

FREEWAY PARK IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT



Freeway Park should be a great downtown destination that connects the city and brings people together: *a tranquil place with an adventurous spirit.*

The Freeway Park Improvements Project will repair, restore, and potentially enhance original park features in support of the park's daily use, maintenance, and programming. The goal of the project is to make the park more welcoming, bring people back to the park, and restore its role as a centerpiece of Seattle's park system and an icon of landscape architecture.

Client
Seattle Parks & Recreation (SPR)

Design Team

Walker|Macy: Lead, Landscape Architecture
HDR (Civil & Structural Engineering, Irrigation);
Bassetti (Architecture); Studio Matthews (Wayfinding);
Watt (Lighting); Reyes Engineering (Electrical
Engineering); ETM (Programming); 3 Square Blocks
(Public Involvement); BOLA (Historic Preservation);
DCW (Cost Estimating); BRH (Survey)

Project Partner
Freeway Park Association (FPA)

scope

planting & irrigation	infrastructure for events & daily programming
furnishings	potential right-of-way improvements
paving	potential fountain improvements
comfort station (restrooms)	potential improvements to support children's play
lighting	
wayfinding	

budget

Total Project Budget
\$10 million

Construction Budget
\$6 million

The project is funded by the Washington State Convention Center Expansion Project

schedule

Design & Documentation
Fall 2019 - Spring 2021

Construction
Winter 2022 - Fall 2022 (estimated)

ORIGINAL DESIGN



The park was designed to celebrate nature and the city, and create a new relationship between them.

Freeway Park is considered a ground breaking masterpiece of landscape architecture. It was the first park built over an interstate highway. Designed to be both an “exciting nature park” with an “adventurous atmosphere” and a respite from the city’s traffic, smells, and noises, the park was created to mend the new freeway’s scar on the city and reconnect people across it. It was the result of community activism, forward-thinking, and Seattle’s civic process.

did you know?

Freeway Park is an iconic work of modernist landscape architecture by Lawrence Halprin & Associates. It has been nominated the National Register of Historic Places and City of Seattle landmark status.

At 5.2 acres, it is the largest public park in downtown Seattle.

The waterfall helps to mask the noise of traffic below and surrounding the park.

- 1966** Downtown Seattle section of I-5 is completed
- 1968** Seattle voters pass “Forward Thrust” bonds that will fund a lid over the freeway
- 1970** Design begins
- 1976** Freeway Park opens



FREWAY PARK IMPROVEMENTS



THE PARK TODAY



40 years of change have led to new challenges and opportunities.

Since it opened in 1976, the park has matured and evolved. so has the City around it. The Convention Center was built and new buildings, public spaces and entrances were added on to the edges of the park. The trees and plantings have grown more than anticipated. Original park features are old and require repair. The park is actively programmed, drawing a diverse community and successfully demonstrating new ideas about the use and meaning of public space in Seattle today.

freeway park association

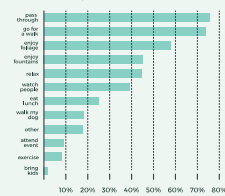
Freeway Park Association (FPA) was formed in 1993 and has built an enduring partnership with SPR to raise funds and awareness about Freeway Park and to advocate for the city's largest downtown public park as an essential space for community building. This model of public/private partnerships in urban public space management is growing in popularity and could signal a change for public parks as communities play a greater role in the stewardship of their places.

FPA's work includes advocacy, fundraising, partnership building, program design, activation, and community outreach.

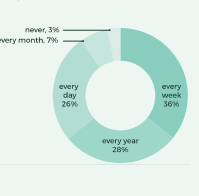
FPA's Programming & Activation Strategy layers 3 tiers of activation to provide a balance of passive and active opportunities: Daily Activations, Event Series, and Signature Events.

freewayparkassociation.org

What types of activities do you do in the park?



How often do you visit the park?



PROCESS



We are at the beginning of a two year process to restore and improve the park.

1. The project team has analyzed the park as it is today: What works well? What needs improvement? How can the park evolve to meet its potential?
2. We are developing preliminary design concepts that address the project's goals and park's needs, and will gather input from the public, stakeholders, and City. — we are here
3. We will determine which improvements are most important and develop detailed design and restoration plans that meet the project's construction budget.
4. Once the project is approved and permitted, it will go to bid and construction.

stakeholders

The project team will meet regularly with an Advisory Group comprised of representatives of several stakeholders, including:

- Compass Housing Alliance
- Downtown Seattle Association
- First Hill Improvement Association
- Horizon House
- Lid I-5 Steering Committee
- Town Hall
- Visit Seattle
- Washington Holdings
- Washington State Convention Center
- Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

outreach

The project team is also meeting with others who have a special interest in the park, to listen to their ideas and concerns. To date we have met with:

- People experiencing homelessness who use the park
- Seattle Police Department and Seattle Parks Rangers
- Park maintenance staff

We will continue to reach out to these groups and others throughout the design process.

The public can check back to the project website for quarterly updates on the project. We will be sharing design updates on the website and in person in early 2020.

www.seattle.gov/parks/restorefreewaypark

design review

Seattle Parks & Recreation staff will oversee the design and technical documentation of the project.

The Seattle Design Commission will review the design at the end of each phase.

The park has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

The work will comply with the Secretary of Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties, as well as specific guidance for parks found in the Secretary of Interior's *Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*.

