

April 2024



# February 2024 Engagement Summary

## Bitter Lake Reservoir and Park Improvement Projects

## Executive Summary

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR), the Office of Arts & Culture (ARTS), and the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) held a joint engagement period from February 2 to February 26, 2024 to collect feedback on the updated reservoir designs, park design concepts, and public art themes.

- ➔ 361 people engaged with us at seven in-person project information tables
- ➔ 1,779 unique users visited our online open house which shared information on SPU's mid-design updates, SPR's three conceptual park designs, and ARTS's outreach progress
- ➔ 116 people responded to the survey with input on SPR's three conceptual park designs, SPU's reservoir viewpoint, and ARTS's public art theme ideas
- ➔ 253 people from nearby ethnic and faith-based communities engaged with Community Liaisons in Cantonese, Mandarin, Amharic, and Oromo
- ➔ The team collected additional insights through door-to-door outreach to neighbors adjacent to the Bitter Lake Reservoir, focus groups discussing the conceptual park designs, and in-person polling about public art themes
- ➔ 22 Bitter Lake businesses engaged

### Key themes

Neighbors prefer a site that:

- Is accessible for everyone by prioritizing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant paths and ramps as well as incorporating frequent seating options
- Maintains existing greenery and adds more by expanding the P-Patch community garden, planting trees for shade, planting native plants, and creating natural play areas
- Prioritizes year-round use by adding trees for shade, native plants for climate control, and sheltered areas for gathering and by creating a robust maintenance plan
- Considers how the design and construction will affect the growing neighborhood population, especially in terms of noise, safety, privacy, crime, and parking
- Activates the park space by creating park programming and including areas for multi-generational gathering, more benches and picnic tables, and expanded play areas for kids near the P-Patch community garden

### Survey results summary

- Open space and park design concepts: Out of the three conceptual designs, respondents rated the "Flow" concept the highest on average. Many preferred a combination of all three concepts that expands upon the existing P-Patch community garden and play area and adds new trees, plants, paths, and seating.
- Reservoir viewpoint features: The top choice for respondents was adding benches to the reservoir viewpoint.
- Public land art themes: Respondents expressed an equal preference for public art that represents the themes of local history and water cycles.

## Project background

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) is replacing the existing 21-million-gallon drinking water reservoir in the Bitter Lake neighborhood. The new reservoir, which will hold the same amount of water as the current reservoir, will be partially buried and have a smaller footprint. This provides the opportunity to develop an expanded park with more recreation amenities and public art for the community to enjoy after the new reservoir is constructed.

This project is a One Seattle effort to provide the Bitter Lake neighborhood with a new reservoir, additional open space, and public art. SPU is leading the design of the new reservoir, in coordination with Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR), the Office of Arts & Culture (ARTS), and the Department of Neighborhoods (DON). Community engagement efforts will be coordinated, and public feedback will be shared between the four departments.

## Engagement overview

The Bitter Lake Reservoir Improvement Project reached new milestones in winter 2024. SPU's reservoir improvement project reached mid-design and SPR's open space and park design project reached the conceptual design phase.

SPU, SPR, ARTS, and DON partnered together to hold a joint engagement period from February 2 to February 26, 2024, to collect feedback on the updated reservoir designs, park design concepts, and public art themes. All materials for the engagement period were provided in English, Spanish, Amharic, Traditional Chinese, and Oromo. In-person engagement was primarily conducted in English. The project team also partnered with the Department of Neighborhood's Community Liaison Program to engage community members who prefer to speak Spanish, Amharic, Oromo, Cantonese, or Mandarin.

Over the course of the engagement period:

- 361 people visited our seven in-person events
- 1,779 unique users visited the online open house
- 116 people responded to our feedback survey
- 253 people from nearby religious and ethnic communities engaged with Community Liaisons in their preferred language
- 22 Bitter Lake businesses engaged.

