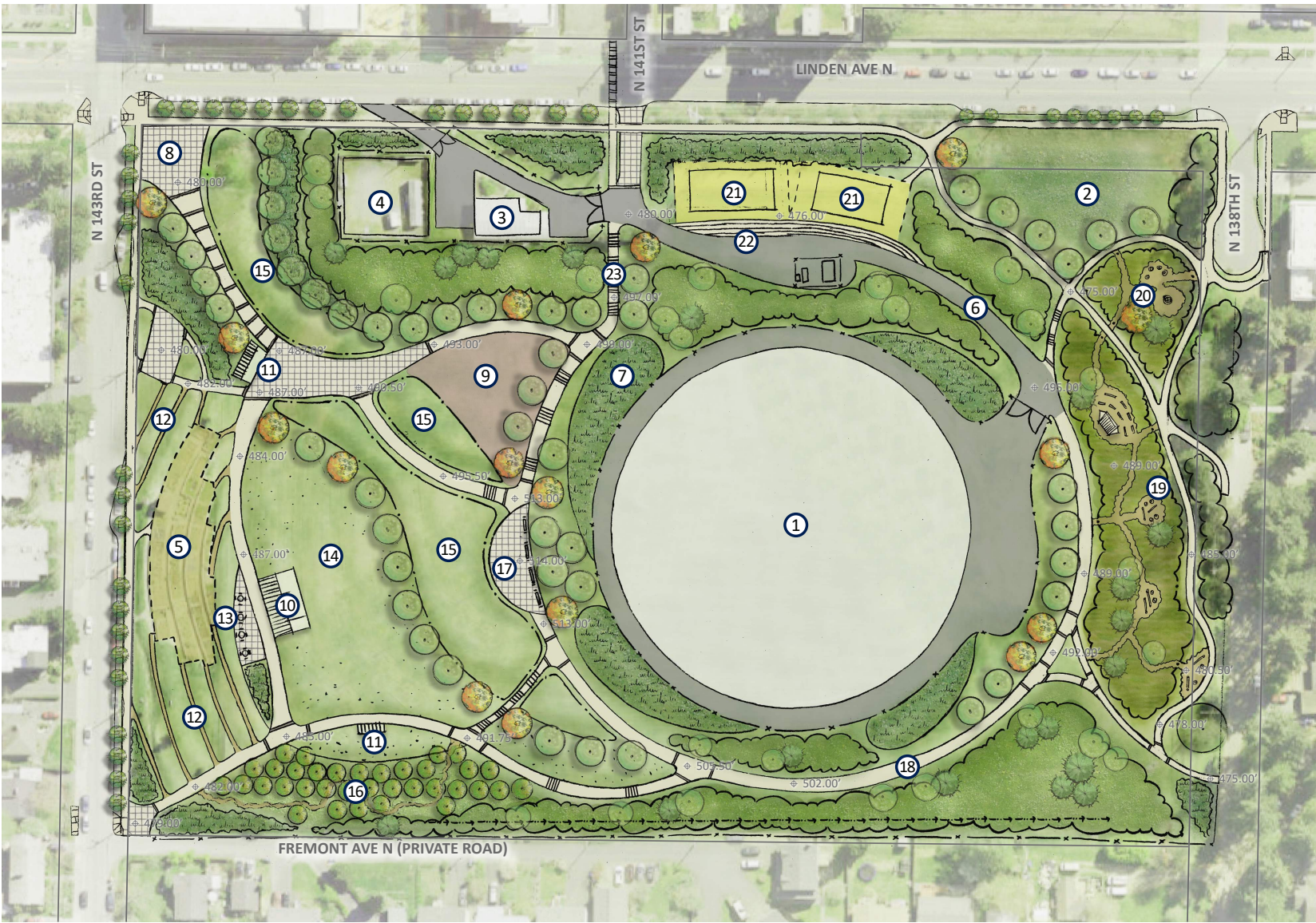
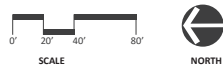
Mike Schuler, neighborhood resident

Appendix B: Conceptual Designs and Reference Images



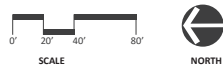
LEGEND

- ① Reservoir
- ② Existing stormwater facility
- ③ Existing pump station
- ④ Existing maintenance storage area
- ⑤ Existing p-patch
- ⑥ Maintenance access
- ⑦ Bioretention planting, typical
- ⑧ Plaza/ gathering, typical
- ⑨ Play area
- ⑩ Shelter
- ⑪ Tool shed/ information kiosk
- ⑫ Expanded p-patch
- ⑬ Picnic tables
- ⑭ Open lawn
- ⑮ Land art opportunity
- ⑯ Food forest
- ⑰ Overlook plaza with seating/ picnic
- ⑱ Paved loop trail
- ⑲ Nature play/ outdoor classroom
- ⑳ Fitness/ interpretive learning
- ㉑ Sand volleyball courts
- ㉒ Informal seating/ steps
- ㉓ Stairs, typical
- Right-of-way line, typical
- ✕✕ Security fencing, typical
- SPU drainage swale



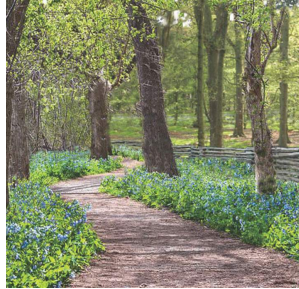
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- ⑫ Land art opportunity
- ⑬ Open lawn
- ⑭ Overlook plaza with seating/ picnic
- ⑮ Slope play area
- ⑯ Paved loop trail
- ⑰ New maintenance access
- ⑱ Informal trails/ seating
- ⑲ Elevated boardwalk
- ⑳ Multi-purpose sport courts
- ㉑ Grand staircase
- ㉒ Stairs, typical
- Right-of-way line, typical
- ✕ Security fencing, typical
- SPU drainage swale



REFERENCE IMAGES

PAVED LOOP TRAIL/ INFORMAL TRAILS



ENTRY PLAZA/ GATHERING



DOG OFF-LEASH AREA



OPEN LAWN/ COMMUNITY GATHERING



LAND ART



ELEVATED BOARDWALK



FITNESS AREAS/ ACTIVE SPORTS

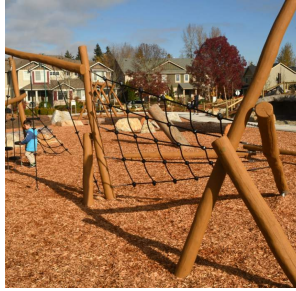


SHELTER/ TOOL SHED/ INFORMATION KIOSK



REFERENCE IMAGES

PLAY AREA



SLOPE PLAY



OVERLOOK PLAZA/ PICNIC



P-PATCH/ FOOD FOREST



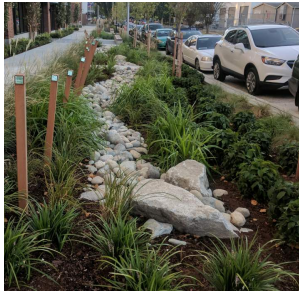
NATURE PLAY



INFORMAL STEPS/ SEATING



STORMWATER TREATMENT



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM/ INTERPRETIVE LEARNING



GRAND STAIRCASE/ STAIRS