WHY CHANGE?



- ▶ **The park has changed and needs to be restored and repaired.**
- ▶ **It is a nationally significant park that deserves high quality materials and maintenance.**
- ▶ **City and park context have changed dramatically since it was designed.** Physical and programmatic changes may be necessary to preserve the park's use and legacy.
- ▶ **The park was meant to be an innovative response to the pressing urban challenge of its time: the freeway.** In 2019, the challenges are different. Responding to contemporary influences with thoughtful updates would support this original vision.

At 43 years old, Freeway Park is considered a ground breaking masterpiece of modernist landscape architecture.

The Improvements Project requires a thoughtful design approach that balances restoration with new opportunities that will serve the community.

6 OBSERVATIONS



- ▶ **Many people don't know the park or understand what it offers.**
- ▶ **Entrances and exits are hard to find from inside and outside the park.**
- ▶ **The park has many barriers, both physical and perceived.**
- ▶ **There are not many children and families using the park.**
- ▶ **The park is no longer as comfortable as it should be.**
- ▶ **Programming brings more people to Freeway Park, but the park's design poses challenges.**

The design team spent three months analyzing Freeway Park. We reviewed original drawings and design intent; assessed and mapped park systems such as access, circulation, and arrangement of park spaces; and observed how the park is used today. We have assessed how the park's design and current conditions support or challenge positive uses.

We arrived at six key observations, which provide a basis of design for all our work moving forward.

The Improvements Project will respond to these observations with park-wide strategies and specific designs to address the most important challenges and opportunities facing Freeway Park today.

RESTORATION

The most essential work of the Improvements Project is to restore the park to its original design and good condition. Adhering to the Secretary of the Interior's *Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, we will focus our design effort and construction budget on ensuring that Freeway Park is properly restored.

preserve & restore

Preserve and restore original character defining features. Make adjustments to meet current standards and codes.

- fountains and walls
- paving
- lawns
- significant trees and planting
- overall park design

repair or replace

Repair or replace broken elements. Adapt the design to discourage misuse, vandalism, and theft.

- paving
- benches
- trash receptacles
- drinking fountains
- irrigation and drainage systems

remove

Remove features that detract from the original design. Replace them with high quality standards.

- wooden storage facilities
- pedestrian lights
- round planters
- portable toilets (seasonal)



PARK ENTRANCES

Since Freeway Park opened in 1976, new buildings and public spaces were added on to the edges of the park, fundamentally changing park circulation and access, and making the park difficult to find and navigate. The Improvements Project can simplify access by establishing a clear hierarchy with four primary entrances into the park.

clarify entrances

There are currently 12 entrances to the main part of the park. This causes confusion and poses challenges for park security and emergency response.

The proposed park entrance strategy establishes four primary entrances located along key city walking routes that pass the park and connect to primary walking routes through the park.

Minor entrances remain open but are not highlighted.

Access routes through other property (e.g. private property) can be marked with wayfinding and signage, to connect people to the park.

Two existing entrances on the alley behind the park are closed to the public, gated for service access only.

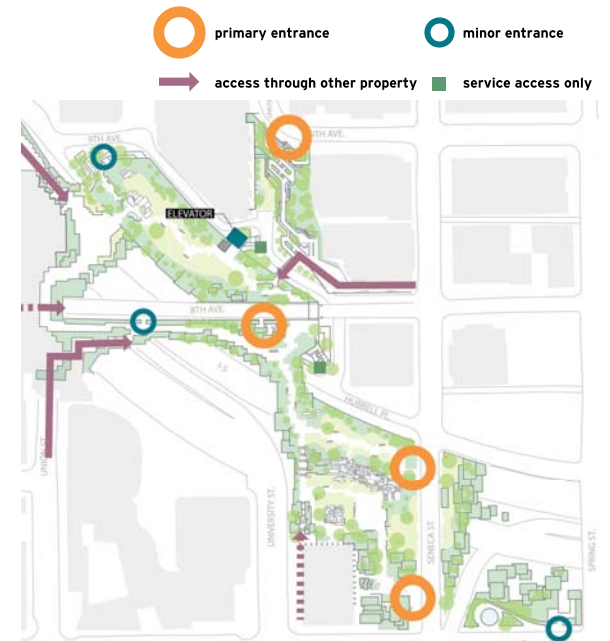
This project also recommends that ADA parking stalls be designed for park visitors in the garage below the Upper Lawns. The elevator is being improved as a separate project.