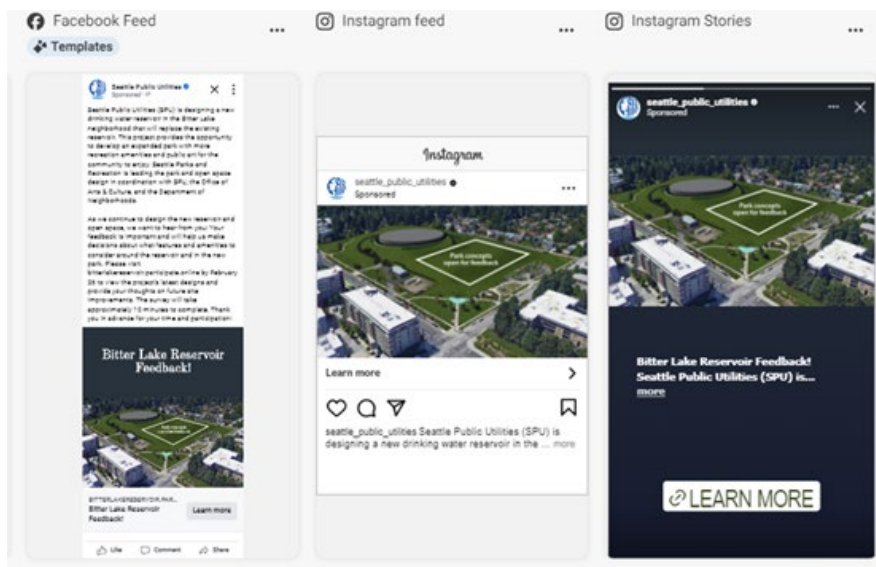


*Project team members engaging with neighbors at the Bitter Lake Reservoir Site*

## Notification activities

The project teams notified the Bitter Lake neighborhood about the engagement period through direct mail, in-person outreach, local signage and posters, email, and social media. Physical notification materials included QR codes that neighbors could scan to visit the online open house in English, Spanish, Amharic, Traditional Chinese, or Oromo. Notification efforts included:

- Postcards mailed to people who work or live in and around Bitter Lake on February 1
- Emails to local stakeholder groups
- Yard signs and posters around the Bitter Lake Reservoir Site
- One social media post each on SPU's X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and Facebook, reaching 2,539 users on February 22 and 23.
- Social media advertising campaign on Instagram and Facebook reaching 46,631 total users (20,901 English users, 9,775 Spanish users, 15,995 Traditional Chinese users) from February 3 to 26. *At this time, Meta does not support social media advertising campaigns in Oromo and Amharic.*
- Community Liaisons distributed in-language project information, see [Community Liaison outreach activities](#) for more details.



*Examples of the social media advertising campaign*

## Online engagement activities

The project teams engaged with the community online to share information and collect feedback on the updated reservoir design, three park design concepts, and public art theme ideas. Online engagement activities included:

- An online open house reaching 1,779 unique users from February 2 to 26, 2024. The website included information on SPU’s mid-design updates, SPR’s three conceptual park designs, and ARTS’s outreach progress.
- A feedback survey collecting input from 116 people on key aspects of the projects. The survey was embedded in the online open house from February 2 to 26, 2024.

### In-person engagement activities

The project teams held in-person engagement events to connect with the community further. The goal of these events was to engage Bitter Lake’s diverse community and hear from neighbors who we hadn’t yet reached. Community Liaisons helped staff some of these events to engage with community members with preferred languages other than English.

