

# Pier 58 - Waterfront Park

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**Samuel Assefa**  
Director, OPCD

**Brianna Holan**, Chair

**Justin Clark**, Vice Chair

**Kim Baker**

**Elizabeth Conner**

**Azzurra Cox**

**Mark Johnson**

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## Commissioners Present

Brianna Holan, Chair  
Justin Clark, Vice Chair  
Elizabeth Conner  
Azzurra Cox  
Mark Johnson  
Rick Krochalis  
Amalia Leighton  
Vinita Sidhu  
Elaine Wine

## Commissioners Excused

Kim Baker

## Project Description

The Office of the Waterfront is proposing to rebuild Pier 58, currently known as Waterfront Park, as part of the larger Waterfront Seattle project. The pier will be developed as a public park with a public plaza, children's playground, a large lawn and small grove of trees. The park will offer expansive views of Elliott Bay and the Olympic Mountains. The pier is also designed to improve the salmon habitat and migration corridor, supporting the sustainability features of the seawall. It is located at the terminus of Union St, south of the Aquarium, and together with the Overlook Walk and Pier 62/63 will form the largest contiguous public open space downtown.

## Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) second review of the Waterfront Park project. The concept design (30% design phase) was approved in 2014 when the project was reviewed under the name Central Public Open Spaces. The purpose of this meeting was to review the Schematic Design (60%). At this meeting, the SDC voted, 9-0, to approve the schematic (60%) design for the Pier 58 project.

## Recusals and Disclosures

None

January 7, 2021

2:00 - 4:00 pm

**Project Type**

CIP

**Phase**

Schematic Design

**Previous Reviews**

4/6/14

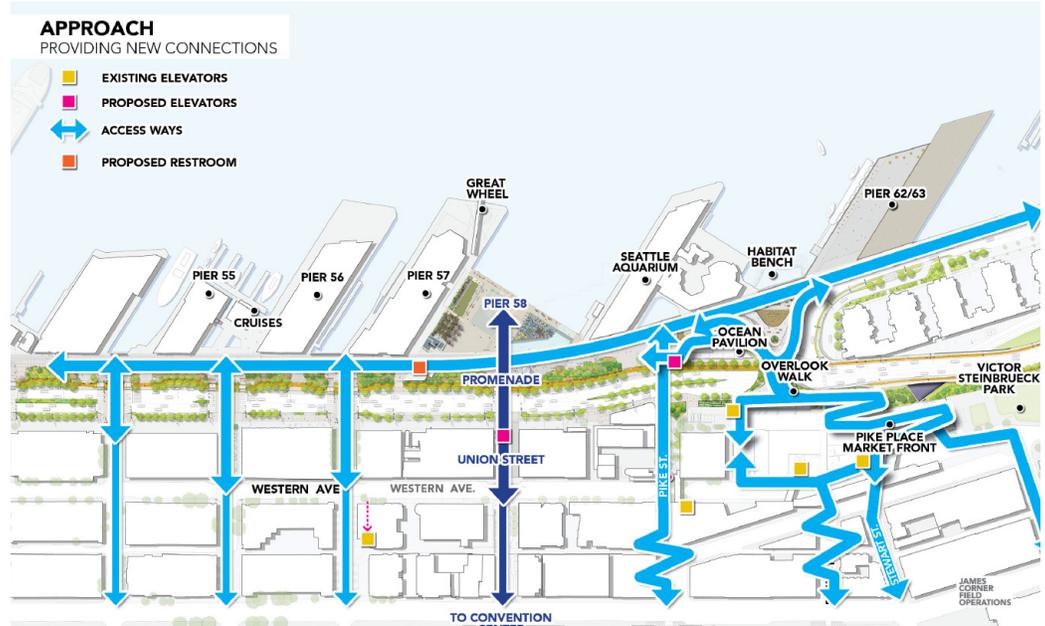
**Presenters**Cale McPherson  
Office of the WaterfrontAndrew tenBrink  
JCFO**Attendees**Omar Akkari  
SDOTDerek Baker  
Seattle AquariumAndrew Barish  
JacobsTatiana Choulika  
JCFOJill Crary  
AttendeeColin Curley  
JCFOMatthew Ells  
JCFODavid Graves  
SPRSteve Pearce  
Office of the WaterfrontJesse Phillips-Kress  
Seattle AquariumIris Picat  
EnviroissuesRuri Yampolsky  
Office of the Waterfront