connect to the city's pedestrian network



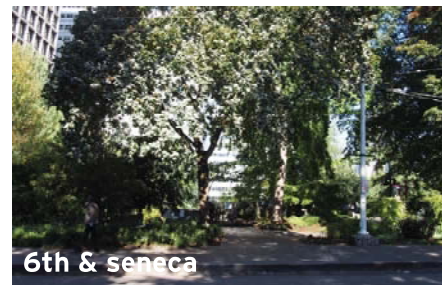
emphasize two main park routes



establish four primary entrances



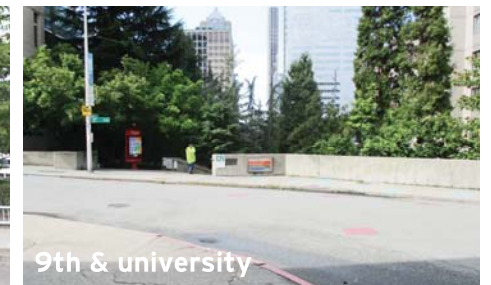
seneca



6th & seneca



8th south



9th & university

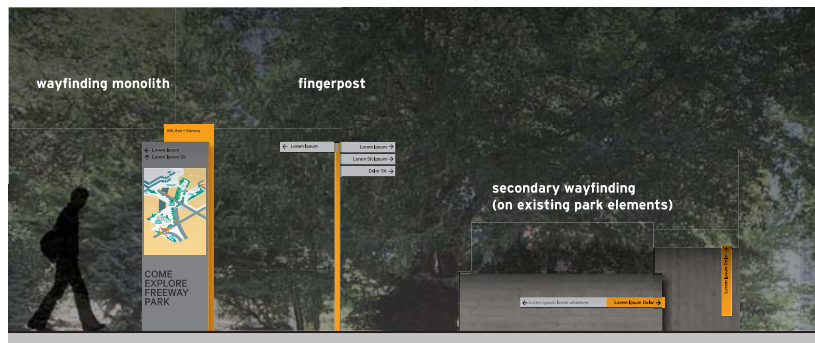
WAYFINDING

Freeway Park today is challenging to find and navigate. It can rarely be seen from outside its boundaries and its destinations and entrances are spread out and unmarked. The Improvements Project will solve these problems with an integrated approach to wayfinding that includes modifications to the landscape as well as new elements including lighting, signage and maps. Everyone should know where they are and feel comfortable walking through the park.



entrance elements

Entrance markers will help to make park entrances more visible from inside and outside the park. These could be brightly colored so they can stay small but be recognized from far away.



signage family

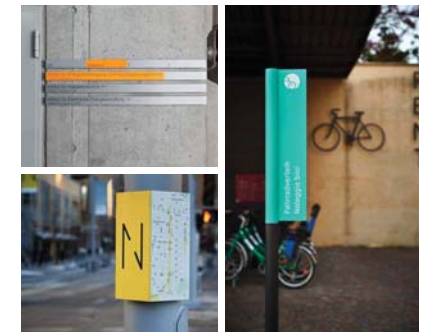
Wayfinding signs throughout the park will help people know where they are and how to find their destination, while encouraging them to explore the whole park.

A new park map will show key park features, park entrances and walking routes, links to city destinations and neighborhoods, and walking times from A to B. It will be a friendly and inviting design.

The wayfinding strategy could include interpretive elements that tell the story of Freeway Park and its significance.



example of park map



small dose of strong color

dislike it

not sure

like it

LIGHTING

Freeway Park today is dark and uncomfortable. Though paths are well lit, the rest of the park is not. The Improvements Project will implement a new lighting strategy to make the whole park safe, comfortable, and beautiful after dark.

goals

- Enhance the park experience at night.
- Improve wayfinding.
- Improve perception of safety and comfort.

assessment

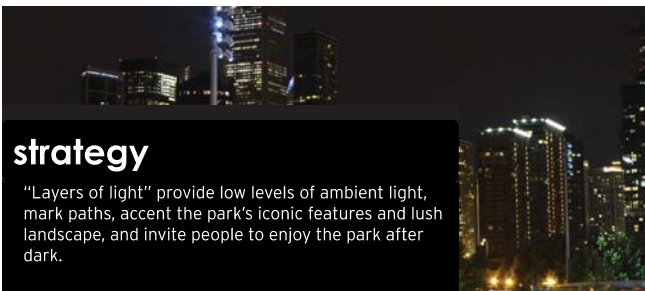
Lighting in Freeway Park needs to be improved. The original design, based on five tall mast lights to “moonlight” large open spaces is no longer effective and doesn’t provide for the sense of security and comfort we expect in a downtown park. Many areas in the park are too dark to see.

Pole lights added ten years ago illuminate the paths but leave the rest of the park dark, creating a disconcerting tunnel effect that effectively shrinks the park at night.

Seasonal installations of decorative lighting in Freeway Park have been effective in accenting its features and landscape areas.

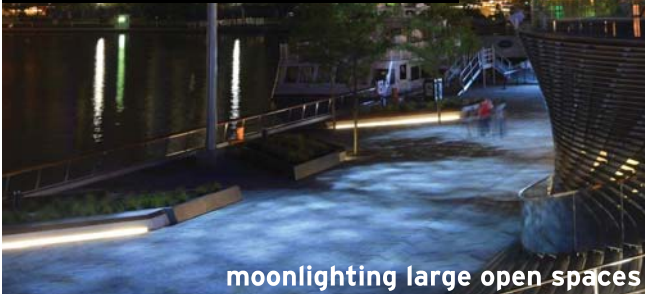


high contrast



strategy

“Layers of light” provide low levels of ambient light, mark paths, accent the park’s iconic features and lush landscape, and invite people to enjoy the park after dark.



