

North Rainier Park Development

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Samuel Assefa
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Brianna Holan, Acting Chair

Justin Clark

Mark Johnson

Rick Krochalis

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Vinita Sidhu

Lucas Whitesell

Elaine Wine

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Commissioners Present
Rick Krochalis, Acting Chair
Justin Clark
Mark Johnson
Vinita Sidhu
Lucas Whitesell
Elaine Wine

Commissioners Excused
Brianna Holan, Vice Chair
Amalia Leighton

Project Description

The project is one of 14 landbanked sites acquired by Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) as part of the 2008 Open Space levy. The project site is roughly 1 acre in size and is located along S. Charlestown St. between 34th Ave S and 35th Ave S. The current budget is \$1.28 million. Proposed park amenities include an open lawn, gathering space, active play area, and street improvements. Additional funding will be provided from Kaiser Permanente to provide adult exercise equipment in addition to the park programming budget.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commissions (SDC) third review of the North Rainier Park Development. The purpose of this meeting was to review the design development phase (90% design) for the project. After the presentation and discussion, the SDC voted 5-1 to approve the design development phase for the North Rainier Park Development with several recommendations. While this was the last full review of the project, the SDC will receive an update from the project team at a future subcommittee meeting.

Recusals and Disclosures

None

March 5, 2020

2:00 - 3:30 pm

Type

CIP

Phase

Design Development

Previous Reviews

[11/21/19](#), [9/21/17](#)

Presenters

Lisa Corry
Osborn Consulting

Jennifer Munde
Osborn Consulting

Attendees

Angela Davis
Community Advocate

Brian Dougherty
SDOT

Hillary Nichols
PACE

Ed Pottharst
SPR

Mike Schwindeller
SPR

Summary of Presentation

Lisa Corry and Jennifer Munde of Osborn Consulting presented the design development phase for the North Rainier Park development. The presentation team provided both project and design updates that addressed previous recommendations made by the SDC (see image 1). Project updates include updating the southwest corner entrance to include accessible seating options, providing access to electrical utilities for larger events, and providing utilities for a future water fountain and Portland loo style restroom.

The project team continues to collaborate with SDOT on providing ROW improvements along the street edges of the park as well as traffic calming measures along S Charlestown St. Parks will fund street improvements, including curb, gutter, sidewalks, vegetation, and street trees along 34th Ave S, 35th Ave S, and S Charlestown St, as well as curb bulb outs along the north side S Charlestown St. SDOT will fund curb bulbs along the south side of S Charlestown St. SDOT has also committed to funding a pedestrian pathway to connect sidewalks north of the project site along 34th Ave S and 35th Ave S. SDOT also supports providing a marked crosswalk(s) across S Charlestown St but will need to conduct a pedestrian traffic study to see if the pedestrian counts meet the threshold (warrant) for providing a crosswalk.

The planting palette for the park is designed for climate adaptation and will include drought tolerant plants. The project team stated that the planting design along the northern edge of the park had been updated to increase visibility and to accommodate a potential future connection the parcel north of the park site. Proposed materials will include standard site furnishings, adult exercise equipment (funded with a grant provided by Kaiser Permanente), and play equipment which will also include accessible play elements.

The proposed design includes elements for cultural expression that reflects local community desires and expectations. These elements include light pole affixed banners with imagery and patterns that are reflective of the surrounding community as well as including a weaving pattern, achieved by using a broom finish on the concrete, at southwest park entrance.

Agency Comments

None

Public Comments

Angela Davis, Community advocate, thanked the project team and then stated their excitement for the community to have a place to play and exercise. Angela then stated that they have appreciated the design process and recommended the project team bring images of the overall design proposal as well as specific park elements to the next community meeting. Angela also appreciated placing a pattern within the sidewalk finish and recommended the project team include a pattern or design on the play structure to express cultural identity and inclusivity.

Hilary Nichols, PACE, hosted a community meeting to address pedestrian concerns at the 34th Ave S and S Charlestown intersection. Hilary stated that while it is important to provide a marked crosswalk at both 34th Ave S and 35th Ave S, that if only one could be constructed, the community would prefer to prioritize improvements at 34th Ave, as there are many apartment buildings located on 34th. Hilary mentioned that community members, many of which are seniors or people with mobility issues, are most likely to cross this section of S Charlestown St. Hilary then stated that a pedestrian had recently been killed while trying to cross SE Charlestown St near 34th Ave S.



