

Myrtle Reservoir Park, Public meeting #2, Jan 22, 2008

Q = a question or comment by a citizen, A = response by Parks or Project Team

Virginia Hassinger opened the meeting, introduced the project team of Nakano Associates, Jim Yamaguchi, and two others (Kenichi Nakano, Ida Otteson). Special welcome was made to all the young skaters who came out to this meeting. She also gave a brief recap of the Pro Parks levy, and referenced the Morgan Junction Neighborhood Plan recommendation for the reservoir space “develop for family oriented activities once the reservoir is lidded” She then brought in the Citywide Skatepark Plan and Myrtles reference in the Citywide Skatepark Plan CSP – that a skatepark can be at High Point Community Center, or at Myrtle, but there will not be two skateparks in this area. She said that the Parks dept believed (since no one currently assigned to the project was at the first meeting) that at the first scoping meeting there was strong concern about the location at the reservoir.

For this meeting – we’re at design, time to select the elements to include. The budget for the entire project is \$1,068,000, with \$668,000 for construction. From summary information from the first scoping meeting was the emphasis on the views, maximize green space. On the skatepark concerns, people mentioned noise and crime – so today Parks will show a design with the skatepark sited so people can see the context.

First question taken was a person who asked Virginia to take a vote of how many people were in favor of the skatepark. Virginia declined to do so, as voting on the skatepark itself was not the focus of the meeting.

Q How much influence do we have about the skatepark at this point?

A Nothing has been decided, just family orientation at this park, not something like athletic fields, and we will be including amenities. But we are taking schematic comments and we’ll come back to you to show that.

Q Are you taking comments on the High Point skatepark location?

A No, just comments on Myrtle.

Q At the first meeting, roughly 85% of us were not excited about a skatepark. What would it take for us to not have a skatepark?

A It takes public comment, here or via email. At this point, Parks has not invested. We will show you that we don’t have the funds to build a skatepark, but we will show you how this park could accommodate one.

Q Citywide Skatepark Plan (CSP) says Myrtle Reservoir would be a Skatespot.

A CSP does not say that, only that a place should be between High Point or Myrtle.

Virginia then read from the CSP about what has been recorded to date about neighbors concerns. But now, she continued, we now have a process to decide about the elements in the design.

Q What’s the size of Myrtle?

A (from a citizen) about the size of EC Hughes Park.

A From Jim Y – 130,000 square feet.

At this point Jim took over and began to review the important features the design project team considered, based on input from the first meeting and their evaluation of the site. The view was the most important, and to have congregation space, passive in nature. The space on top of the reservoir has limitations, so it’s just left as a large open space. And we have to address the ADA factor.

Referring to one drawing, he showed how the arrows indicate view directions, mostly to the north, northwest and northeast, and have many panoramic views. The alley to the west can provide “eyes on the park” but the closeness of the alley could also be a drawback (?not sure if heard correctly) I’m not sure either, doesn’t make sense. The mechanical building in the NW quadrant is at grade for the roof, sloping away grade will expose part of the building. There is a stairway that descends down to access building. But this will have to have a 12 foot fence around it. There will be about 2 feet of soil fill on top of the new reservoir lid. For the rest of the park, about one half of the park has up to a 20 degree slope. There’s a drainage swale in the middle of the reservoir cover. Most “active” areas have to be at the north end. Security is a primary focus for SPU, so fencing and mechanical building and parking are fenced(?). The fence currently surrounding the construction area will come down when the project is completed. There was also some discussion about the fencing which will have to remain around the elevated water tanks and the communication towers.

Q citizen talked about access to fence between house and park (I could not hear well enough, not sure if it was a concern or not)

Q What about access road, what is the material?

A We can use it, I think it’s asphalt, but there will be bollards to prevent cars from driving on it. It’s a road that’s always been there for service access.

Q Will there be a buffer between the slope and 35th Ave? I can just see rolling balls going out into the road.

A Yes, you’ll see when we review the design. It’s both a deterrent and an opportunity to be able to use the slope.

Q Will these drawings be going up on the Web?

A Yes, they will be posted on the Parks website, the WS Blog and the MoCA website..

Q Cal Anderson Park has a cool water feature/fountain.

A It is very cool, but we don’t have a similar budget.

Jim Y continued using the views and overall park area drawing to illustrate his points: We looked at what makes this site special – it’s the highest point in Seattle, hence the name High Point. So we wanted to incorporate that feature into a viewpoint area with benches oriented to the other hills in Seattle.

Q Is that where the picnic tables are going – it would be nice to have those where the viewpoints area will be.

A OK, but we can’t move play structures to the top of the reservoir. Benches up there will be OK. The area above the entire lid is grass, but use has to be informal rather than programmed play because of maintenance and fertilizer requirements that we can’t do on top of the reservoir, but it can be watered.

Q Could part of this grade be for a sledding hill?

A Possibly

Q Will there be a stoplight or walk signal at Willow and 35th?