moonlighting large open spaces



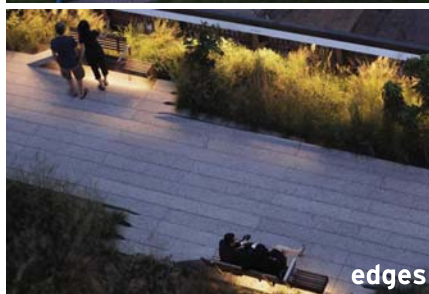
paths



walls



landscape



edges



fountains



underpasses

dislike it

not sure

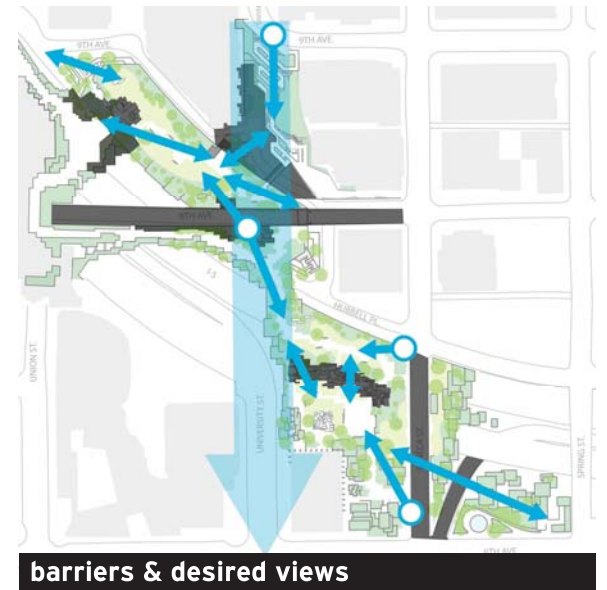
like it

FREWAY PARK IMPROVEMENTS



MAKING VIEWS

Freeway Park is big and sprawling but divided into small spaces that are secluded from one another and the surrounding city. While respecting the original design intent, the Improvements Project can create “stitches” across physical and perceived barriers by opening select views between park spaces, to improve visibility, orientation, and sense of safety in the park. There are also opportunities to connect the park to the city fabric and Puget Sound beyond, by opening long views out of the park.

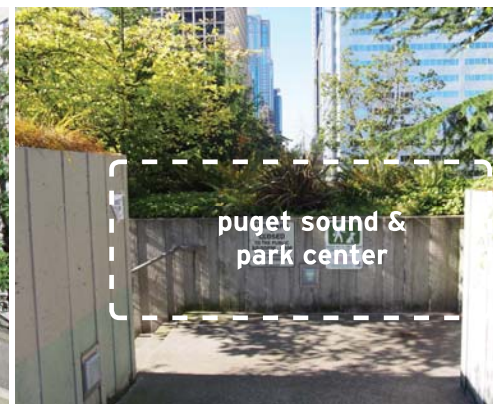
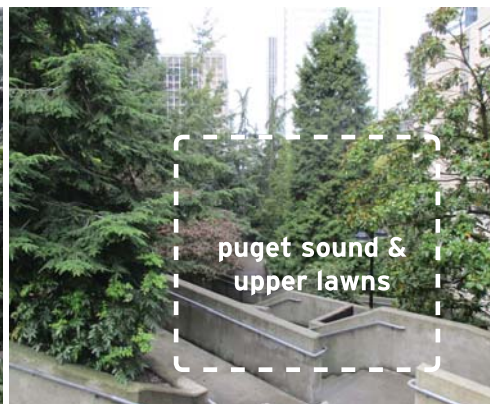


strategies

Selective pruning or removal of shrubs and trees, to eliminate hiding spots and to create filtered or open views

Selective modification to site walls, to eliminate hiding spots and to create open views

Selective grading modifications (lifting or lowering the ground) to create open views



dislike it

not sure

like it

USING THE WHOLE PARK

The original design for Freeway Park features four primary park spaces, connected by circulation areas. Over time, the uses of these spaces have evolved, though their design does not necessarily support the reasons people go to them. The Improvements Project has the opportunity to reinforce the unique character and park function of each space, to encourage visitors to explore and use the whole park.

primary park spaces

Seneca Plaza is the iconic heart of Freeway Park, home of the Canyon and Cascade fountains, and center of activity for programming and events. It is closest to downtown and the most dramatic and adventurous landscape in the park.

Upper Seneca is a quiet place to sit above Seneca Plaza and off the main flow of traffic through the park. It is a tranquil forest landscape overlooking the top of the Canyon.

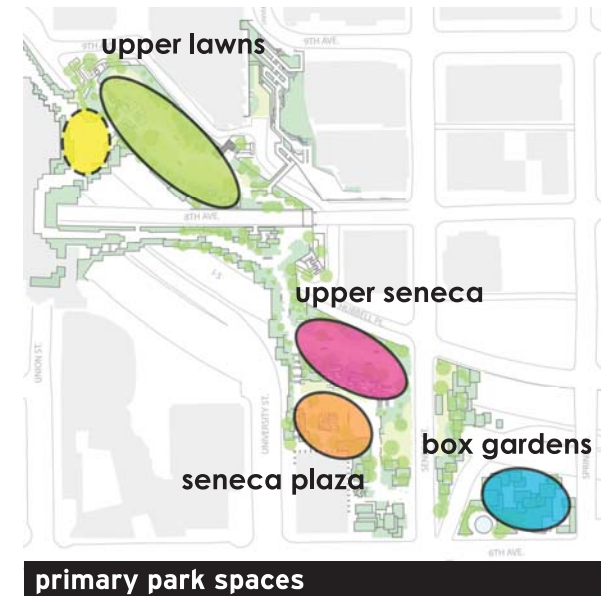
The **Upper Lawns** serve as a neighborhood park for the surrounding apartment buildings and residents of First Hill. It is the best place in the park to lay a picnic blanket or throw a ball. Today, it is tucked away, relatively isolated from the other primary park spaces and the Convention Center nextdoor.