Figure 1: Project location along Seattle Waterfront

**Summary of Presentation**

Andrew tenBrink of James Corner Field Operations (JCFO) presented the schematic design of the Pier 58 - Waterfront Park project. The presentation team provided information on the community outreach as well as background information on the Waterfront Seattle plans and the role of this project in creating a large contiguous open space in downtown. The presentation illustrated the physical context of the site at the water's edge (see figure 1), which is hugged between two active piers, as well as pointing out the perceived barrier to Alaskan Way created by the grade difference between the original pier and the pedestrian promenade along Alaskan Way. The team explained the objectives for the proposed design are to provide an at grade connection from the promenade and piers, reorient to views of the bay, and provide nearshore open water habitat. Design refinement since the last SDC presentation included the addition of a concierge restroom building on the promenade (to be reviewed separately), relocation of the kiosk, addition of a play area, and the addition of a water opening in the pier. Additional changes since the last review included the elimination of the water fountain on the pier due to high cost and permitting constraints, as well as the removing the downslope of pier toward the water to address sea level rise, to provide more accessibility, and to allow for more light penetration into the marine habitat. See figure 2 for more details.

The team then presented the areas of the new Pier park in more detail, which include the relocated Fitzgerald Fountain tree grove and lawn (the southern bar) and a central open gathering area, play area, and nearshore opening. An opening to the water below in the northeast corner of the park was added into the pier design in coordination with the permitting agencies and in response to the monitoring of habitat quality along the recently constructed seawall. It will enhance fish habitat and provide an opportunity for the public to see and learn about it. Also, the tree grove area was elevated to introduce more topographic change to the site.

The existing Fitzgerald Fountain will be relocated to the southern portion of the site. The proposed tree grove, which is located adjacent to the relocated fountain will provide moveable seating and shade. The proposed lawn area was updated to slope upward toward the water to provide better views of both Elliott Bay and back towards downtown Seattle. The Central open gathering



Figure 2: Updated design proposal

space is designed to be flexible, accommodating different sized groups and events. The gathering space includes large timber seating elements which can be moved to accommodate larger events. Friends of the Waterfront have been programming the space and will continue to after the new park is built. At the west end of the park will be the water's edge element, which will provide a link to the Aquarium at the north and offers seating to view Elliott Bay and the Olympics. The design of the playground area is not as developed as the rest of the design. Earthscape, the playground design consultant, has developed early concepts based on initial input they received from the public, which was to include something tall yet transparent to take advantage of landscape, as well as providing elements for climbing, education, and a variety of play, and attractive locations

for parents. The project team developed three concepts for the play area: Above and Below – inspiration from the kinetic action of waves; Pier Pile Fun – high play structure to move inside of; Sea Dreams – draws from habitat waters using a jelly fish form for a high, climbable structure. See *figure 3 for more detail.*

After describing the proposed design and programming of areas within the park, the team then presented how the paving plans had evolved. Paving for Pier 58 is a continuation of the paving palette for the larger Waterfront project. It includes exposed aggregate, grating to allow light to the water, metal inlays, and smoother surfaces and is intended to draw people to the water and create more intimate spaces. Stabilized aggregate, possibly decomposed granite will be used in the grove area, but this detail is still under development.

The presentation team then discussed proposed furnishings, which include various design types that are used in other spaces along the Waterfront such as timber benches, concrete finishes, and moveable tables and chairs. Large timber seating benches made of Western Red Cedar that are located elsewhere along the Waterfront may be used in the park. Large stone seating blocks made of local basalt will be located along the western edge of the park. Railings and handrails will be provided not only where required but also to provide lighting and frame the space.

The lighting plans are still under development but will be similar to the Main Corridor and other Waterfront projects.

Major planting areas include the tree grove and lawn. The plantings in the south bar relate to the Promenade. The tree that was selected for the grove will be a vase shaped species, suitable for growth in a limited soil volume, that provides shade but does not inhibit movement through the area. The planting palette is under development but will be native inspired. Valerie Segrest, Indigenous plant expert, will consult on plantings. Evergreens are being used to provide foliage in winter and to create an edge to the space. A synthetic lawn is being considered for reasons such as aesthetics, texture, and stability for people who are experiencing mobility challenges. The Seattle Parks and Recreation Department will maintain the park and is reviewing it.

There is no art planned for the Pier, but on the Promenade adjacent to the site will be the three Welcome Figures by Shaun Peterson.