A No, not to our knowledge

Q Where’s the parking?

A It’s not a destination park, more a neighborhood park, so parking was not put in the design.

Virginia then went over the budget numbers, saying that there's a lot of area and not much money for such a large space

(pasted in from later mailing)

Park Program & Budget:

Viewpoint \$16,000

Informal Play Field \$45,500

(Seed lawn & irrigation)

Children's Play Area \$95,000

(Ages 35,

& Ages 512)

Pavement & Hardscapes \$85,000

(Paths & Gathering Places)

Site Furnishings \$20,000

Landscaping \$95,000

(Plants, rain gardens, swale, etc.)

Irrigation System \$125,000

Site Lighting \$70,000

Park Signage \$5,000

Skate Park (future)

Site Construction Prep Costs: \$51,000

(Mobilization, survey, grading, temporary erosion control)

Total \$607,300

10% Contingency \$60,700

GRAND TOTAL \$668,000

ProParks Levy: \$1,068,000

Amount available for construction: \$668,000

Q Where's the difference between \$1,068,000 and the \$668,000 – it's a \$400,000 gap?

A It's in soft costs, like permits, etc.

Q Then you should show what those are and account for the difference.

Q Is there a website where we can donate to the skate park?

A You could apply for funding from the Neighborhood Matching Fund, I would also put you in touch with MoCA, who is the local community organization. You can write to me for more info.

Q If you build a skatepark, it would be a pretty good idea, next closest to me so I can skate is 30-45 minutes away by car.

Q (citizen responding to previous comment) It's not that we're opposed to one in the southwest, we still think HPCC is an option.

Q The last meeting was not the first time that a skatepark has come up. A skatepark was one of the ideas for this place as far back as 1998 and was brought up during the neighborhood planning. This is not a new idea.

Jim then put up the park schematic drawing with the skatepark option and pointed out the major elements of the design, trail, play areas etc.

Q Is there a restroom facility in the park?

A No it's not in the program, even if a skatepark is put here. To construct one would be about \$80,000.

Some discussion about restrooms, people thought portapotties would be smelly, concern about crime in the portapotty, and there's a maintenance issue. But people observed that the portapotty at the Lincoln Park tennis courts works OK.

Q So kids will be driving here – there needs to be parking.

A Kids will bus, and there is actually quite a bit of on street parking on both sides of 35th.

Q Once you start adding in all these features like the skatepark, it removes it away from a “neighborhood” park and makes it more into a destination park.

A (from Matt Johnson) I was a member of the task force and we put lots of consideration into all the sites in the city that were recommend in the CSP. This location and High Point were nominated during the public meetings, criteria was applied and we tried to use objective scoring. (and there was lots of give and take dialogue on this point that I didn't write down).

Q I support skatepark, I looked at the plan and didn't realize (?). The High Point location is supposed to be a district park. Matt says that Myrtle would be downsized to a skatespot.. (more debate until Virginia had to step in and assert control over the discussion).

At this point Virginia began to go row by row and let each person have an opportunity to speak.

Q I'm a skate mom, there are great parks around, but we need skatepark. My point is also that kids are well behaved.

Q I'm feeling real positive about the design with the skatepark and track.

Q The comment about High Point is disingenuous, there's no plan to redevelop the HPCC or have the money to do it. My kid is 4 years old, I want places for kids to have healthy activity and feel safe and trusted, so mark out the spot (?)

Q If we rule out holding the spot open, then we might lose the opportunity entirely.

Q About crowding, it's never parking crowded up at that area (?before construction?).

My second comment is our teenagers have no funding for their activities.

Back to Jim Y, who gave more description about the skatepark location.

One thing is with the skatepark in this NE corner, there are more “eyes on the park” at this corner. It's an addition to the gathering space with the kids play area going up the slope area. Parents could see the skatepark from all areas of the park. It's a 10,000 sq ft skatepark as drawn here. We also have a chance to develop informal rain gardens.

Q What's that brown area north of the maintanece building?

A It's a drainage swale, a Seattle Public Utilities feature.

Q Around the cell tower, will that fence stay?

A Yes

Q Does the budget include money for art?

A No

Q What about lighting?

A There may be low level lighting still to be determined.

Q Swales – in the new High Point community, water goes into a pond and then into Longfellow Creek. Will this be the same or not?

A No that's high maintenance, we're thinking of just grass, but we may be able to do some native plantings in swales.

Q But what about the water itself?

A It will go into the storm drains.

Q Will there be trash cans?

A Yes.

Jim Y then put up the schematic version that has a rain garden in the NE corner instead of the skatepark. The rain garden showed trees remaining, and he said that both options would have a walking loop.

Q Is the chain link fence required (around the building)?

A Yes, it will be black, but must be chain link and nothing can go on or around the fence that affects security, like bushes in front of it that people could hide in.

Q Will there be a closing time for the park?

A Yes.