The **Box Gardens** area is a sculptural park space designed to be appreciated from a distance. It has no park function, per se, but has potential to be an important park space.

other uses

This project will also explore more ways to activate **interstitial zones** between primary park spaces, to reinforce the idea of using the whole park.

These strategies may include a botanical walk, interpretive walk, temporary art installations, and fitness programs that take advantage of the park's unique geography and features.



upper lawns



upper seneca



seneca plaza



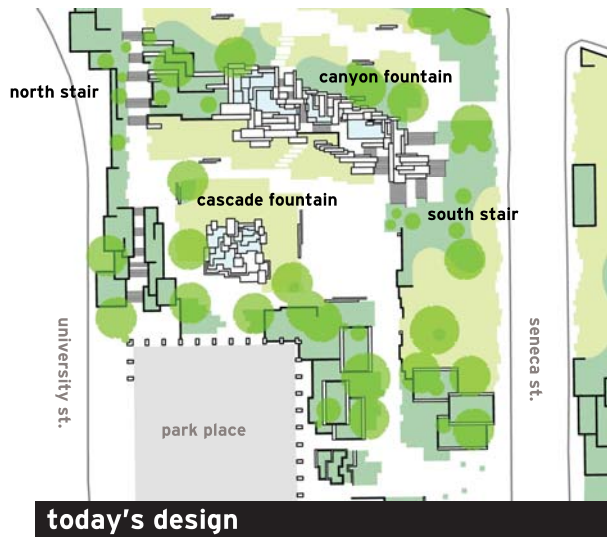
box gardens



SENECA PLAZA

Seneca Plaza is the iconic heart of Freeway Park, home of the Canyon and Cascade fountains, and the center of activity for programming and events. It is closest park space to downtown and the most dramatic and adventurous landscape in the park.

The Improvements Project has the opportunity to bring back the sense of discovery and play in Seneca plaza, to make it more visible and inviting, accessible to everyone, and functional as a energetic program space.

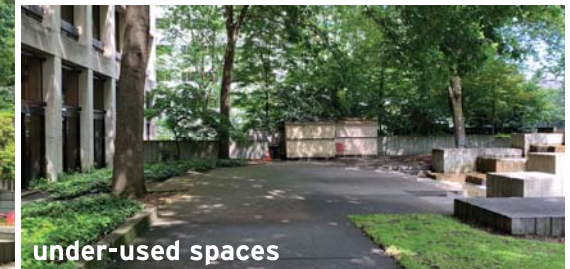


original design intent

- iconic center of Freeway Park
- adventurous features for discovery and play
- connection to Park Place building (planned to have a restaurant facing the plaza)

today's challenges

- overly shaded
- some areas lack use or appeal
- poor connection to building
- poor visibility from street and throughout plaza
- Cascade fountain is not accessible as an interactive play fountain. It also lacks a restroom nearby, as required by Washington State health code



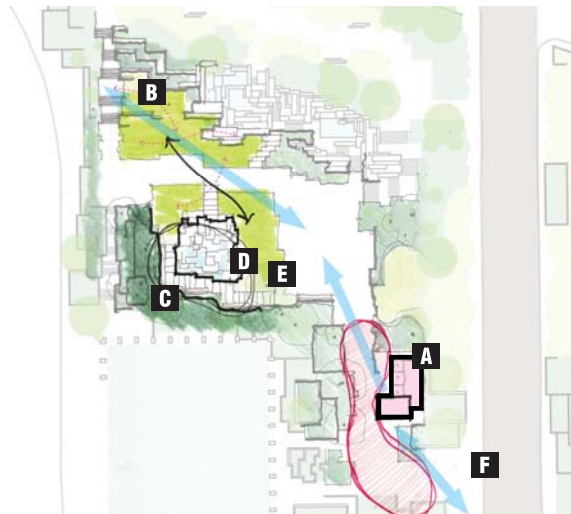
SENECA PLAZA

design concepts

The following concepts address current challenges and new opportunities for Seneca Plaza, while preserving the intent and character defining features of the original design. They are focused on enhancing Seneca Plaza's role as the iconic heart and most lively space in the park, a downtown destination.

These concepts are shown on two "demonstration plans" which, together, illustrate a range of approaches.

- A** New staffed park building, with park concierge, public restrooms, and storage.
- B** Expanded lawn and modified walls by the north stair, to create a more open area overlooking the plaza.
- C** Modified landscape to better integrate the Cascade Fountain into plaza space and make a more appealing place to enjoy the fountain.
- D** Modified Cascade Fountain to make part of it ADA accessible and to make the fountain safe and inviting to play in.
- E** Pruning or removing some large trees and shrubs to open up views and allow more sunlight into the plaza.
- F** ADA passenger drop-off zone at Seneca entrance.
- G** Expanded plaza space to better accommodate events.
- H** Expanded lawn on the south end, with hillside seating overlooking the plaza.



concept demonstration plan 1



concept demonstration plan 2



dislike it

not sure

like it

THE CANYON

The Canyon fountain is Freeway Park's most dramatic and iconic architectural feature. It was designed to be explored and used in creative ways, and was intended to be "accessible to all."

