

Restoration

Responsive

Reliable

Resourceful

Seattle is known for its natural beauty. Our parks and open space contribute to making this region a destination. There's a reason why Seattle often ranks as one of the most livable cities. We are surrounded by classic icons such as Mount Rainier, the Cascades, and the Space Needle. We also have our designated viewpoints. They may be lesser known, but they provide views that are just as breathtaking.

Our viewpoints reflect the City's core values of being a welcoming city for all that prides itself on our quality of life, and aligns with Seattle Parks and Recreation's (SPR) vision of a city that supports healthy people, a healthy environment and strong communities.

Developing a reliable and consistent system that maintains these public viewpoints is a priority for the City. The importance of the views provided at these parks is captured throughout city policies, including the Comprehensive Plan 2035, our Shoreline Master Plan, and Seattle's Municipal Code.

Respecting our natural surroundings and key natural features is an unstated mandate: it is who we are, part of our DNA. Some may say it is our basic, but extraordinary, infrastructure.

Several of these viewpoints were established well over 100 years ago when Seattle's park system was first developed. They are important amenities and we want to ensure they are enjoyed for another 100 years. This is why the Viewpoint Advisory Team was convened.

The Viewpoint Advisory Team was charged with developing a set of options to the Superintendent that provides a feasible and equitable approach to preserving and maintaining these assets. Understanding the task at hand and the brevity of time, the group acknowledged two foundational conditions which would set them up for success: this exercise would focus on the 16 officially designated viewpoints as reference in Department Policy and Procedure 060-P 2.17; and the desire for a process to revisit the list of designated viewpoints, including the addition and removal of sites.



The group also recognized the fine balance between what could seem like competing interests- restoration and view preservation. The recommendations presented embody the following goals and objectives:

- To preserve the designated public views.
  - To protect steep slopes from erosion and surface run-off.
  - To provide maximum native habitat value for wildlife.
  - To prioritize public safety and minimize any hazard potential.
  - To provide consistent, pragmatic management direction to successfully establish and maintain sustainable vegetation for our viewpoints.
  - To increase efficiencies and reduce vegetation maintenance intervals
- To include racial equity and social justice as a core belief to ensure plans, policies, and budgets reflect our values so that we are equitably addressing the needs of our program and the community.

Over the course of four meetings, the group received numerous presentations and reports to help with the development process. As a result, the group identified recommendations to forward to the Superintendent, including the recommendation for a Phase 2 process.

The Superintendent will review the options presented, deliberate and ultimately make a recommendation based on the information presented.

## Categories

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### **RESOURCES**

As a city we must commit to continually prioritizing the views and the environment. Creating a positive impact will take time, commitment, and resources. There's a desire that any option that moves from recommendation to implementation is well resourced and adequately funded through all stages of development- ideation through establishment. There's an agreed upon understanding that true restoration will require a substantial investment initially and the return on investment will be seen in later years as the need for maintenance wanes.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Provide a comprehensive budget pertaining to all costs associated with the 16 designated viewpoints. The budget should cover all phases of the restoration efforts, including but not be limited to: planning, restoration, maintenance, successful establishment, monitoring, ongoing maintenance costs, and staffing capacity to ensure works gets done.
- Explore alternative funding mechanisms such as Public Private Partnerships and other creative solutions, such as emissions or hotel/lodging tax, for sustainable funding.



## **VIEWPOINT MANAGEMENT PLANS (VMPs)**

Because different areas within viewpoints have different needs and, at times, are maintained by different entities, the VMPs should serve as universal guides for maintenance and management procedures. We need a comprehensive approach that is accessible, easily understood, and widely shared. We encourage measures that promote our history and environment. To foster accountability, we need open communication where information is shared in a clear, accessible and timely manner. Included in this effort, is an update of City policy that meets the standards and paves the way to transformation: A policy that expands the definition of the experience provided by our viewpoint parks and is applicable to current, as well as future viewpoint designations.

### **Recommendations:**

- Update of the 2005 Vegetation Management Plan to create a detailed and overarching Viewpoint Management Plan that includes but is not limited to: goals and objectives, index or table of content, detailed delineations, distinct zones, menu or library of appropriate vegetation, descriptive of site-specific views, and design specs. The 16 site-specific pull-out plans will be short, simple, digestible, but they should belong to and reference back to a larger more comprehensive document or end-product. They will complimentary tools that are housed together.
- Apply a designer lens, via Landscape Architect, to develop specs as well as provide technical assessments for each site.

## **BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

It is important to note that while these recommendations stem from today's industry standards, this work will continue to evolve over time as research influences practices and new regulations are adopted. Our restoration and maintenance approaches should be multi-pronged, offering a variety of benefits, including preserving today's views, prioritizing safety, and preparing for tomorrow's climate needs. The success of one should not come at the expense of the other.

### **Recommendations:**

- Commit to universal language so there's shared understanding and a reference point.
- Apply restoration, maintenance, and design approaches that preserve views, promote environment, and do not create situations that could enhance slide potential or other risk factors.
- Develop a multi-beneficial maintenance approach that integrates and enhances environmental standards, including but not limited to: urban canopy, bee city, Tree City USA, wildlife habitat.
- Prioritize safety first and foremost- existing and projected risks should be factored within criteria, designation and design.



## **FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS**

The October 2018 recommendations are intended to launch an iterative learning process for the City. The goal is to preserve our views through environmentally sound practices, while also preparing for future environmental challenges. This exercise was focused on the 16 designated viewpoints as referenced in Department Policy and Procedure 060-P 2.17, and that it was a starting point in an ongoing conversation.

### **Recommendations:**

- Continue conversation and knowing that time is of the essence, highly recommend developing Phase 2 that would include but not be limited to: reviewing the designation criteria, process, and developing a clear path for the possibility of adding and removing sites. Because these sites are destinations, a city-wide conversation is needed for education, and outreach and engagement.
- Prioritize racial equity and social justice as a core belief to ensure plans, policies, and budgets reflect our values so that we are equitably addressing the needs of our program and the community.
- Once recommendations are presented, and decisions are made, develop a timeline, sequencing the various steps to fully understand breadth of work to ensure success.

## **OTHER**

- Proceed with phased restoration efforts.
- Prioritize within the 16 Viewpoint Parks, or tier-system, acknowledging that some viewpoints have more needs than others. SPR should take into account the following when prioritizing Health and safety; Racial equity; Site needs; High Use/High Frequency/Iconic; Existing VMP.