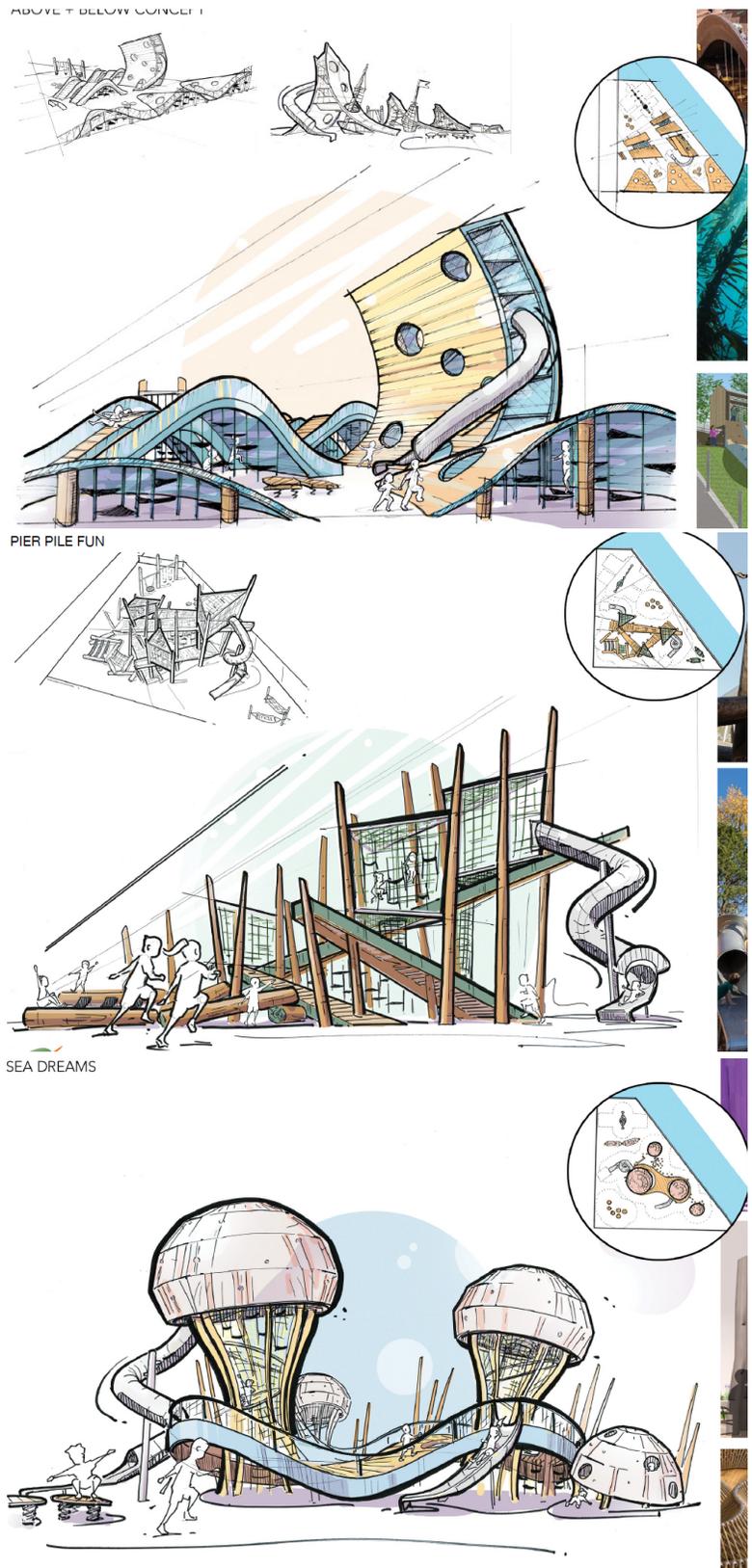


Figure 3: Proposed play structure design concepts: Above/Below (top), Pier Pile (middle), and Sea Dreams (bottom)

## Agency Comments

None

## Public Comments

**Jesse Phillips-Kress** commented that they works at the Aquarium.

## Summary of Discussion

The Commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- Programming and flexibility
- General layout of site and changes
- Materials and furnishings
- Play area

### *Programming and Flexibility*

The SDC commended the project team for the clarity and restraint of the updated design proposal. Commissioners encouraged the project team to continue to be attentive as they continue to make refinements to the design. The Commission commented that, while the grove and lawn may not be expected on the waterfront, they would offer much needed green space to linger to downtown residents and tourists alike. Commissioners then stressed how important it would be to plan for easy moving and storing of furnishings for events.

### *General Layout and Changes*

The SDC appreciated the overall layout and changes made the proposed design. Specifically, commissioners expressed appreciation for the addition of an opening to the water as well as its placement near the promenade, Aquarium and play area.'

The Commission also expressed their approval of the placement of the play area and the moves to provide views to the water with the choice of play equipment.

The SDC then discussed the proposed updates to the tree grove, open lawn, and open gathering space. Commissioners noted that the raised grove and lawn areas might allow for views to the play area for parents and caretakers. There was discussion about whether the grove and lawn space were sized correctly. Commissioners recognized that the tree grove will provide protection from sun and rain, also, depending on the type of artificial turf that is proposed, stabilized granite might be a more attractive material. The Commission then questioned the materiality of the stone seating along the western edge of the site. Commissioners commented that the stone appeared heavy, was an additional element to the material pallet, and would need to be thoughtfully considered in relation to the gathering space and the view to the water. The commission then recommended the project team reconsider the materiality of the seating, encouraging the team to consider a lighter material that would not present such a barrier in this location. Commissioners also recommended the team consider moveable seating options, similar to the large timber seating used elsewhere on the project site.