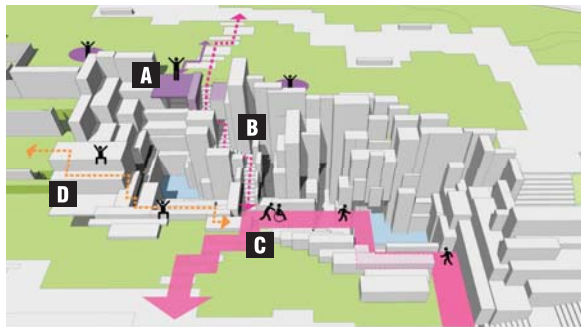
The Improvements Project has the opportunity to restore this vision by addressing security issues, making parts of the Canyon truly accessible, and providing better opportunities to approach and appreciate its sculptural form from above and below.

original design intent

iconic visual feature
intended to be "accessible to all"
immersive experience inspired by natural Pacific Northwest geography

today's challenges

obscured entrances
only one accessible path leads to the edge of the fountain, at the bottom
no accessible path into the Canyon, from Seneca Plaza
no accessible path to the Canyon, from Upper Seneca
limited views from top to bottom
lack of use leads to misuse



design concepts

The following concepts address current challenges and new opportunities for the Canyon Fountain in Seneca Plaza, while preserving the intent and character defining features of the original design, and making it more accessible to a broader group of park users.

- A** ADA accessible view points at the top of the Canyon.
- B** Improvements to the existing path (stair) to make it more visible and inviting.
- C** A new ADA accessible route through the fountain, connected to Seneca Plaza.
- D** At-grade lawn connections that invite people to climb and explore.



dislike it

not sure

like it

UPPER LAWNS

The Upper Lawns serve as a neighborhood park for the surrounding apartment buildings and residents of First Hill. It is the best place in the park to lay a picnic blanket or throw a ball. Today, it is tucked away, relatively isolated from the other primary park spaces and the Convention Center nextdoor.

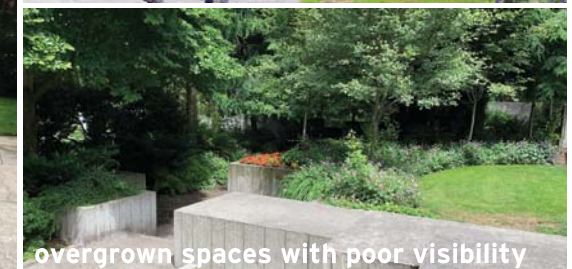
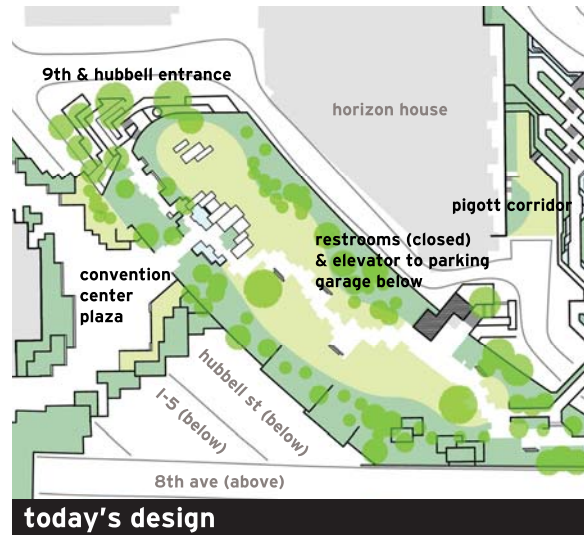
The Improvements Project has the opportunity to enhance the character and use of the Upper Lawns space, to make it better connected, more comfortable and functional as a neighborhood park, and inviting as a place for kids to play.

original design intent

quiet and serene park area
primary circulation route, exiting the north end of the park toward Pike Street (no longer functions as such)

today's challenges

space is divided by path and grading; lawns are not large enough for many recreational activities
deep shade and poor visibility at edges
restrooms are closed
weak connections to Convention Center Plaza and Pigott Corridor
drainage issues



UPPER LAWNS

design concepts

The following concepts address current challenges and new opportunities for the Upper Lawns, while preserving the intent and character defining features of the original design. They are focused on enhancing its role as the park's large, green open space serving the neighborhood.

- A** A larger lawn area to support neighborhood activities and recreation.
- B** A restored restroom building, with added space for a park concierge and storage.
- C** A sunny, kid-friendly space with seating and better access to original park features for climbing and playing.
- D** A new direct connection to Pigott Corridor. (see Pigott Corridor exhibit)
- E** Pruning or removing some large trees and shrubs to open up views and allow more sunlight into the space.
- F** Improvements to the 9th and Hubbell entrance (stair) to improve visibility



concept demonstration plan



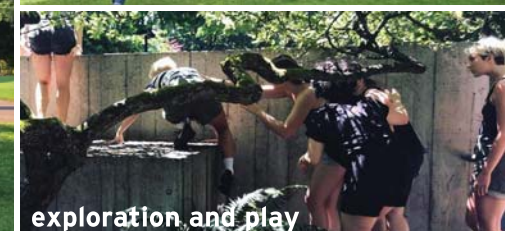
park concierge & programming



big usable lawn



iconic features



exploration and play

dislike it

not sure

like it

FREWAY PARK IMPROVEMENTS



PIGOTT CORRIDOR

Pigott Corridor is a key connection from Freeway Park to the First Hill Neighborhood. Designed years after the park opened, it is now an integral to park circulation route. Throughout the day it is full of people using the park to get from here to there.

