

Seattle **design** Commission

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APPROVED **MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

March 19, 2009

Convened 8:30 am
Adjourned 4:30 pm

Projects Reviewed

Northgate Urban Center Park
Tim Gallagher, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation
Electronic Parking Guidance System
Madison Valley Stormwater Improvements
Children's Hospital - Street Vacation

Commissioners Present

Mary Johnston, Chair
Andrew Barash
Graham Black
Brendan Connolly
John Hoffman
Nathan Polanski
Dennis Ryan
Norie Sato

Staff Present

Guillermo Romano
Valerie Kinast
Tom Iurino
Jeff Arango

Celebrating 40 Years 1968-2008



March 19, 2009

Project: Northgate Urban Center Park

Phase: Design Development

Last Reviewed: August 21, 2008

Presenters: Kim Baldwin, Parks
Doug Leigh
T Frick, Mithun

Attendees: Paul Fishberg, Office of Policy and Management
Karen Janosky, Mithun

Time: 1 hour

(169/RS0605)

ACTION

The Commission would like to thank the design team for their clear presentation of the Northgate Urban Center Park design and unanimously approves the design development phase with the following comments:

- The Commission appreciates the design team's consideration of the history and context of the site and also the lengths that were gone to determine what the community is looking for. This is reflected in the depth of the design concept.
- The Commission appreciates the good coordination with SDOT on streetscape elements, and that the park could in a sense extend into the right-of-way..
- Commissioners recommend keeping the art simple. It should not try to be too literal in telling a story.
- The design team is guided to look to some of the other newly designed places in the Northgate area and tie in to them with the choice of materials and objects.
- Consider a community driven local planting program to provide plants where the budget can't provide for all planting materials.
- Commissioners are concerned about the colored pavement. Using monochromatic coloring could lead to later patching being highly visible. Also, take care in considering how the color chosen fits into the overall color scheme of the park with an eye to keeping it simple.
- Focus attention to programming, and how different spaces are used for various activities.

Presentation

The idea for the park began as early as 1993 in the comprehensive plan. On April 1st, 2009 the city acquisition of the property will be final. As part of the negotiations with King County they would like to lease back part of the site for their use. Free bus tickets will be used, including \$10k in free bus tickets.

The Design Commission last reviewed the project in August of 2008, but the project was put on hold because construction funding was uncertain. The City Council recently approved funding for the project. The total project budget for Phase I is 4 million dollars. The design team is collaborating with SDOT, but there is little opportunity to work with SPU. Along 3rd Avenue, they are developing a streetscape design, along 5th Avenue a capital project to develop Northgate Way to the park and to continue design criteria to the north.

In April they will have 60% construction documents, 95% by May. The project will go out to bid in July with construction in late fall. A MUP will be required.

The Site is now a park and ride and consists of a sea of asphalt. The project site is located just north of the Target/Best Buy facility and the Northgate Mall.

As part of the community meeting process the design team got to learn the hopes and vision of the community. At the first meeting, each community member got a passport to provide individual input in terms of a visual preference survey that included images (are they important or not important). It also included a cultural audit process – only certain groups can make the meeting, gets the feelers out in the neighborhood and to those that might not attend the meetings. It identified a very diverse demographic: young children, families, students, older people. The team distilled vision of ideas from the input, including heritage and it should be fun, a contrast to the urban environment. Social, economic, ecological were all considered, including sustainability in terms of ecological, social and economic functions.

The process led to a group of program elements that were then prioritized by the project team. Program elements drove the vision plan. Intimate yet interactive space was a major focus with an emphasis on passive activities and serenity. Three design alternatives were presented at the last meeting. First is the blue street, connected to the Bruce family, that used to own the site. Hydrology analysis shows a creek that went through the site and serves as the basis for the blue street. Next they looked at the edges and solar access. 112th and 5th are very busy, but in the park and to the west it is quieter. Grade constraints were also considered. The south end of the site is below grade, it's a constraint and an opportunity, create a perch or overlook.

Final program diagram was the result that was presented at the last meeting. Loved the contrast between the urban and natural environment, gateway features are important as is the promenade connecting the historic wetland and spring locations. Intersperse exercise and play along 5th avenue where there are eyes on the activities. Skate park will be near 112th on the south side. They are looking to activate the edges in the future.