Image 1: Updated design proposal

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Traffic calming and pedestrian connections
- Planting and materials palettes
- Cultural expression
- Cohesiveness of the color palette
- Design and integration of the northern park edge

Traffic calming and pedestrian connections

The SDC appreciated the project team's ongoing collaboration with SDOT to provide traffic calming and pedestrian connections. Specifically, Commissioners appreciated the addition of curb bulbs along the south side of S Charlestown St. as well as providing informal pedestrian pathways connecting the sidewalks on 34th Ave S and 35th Ave S to the development north of the project site. While the SDC is very supportive of the proposal to include one or more marked pedestrian crosswalks crossing E Charlestown St, they are concerned with the delay of constructing the crosswalks. The SDC strongly encouraged SDOT to study pedestrian traffic counts crossing S Charlestown St as soon as possible so the marked crosswalks can be completed with the construction of the park. The SDC will follow up with SDOT regarding the pedestrian traffic count study.

Planting and materials palettes

The SDC commended the project team for providing a well thought out plant palette. Commissioners encouraged the team to share the proposed plant palette with the community during their next public meeting. The Commission appreciated the project team addressing climate adaptation by specifying drought

tolerant plants. Commissioners then recommended against using lavender and rosemary plants, due to how it grows and matures.

The Commission then discussed the proposed site furnishings. Commissioners encouraged the project team to provide site furnishings that are accessible for all park users. The SDC then acknowledged the variety and quantity of proposed site furnishings and encouraged the project team to work with the community to identify and prioritize which furnishings are important, in case site furnishings are reduced due to budget constraints.

Cultural expression

The SDC supported the overall idea to include cultural expression within the park design. While commissioners also appreciated the team's idea to include patterns and designs that are important to community members, they were concerned that patterns would be included on light pole banners, which they viewed as temporary. The Commission recommended the project team consider the incorporation of a permanent cultural element. Several commissioners then encouraged the project team to consider cultural integration through the design of the basketball court pavement. The SDC expressed interest in reviewing the proposal for cultural integration during a subcommittee meeting.

The Commission then discussed the proposal to include a weaving pattern within the concrete sidewalk. While commissioners appreciated the idea of providing visual interest in the concrete, they are worried the pattern would not be implemented well nor would it be noticed as a cultural element by most park users. The Commission encouraged the project team to continue working with the community during future public meetings.

Cohesiveness in the color palette

The SDC acknowledged the project teams continued effort in selecting a color palette for park elements. The Commission recommended the project team consider the cohesiveness of the color palette throughout the entire park, understanding how the proposed color palette for different park elements will work together to help create an identity for the park. The SDC encouraged the project team to have an element help guide the color palette. The commission expressed interest in reviewing the proposed color palette during a subcommittee meeting.

Design and integration of the northern park edge

The SDC commended the project team for addressing previous concerns by providing a potential connection to the parcel located north of the project site. Commissioners also appreciated the updated planting palette to provide better visual connectivity and to increase perceived safety along the northern edge.

Action

The Commission thanked the project team for their presentation of the design development phase for the North Rainier Park Development. The SDC appreciated the project team's continued community engagement¹, collaboration with SDOT to provide traffic calming measures², extension of pedestrian pathways north of the park site, consideration drought tolerant plants, and responsiveness to address northern edge of the park. The Commission voted, 5-1, to approve the design development phase for the North Rainier Park Development with the following recommendations:

1. Strongly consider the addition of water fountain
2. Consider the incorporation of a permanent cultural piece; possibly expressed through the design of the basketball court pavement
3. Consider the cohesiveness of the color palette throughout the park

The following are comments from commissioners who voted against the project:

Justin Clark, While I am not opposed to the project, I am voting against it to highlight concerns with the lack of a pedestrian crossing on S Charlestown St being delivered in the same timeframe, if ever, as the park

¹The SDC will have a subcommittee meeting to discuss ongoing community engagement efforts as it relates to the development of a permanent cultural element and proposed color palette for the park.

²The SDC will follow up with SDOT on pedestrian traffic count study.

construction. The project is connected to the adjacent community, who are strongly advocating for a marked crossing at the intersection of 34th Ave S and S Charlestown St. I want to stress the importance of meeting the needs of the community. I applaud the coordination between Parks and SDOT up to this point, and urge them to continue this coordinated effort through the delivery of this project to produce the best possible outcome for this project and community. The design of the park and the surrounding neighborhood context need to be thought about together and delivered in an integrated, comprehensive way.