The Improvements Project has the opportunity to create a primary park entrance at the top of the corridor, at 9th and University, and provide a direct connection into the Upper Lawns.

original design intent

Pigott Corridor is not part of the original park
it reflects Lawrence Halprin's vision for Freeway Park to catalyze additional green connections to the city around it
it provides an accessible route from 9th and University down into park (approximately 40 feet in elevation)
moving water and woodland planting create a serene environment

today's challenges

circulation in the lower half of the corridor is complex and confusing
the corridor provides a good connection from First Hill but bypasses the closest park space, the Upper Lawns.
the lower portion of this route is dark, uninviting, and disorienting

design concepts

- A** Improvements to the 9th and University park entrance, with new signage and improved visibility and lighting.
- B** Pruning or removing some large trees to open up views of the park and Puget Sound. Modification to some walls, to improve visibility in the corridor.
- C** A new direct connection to the Upper Lawns, landing near the restored restrooms and park concierge building.
- D** Service stair to be adjusted or relocated.



dislike it not sure like it

PARK CENTER

In the center of Freeway Park there is a place where park paths converge directly below the bustling city sidewalk of 8th Avenue. Today these two circulation systems are barely connected: the park entrance on 8th is almost invisible and the stair down to the park is hidden and intimidating.

The Improvements Project has the opportunity to create a primary park entrance at 8th, with views of the city and Puget Sound, and a gracious stair down to a new “park center” where visitors can get oriented before continuing into the rest of the park.

original design intent

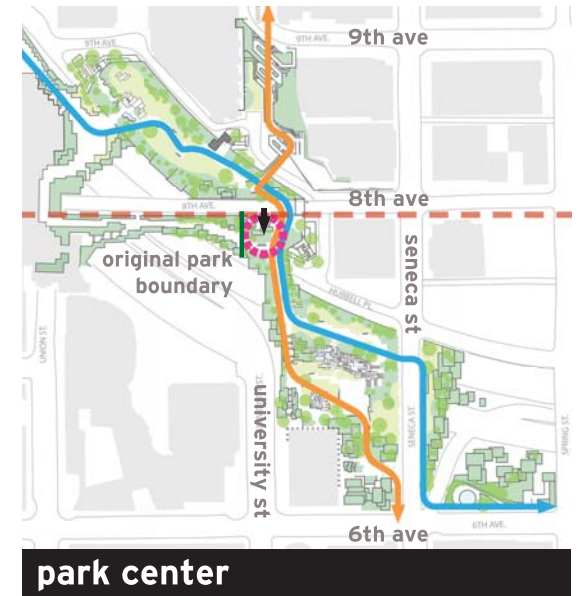
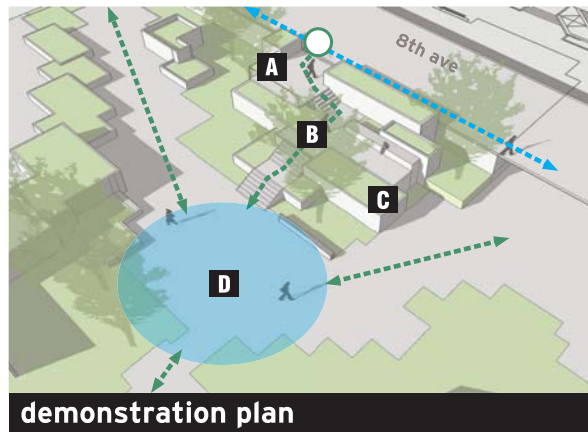
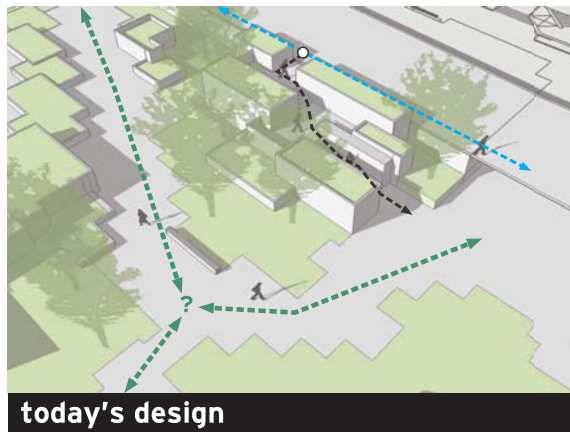
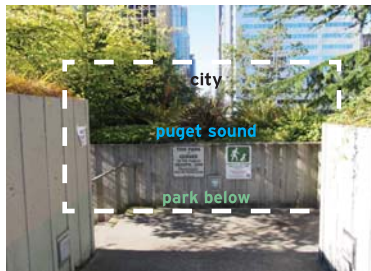
minor park entrance at 8th avenue
 connection to primary park circulation route (connection to convention center was added later)

today's challenges

many people pass the park on 8th, but don't enter
 8th avenue entrance and stair are hidden from above and below
 confusing circulation, with no indication of destinations
 Poor sight lines with hiding spots

design concepts

- A** Improvements to the 8th avenue park entrance, including signage and lighting, with accessible overlook and view to Puget Sound.
- B** Gracious stair connection to the center of “park center” space.
- C** Modifications to original walls and planting, as needed for circulation and visibility.
- D** Enlarged “park center” space with clear wayfinding, park information, and seating.



dislike it not sure like it

BOX GARDENS

The Box Gardens area was designed as a sculptural park space to be appreciated from a distance. It is the place where Freeway Park reaches down to the interstate freeway, proposing a positive relationship between the city life above and mobility below. But in 2019 this gesture is no longer apparent, and, lacking park function, most of this space is neglected and misused. This is perhaps the most challenging park space.