Main gateway is the along the south side. Four ADA access points to the park are incorporated at the four corners. Existing trees will be preserved where possible. Decorative concrete will be used, probably a colored concrete with a texture. The blue street runs through the center of the park. The promenade is accentuated and celebrated.

Regrading will occur from 112th to the north to make the grade change more gentle. Along 3rd, a new curb, plantings and sidewalk zone will be developed. 3rd Avenue is a green street, non-through vehicular street, hopefully it will be coordinated with the neighborhood market.

When there is water along the blue street, they are trying to get a sense of movement and flow. Waiting for monitoring of existing spring, they don't know exactly how much water they will have. It will either be a natural spring, if not, they will celebrate the expression of water by tying it in to the irrigation system.

The spring site is inspired by two myths of spring. Local native spirit named beaverwoman is one. The center is surrounded by a granite pool, within the pool are granite stones that act as stepping stones when water is in the pool. Sense of grave markers, marking history. Source stone – large granite bolder, water fills and spills over the sides, in center stainless steel disc, under will be red lights to glow, illusion to beaverwoman, an opportunity to etch the myth and history of the site. Beaver fir texture carved on the outside. Final piece is the basin itself, will have water in it most of the time, want to do something with the basin floor, looking at embedding at the seams of the paving some red glass or something that sparkles, the basin in the source stone will have a gold or silver leaf.

The neighborhood used to have a contest for the tallest Christmas tree, Northgate won, brought in a tree with only a small top and re-nailed the rest of the branches. Looking to have a large growth of evergreen trees, something that contrasts the other trees in the park. Large area left to plant, but they are working to determine the exact nature of the plantings and cost estimates. Looking to accent the low point.

The lawn area is meant to be a drought tolerant mix, looking at different grass options for these areas and using trees for shade. Exercise play area – basketball court, chosen because it serves multiple functions including stretching and four square. No exercise equipment in the first phase.

Commissioner's Questions and Comments

Wetlands area – looks like there's some raised things, are they rocks or granite?

We're hoping to in Phase I have some sitting blocks, that will allow access to low point.

How wide is the promenade?

12'

Has the project been reviewed by the public art committee?

No, it's not a 1% for art, the Parks dept. was reviewing it, but it was not selected.

Simple is always good. Keep the interpretive elements to a minimum, should be aesthetic qualities.

Lighting, do you believe there is enough?

It's been studied, a lot of light from adjacent properties, including the H building and parking lot lights. Pedestrian pole lights on some paths, with in grade LED lights along the blue street. Blue color will be used. Linear LED in the tunnel for aesthetics.

You had a section drawing through the south end, it looked like there are existing retaining walls?

Yes, there is an existing eco-block wall, where it sticks up above grade, we plan to remove it and use it elsewhere on the site.

You are raising the site quite a bit?

Yes, to bring the site up to the surrounding streets. It helps with the water table, which is really high. Allows us to treat the site as a giant rain garden.

Is there a sidewalk on the south side?

Yes, adjacent to the Target. A walkway has been added along the south side in the park.

Will street parking be retained?

Yes. Public parking at Target can also be used and a bus stop is adjacent to the park.

Is there still a driveway on the south side?

There is an existing ramp, but it will be removed.

If you create an open space/walking system, are there are any other destinations that we should be aware of? I would suggest that as you make decisions about materials, objects and characteristics that other details already put in place are well related to the project (Lorig project, Library, etc..)

Yes, we have been exploring those details in the design.

On the art, the source stone, the stories are fabulous. I get overly worried about graffiti and vandalism.

I like the depth and historic reminiscence. Rather than be a concept you look back to, but in terms of tree planting, if they wanted to plant a large tree, you're also thinking about the future and how the trees grow. Let community process decide tree species, opportunity to create community involvement.

You called out colored concrete, the issue with it is that there will be replacement, a consistent monochromatic tone, when you do replace it, it won't match perfectly, so consider adding more variation now.

On the planting, it might be a good idea to focus the budget on the Northwest portion where you have that open space. Focus on that corner.