

Garfield Super Block

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Commissioners Present

Justin Clark, Acting Chair
Kim Baker
Elizabeth Conner
Mark Johnson
Amalia Leighton

Commissioners Excused

Azzurra Cox
Vinita Sidhu
Elaine Wine

Non-Voting Commissioners Present

Adam Amrhein

Non-Voting Commissioners Excused

Jill Crary

Project Description & Background

The Garfield Super Block is located within the heart of the Central Area neighborhood on a city block bound by Cherry St, Alder St., 23rd Ave, and 25th Ave. The block includes several community, civic & cultural, and educational amenities such as the Garfield Community Center, Garfield Playfield, Medgar Evers Pool, Quincy Jones Performing Arts Center, and Garfield High School. The current design proposal, which focuses on the redesign of the park and adjacent programming located on the northern portion of the block, was developed out of a community led process that was initiated in 2005. In 2005 the community planned for the development of a legacy promenade to highlight the rich cultural diversity and history of the Central Area. The plan, which was never realized, was placed on hold until starting back up in 2014-2015 as an initiative led by the Garfield Super Block Coalition. In 2019, The Coalition received City funding to develop a concept design for the project. The updated design proposal will expand the original promenade idea to include a cultural loop that wraps around the park (highlighted by a red line in the plan), highlight entrances/gateways & connections, and to renovate park elements to better meet needs of community.

Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the Garfield Super Block project. The purpose of today's meeting was to receive a briefing on the Garfield Super Block project. The Commission did not take an action during today's meeting, but provided the project team with recommendations to address prior to the next review. The SDC will review the project again at the concept design phase (30% design phase).

Recusals and Disclosures

Vinita Sidhu, is recused from the project review.

April 1, 2021

1:30 - 3:30 pm

Project Type

CIP

Phase

Briefing

Previous Reviews

None

Presenters

Sharon Khosla
Garfield Super Block Coalition

Aimee Rozier
SiteWorkshop

Robert Stephens
Garfield Super Block Coalition

Attendees

Jason Huff
OAC

Stephanie Ingram
FiveDot

Ann Suter
Attendee

Summary of Presentation

Sharon Khosla, of the Garfield Super Block Coalition, and Aimee Rozier, of SiteWorkshop, presented the design proposal for the Garfield Super Block project. The team provided information on the history and context of the project site and surrounding community prior to discussing the scope, overarching goals, and guiding principles for the current project proposal. The overall focus of the project is to provide a pathway integrating art and narratives reflecting the cultural diversity and rich history of the Central Area as well as providing park improvements to better serve the surrounding community. *See figure 1 for more detail.*

The team then discussed the current conditions of the existing park as well as the previous design proposal from June 2020. The previous proposal was updated after receiving feedback from the community and City departments. The current design proposal (*see figure 2*) includes the development of a cultural loop along the perimeter of the park, made up of visual elements to guide users along pathways and spaces located throughout the park. The western portion of the cultural loop, between the playfield, Garfield Community Center, and Medgar Evers Pool, will include a series of artworks to reflect the different cultural groups that represent the Central Area. Elements will include gateway, sculptural and ground artworks along the pathway and within the surrounding area. The team also discussed the planting plan for the site, which will include a variety of street trees, native planting, and lawn areas.

The current design proposal also includes a play area, water feature, multi-use sport courts, and community building with restrooms and tables along the northern portion of the site. The southern portion of the site, located between the playfield and Teen Life Center will include accessible seating options and bouldering wall. The southeast corner of the project site includes a large grade difference between the street and park. The design proposal includes several elements that will be integrated into the hillside to connect the park with the street above. The eastern edge of the project site includes the development of a nature pathway with interactive logs and boulders as well as seating opportunities and streetscape improvements along 25th Ave.

The team also discussed the estimated project budget as well as a phasing plan to develop the project. Although the project has received funds and grants from various City departments and organizations, there is currently no commitment from City agencies to fully fund the project. SPR, who owns and maintains the existing park and playfield has been involved in the outreach and development of the proposed design, has proposed funding for specific elements of the project, but has not committed to funding the full development.

Agency Comments

None

Public Comments

None

Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Concept plan
- Community involvement
- Art
- Project phasing
- Accessibility

Concept plan

The SDC commended the project team for their proposed concept plan. The Commission appreciated the creativity, high quality, and level of detail provided in the plan and look forward to seeing how the design continues to develop. Commissioners commented on specific design details, commending the project team for their approach to designing the southeast corner of the project site. The Commission also appreciated the decision to expand the original promenade proposal to include a cultural loop around the perimeter of the park as well as the inclusion of natural planting throughout the plan.

Community involvement

The SDC commended the project team for their approach to community and City partnerships. The Commission appreciated the community ownership of the project and commended the team for the diverse representation of cultures and communities involved throughout the planning and design process. The Commission then recommended the team continue to build upon and strengthen partnerships between the Community, City and other neighborhood organizations. Commissioners commented that this design process will serve as a positive example for future projects.

Art

The SDC commended the project team for their approach to art integration. The commission appreciated the representation of different communities as well as the team's plan to have art interpret the chronological history of the neighborhood. Commissioners expressed their excitement to see how the art proposal will continue to develop after the artist selection process. The Commission recommended the project team consider how the proposed art elements will relate to each other. Commissioners also recommended the team focus on engaging youth and community members to ensure the art proposal is developed in a collaborative way.

Project phasing

While the SDC commended the project team for their proposal for project phasing, commissioners were concerned with the overall budget as well as funding for the development of each phase. The Commission agreed that this project highlights the importance of community ownership of public spaces and strongly recommended the team provide an accurate cost estimate for the entire project so that design elements are not eliminated due to the undervaluing of the overall budget. The Commission also recommended the team provide phasing scenarios for funding and contingency planning to provide the roadmap for realizing this project and to continue to maintain community leadership throughout all phases to help keep priorities incorporated throughout planning and implementation. Commissioners then stressed the importance of being able to implement the vision for the project and strongly recommended the team and City Departments continue to think of innovative ways to ensure the entire project is developed. Commissioners encouraged the project team to explore alternatives to secure funding, such as through contributions from adjacent developments as well as identifying specific project elements as maintenance activities to reduce the permitting process. The Commission then recommended the project team identify projects that can be completed in the near term, either temporary or permanent, to keep the energy and momentum going for the full project development. Commissioners also encouraged the involvement of other City Departments and Agencies to help ensure the project vision is realized.

Accessibility

The SDC commended the project team for providing a design concept that will be inclusive for all ages and abilities. Commissioners agreed the proposal will provide a rich experience for all users.

Action

The SDC thanked the project team for their briefing on the Garfield Super Block project. Overall, the Commission appreciated the community ownership of the project. Commissioners recognized the cultural richness of the project site as well as its importance in serving as a cultural space for the community. The SDC did not take an action during today's meeting, but provided the following recommendations for the team to address prior to the next review:

1. Work to unite all art elements. Focus on engaging youth and community to do art in a collaborative way
2. Continue to involve City departments, public agencies, and organizations as the project develops
3. Identify realistic costs to complete the project; explore ways to close the gap between budget and design. Provide phasing scenarios for funding and contingency planning to provide the roadmap for realizing this project. Continue to maintain community leadership throughout all phases to help keep priorities incorporated throughout planning and implementation.

4. Be innovative about identifying funding sources to provide a budget to complete the project
5. Identify projects that can be completed in the near term, either temporary or permanent, to maintain energy and momentum for the full project development
6. Continue to document the development process – highlighting successes and best practices- that can serve as an example for future projects.