Q I like tying in the south view point with the rest of the park

A We tried to find a way to connect the two, but SPU will not let us to access the stairway on the wall north of viewpoint (to connect the two sites. The top of the wall must remain fenced, and providing for security of the tanks and adjacent electric components are challenging.

Q When are they taking down the fence for general access?

A Seeding grass can't be done until April, the contractors are about a month behind schedule, and hopefully the fence will come down in the summer. If we do our construction in the fall, we can't do our park seeding until spring 09.

Q Will there be a safety feature at skatepark to prevent kids from going into the street.

A We're not dealing with that at this point.

Q The entrances to Cal Anderson Park are at the corners, not at midblock, I'd like to see better access from the corners.

A Jim said that he used the sidewalk to gain some elevation for ADA access from the southeast corner.

Q I like the celebration of the "high point", I like the intergenerational areas, I'm encouraged by the scale of the skatepark within the park, I encourage the skatepark concept.

Q The SW corner needs more emphasis.

Q I support the skatepark, we're not criminals. I get sneered at, built my own place but it was removed by the police. There's nothing anywhere near here and there should be. There really isn't any place to fit a skatepark at HPCC, certainly not a regional one, maybe not even at 10,000 foot one.

Q I echo what the prior speaker said, I applaud Parks effort to place skatepark's in parks. I think a "friends of" should be started.

Q I thank people for changing their arguments (sarcastic) from skaters are criminals to a skatepark is OK but put it at HP. But saying things like traffic, noise, parking are valid, unlike saying "criminal" which isn't. It's a social justice issue.

Q Everyone's trying to defend criminals. I spent 6 years building a police memorial. And 2 months later, skateboarders destroyed the memorial, I have the video.

Q. I'm here to speak for the earth. I don't think concrete belongs at this site. Water conservation should be a focus for this park, to show how the natural systems are connected.

Q Young people need a place that's not in front of the TV and is an active place.

Q Do we get to mark up the schematics (like was done at the Morgan Junction Park meeting the previous week)?

A No, we're using a different process.

Q What do you put in a Rain Garden that makes it different?

A It's a place where you direct all the rain water to percolate back into the ground.

Q I'm concerned about light pollution, the lighting should be pointed downwards.

A Light pollution is something we'll look at, especially for the residents around the park, we'll need shielding.

Q I don't think we're trying to emphasize the criminal issue, I think it's more about the green space and security of parks. (more was said, but it doesn't make sense in my notes racist blog????)

Q I'm from Shoreline, a skateboarder for 20 years. For me to skate, I had to carry ramps to basketball courts. It's great to see the kids come out to this meeting.

Q We should judiciously place our green space balanced with concrete.

Q I'm a South Park skater, I'm pro skatepark I think there's a way to incorporate the amount of concrete.

Q I want to reiterate what the lady said about the earth relationship to turning on the tap. Parks needs to have the exquisite story of how we get our water, it's thematic that we teach respect for water and it's under our feet (in the reservoir).

Q Regarding the kids who trashed the police memorial, that's wrong, but if you add more skateparks it would provide a place for them to skate and prevent damage such as this because the kids have no where to skate.

Q When I lived on 39th, we had to skate in the streets.

Q I live a block away and wasn't thrilled with the skatepark, thought it would take away from the views. But we have to take one for the team, or it will never get done.

Q There are conflicting views presented here. A neighborhood park versus the attraction of kids arriving by bus and parking and high traffic. I also have a big concern about the lack of facilities. We have an opportunity to spend quality time in the park, and there will be needs, especially with little kids.

Q I think HPCC is the easy answer. I would also like to see a heated pool, but that would be a budget issue. Why can't I get what I want, not just what the skateboarders want?

Q I support a 10,000 sf skatepark, but not at the budget, that's a large amount of money for the feature (ed note: I think in one of the debate sessions someone (not parks) threw out a number but I didn't write it down)

Q People park at the reservoir and drink, I'm concerned about it starting up again when the fence is removed. I want to reiterate the need for a closing time and locking any bathrooms, also no alcohol.

Q Great job on a beautiful park. But my son is a cop, and he says that skateparks attract drug dealers trying to sell drugs to kids. 35th Ave is a drawing place.

A If you site the skatepark with "eyes on the park" in mind, it helps reduce crime. The cops in Ballard say that there have been no crime increase issues. When you open any new facility, there could be start up problems, that that occurs for any new facility.

Q It looks like you will cut 5 trees down for the skatepark. I think the ADA path is redundant with the access road already there. Also, I find that your budget chart with missing costs is alarming.

Q I support the skatepark, there's all this talk about increased parking, but that happens at playgrounds, courts, etc.

Q I've heard the same comments about skateparks as Ercolini Park. It's our chance to site one for skateboarders, there are softball and soccer fields all over the city for me to go to

Virginia closed the meeting with a brief summary of next steps. There are lots of notes from this meeting that will be reviewed. The schematics will be posted on the city's

website, MoCA and the WS Blog. There will be two more public meetings one in March and the last TBD (see handout for full schedule.)