### *Materials and Furnishings*

Overall Commissioners reacted positively to the materials and furnishings that were proposed. They were glad to see the Pier will serve as a continuation of the Waterfront spaces. Commissioners encouraged the project team to continue to think about continuity between the park and other Waterfront projects and to better understand what design elements and materials can be carried into this project. Commissioners also encouraged the project team to show how the edge between the park and adjacent promenade will be designed. There was also concern about maintenance and the durability of materials given this location on the water. Commissioners questioned how users will experience the space at various times of day and under various weather conditions and recommended the project team provide an analysis of sun, shading, and programming. The use of regionally sourced wood was supported and encouraged.

While the SDC generally approved of the proposed planting palette, they were concerned with the limited number of drought tolerant and native plants. Commissioners were encouraged to hear that Valerie Segrest would provide Indigenous plant expertise in the refinement of the planting palette. Commissioners were receptive of the use of artificial turf but had questions about the texture and quality of the material as well

as the ability for long term maintenance. The Commission then requested additional information about the quality and texture of the artificial turf.

As noted above in Programming, commissioners were concerned with the purpose and appropriateness of the stone seating bar. The commission questioned the use and additional material for this feature, acknowledging the heaviness of the proposed stone and lack of integration of the material with other elements or programming.

The SDC then discussed the need for an operations and maintenance plan. Given the high quality of the space, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Friends of the Waterfront, and other partners would need to be highly engaged.

### **Playground**

The SDC was very excited about the direction of the playground design. Commissioners noted the opportunities, importance, and complexity of the location of the play area. The Commission expressed their preference for the Sea Dreams and jelly fish design concept, as well as the overall idea to provide height so kids can see across the bay as well as activities happening within the park. Commissioners also appreciated the use of natural materials. While the play structure will not technically be art, The SDC acknowledged that the play structure will be a unique object, providing a memorable piece to be touched and interacted with. The Commission strongly recommended that the play structure continue to be developed to be a highly visible using light, shapes, and materials to provide for a unique and interactive experience. The Commission strongly encouraged the team to design for kids of all ages and abilities. While the play feature may be big and exciting, quieter pockets should be provided for children who don't want to be in the center of the action. Commissioners expressed a desire that the parents and caretakers be offered a quality experience and encouraged the team to provide for clear sight lines to the play area from other areas of the park. Commissioners suggested that the overwater location be capitalized on to enhance the relationship of play and the water. Commissioners then discussed whether it would be possible for the play area to connect to the open water area in some way.

### **Action**

The SDC thanked the team for their presentation of the schematic design for Pier 58 Waterfront Park. They commended the team for designing within a long, ever changing context. They applauded the restraint and rigor in creating a strong civic park for the downtown. The addition of the open water area, and meticulousness in designing universally accessible spaces, was lauded. The SDC was particularly excited about the play area that promises to become a unique and special feature of the Waterfront. The consistent quality of presentations from the team was appreciated.

The SDC voted 9 to 0 to approve the schematic design phase of the Pier 58 Waterfront Park with the following recommendations:

1. Continue developing the spaces with an eye toward how they will perform at various times of day and in different weather conditions. Consider providing sun and shade diagrams in your next presentation.
2. Consider the importance of the maintenance and operations plans. They must guarantee for the spaces to remain in excellent condition over time.
3. Further plan for how the furnishings will be moved around, removed, and stored when the configuration of spaces is changed.
4. Continue to explore local sourcing of materials.
5. Reconsider the purpose, placement, and materiality of the stone seating bar.
6. Explore whether the size of the grove is large enough in relation to the lawn.
7. Continue to design the playground as a unique, special feature. Consider its interface with the open water area. Provide spaces for children of all ages and abilities, including more calm, quiet pockets.
8. Continue to refine the planting palette with attention to providing culturally informed selections, as well as more drought tolerant and native species. Extend the Overlook Walk planting strategy into this site as appropriate.
9. Retain the simplicity of the materials and furnishings palette and consider refining it. In particular, reexamine the basalt seating bar and the quality and maintenance of the artificial turf.
10. Consider the expansion joints in the design to limit concrete cracking.
11. Provide information on the drainage strategy at the next presentation.

The project will return for SDC review of the Design Development (90%) phase in the future. Also, the play area had not reached 60% at the time of this meeting, so it will return for 60% review prior to the whole project returning for 90% review.