The Improvements Project has the opportunity to redefine the significance of this large park area, either by adding a new use, or by transforming its visual presence to restore its original dramatic gesture and statement about urban transformations.

original design intent

iconic feature connecting the park above to the interstate freeway below

lush planting juxtaposed with rigorous architecture of concrete structures

intersection of 6th Ave. and Spring St. designed as a collection of small outdoor rooms with unclear function

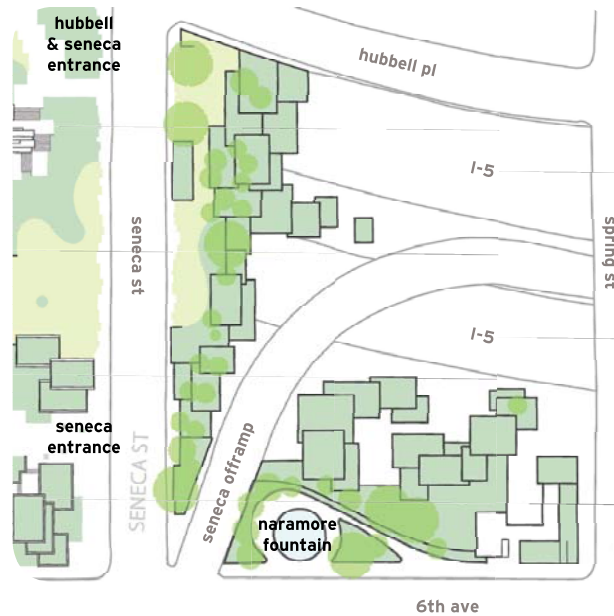
today's challenges

loud and exposed environment

separated from rest of park

planting areas are not accessible for maintenance and are used for camping and drug use

without active park functions, this area is neglected and effectively abandoned



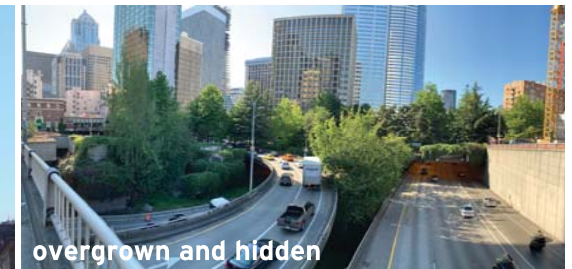
today's design



freeway landscape



no-park function



overgrown and hidden



iconic feature

BOX GARDENS

two different approaches

This board illustrates two entirely different approaches to restoring the Box Gardens as a primary park space, while preserving the intent and character defining features of the original design.

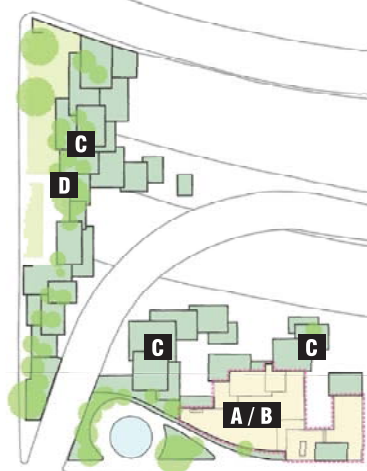


community & positive use

The first approach is to enlarge and activate the landscape rooms at the south end of the original park design, with park uses that will be successful in bringing energy and community to this corner of the park.

This approach adds a new program to the original park design, but preserves the general appearance of the Box Gardens.

- A** A small dog park integrated with the structures of the original design.
- B** A small skate plaza intend for local community and youth organizations.
- C** Restored planting areas, modified to address safety and maintenance issues.
- D** New seating area facing Seneca Plaza.

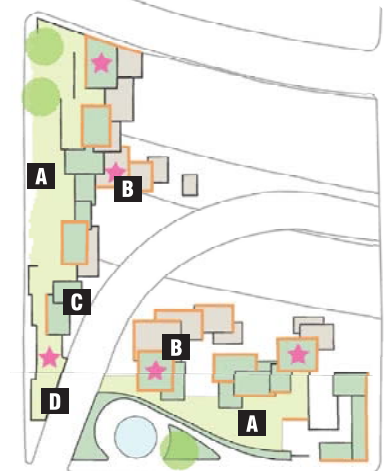


updated icon

The second approach is to reestablish a dramatic and innovative visual connection between city and freeway, using the original architecture of concrete structures bridging the two landscape.

This approach entails a radical transformation of the image of the Box Gardens, but preserves the design intent.

- A** Expanded and new lawn areas, and modification of some Box Garden walls, to create a more open and accessible environment.
- B** Art and lighting installations, throughout the Box Gardens, visible from the freeway and city streets.
- C** A new planting scheme that is unique to this area of the park.
- D** Removal of most trees, to open views.



dislike it not sure like it

FREWAY PARK IMPROVEMENTS

dislike it not sure like it