The project team hosted seven information tables in the Bitter Lake neighborhood to share project information and collect feedback on:

- February 3 at the North Helpline Food Bank
- February 5 outside of the Asian Family Market, with engagement offered in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Korean in addition to English
- February 8 outside Cooper Apartments
- February 11 at the Bitter Lake Community Center’s Pancake Breakfast, with engagement offered in Mandarin, Amharic, and Oromo in addition to English
- February 11 at the Broadview Public Library Connection Cafe
- February 15 at SHAG Interurban Senior Living Apartments
- February 17 at Bitter Lake Reservoir Park, with engagement offered in Mandarin, Amharic, and Oromo in addition to English



*Project team members explaining the park concepts to neighbors at North Helpline Food Bank*

Additional in-person engagement activities included:

- Door-to-door outreach to residents on Fremont Ave N, N 143rd St, and N 138th St on February 17
- Ongoing in-person surveying of preferences on themes for public land art at the site
- One focus group discussing SPR's open space and park design concepts on February 22

### Community Liaison outreach activities

In addition to supporting outreach along with SPU, SPR, and ARTS, Community Liaisons continued to reach out to their communities online and in-person. Outreach activities included:

- Staffed in-person information table at the Bitter Lake Community Center's Family Open Gym on February 18, 2024, reaching approximately 55 people
- Distributing posters and flyers or engaging with customers at 22 businesses in the area
- Social media outreach and individual conversations with community members on WeChat channels including the personal channel of a Community Liaison, "Ravenna, view ridge, Bryant neighborhood", and "Hunan people"
- Distributing Amharic, Oromo, and English outreach materials to approximately 175 people between six services at Idris Mosque, Eritrean Kidist Selassie Church, Islamic Center of North Seattle, and Bethel Ethiopian Church Congregation

## Results

From February 2 to 26, 2024, we collected feedback from the public through a survey available on the online open house. 116 people responded to our feedback survey, providing direction on the park and open space design, preferred features for the new reservoir viewpoint, and preferred themes for public land art at the future park.

### Key themes

Through the feedback survey and in-person engagement, we consistently heard the following feedback from the Bitter Lake community:

- Neighbors want the site to be accessible for everyone by prioritizing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant paths and ramps as well as incorporating frequent seating options.
- Neighbors want to maintain existing greenery and add more by expanding the P-Patch community garden, planting more trees for shade, planting native plants, and creating natural play areas.
- Neighbors want the park to plan for year-round use by adding trees for shade, native plants for climate control, and sheltered areas for gathering. Additionally, they would like to see a robust maintenance plan, even if it means a less elaborate park design.
- Neighbors want the City to consider how the design and construction of projects will affect the growing neighborhood population. Concerns include, but are not limited to, noise, safety, privacy, crime, and parking.

- Neighbors want the design to activate the park space by including areas for multi-generational gathering, more benches and picnic tables, and expanded play areas for kids near the P-Patch community garden. Neighbors would like to see more park programming.

### Survey results summary

- **Reservoir viewpoint features:** The top choice for respondents was adding benches to the reservoir viewpoint.
- **Public land art themes:** Respondents expressed an equal preference for public art to represent the themes of local history and water cycles.
- **Open space and park design concepts:** Out of the three conceptual designs, respondents rated the “Flow” concept the highest on average. However, many survey responses noted the benefits of parts of all three concepts. Respondents preferred a design that expands upon the existing P-Patch community garden and play area, adds new trees and plants, provides multi-use paths, and incorporates areas for seating and gathering.

**Flow**

Average  
rating  
**3.61**

Most  
common  
rating  
**4**

- LEGEND**
- ① Reservoir
  - ② Existing stormwater facility
  - ③ Existing pump station
  - ④ Existing maintenance storage area
  - ⑤ Existing p-patch
  - ⑥ Maintenance access
  - ⑦ Bioretention planting, typical
  - ⑧ Plaza/gathering, typical
  - ⑨ Play area
  - ⑩ Shelter
  - ⑪ Tool shed/information kiosk
  - ⑫ Expanded p-patch
  - ⑬ Picnic tables
  - ⑭ Open lawn
  - ⑮ Land art opportunity
  - ⑯ Food forest
  - ⑰ Overlook plaza with seating/ picnic
  - ⑱ Paved loop trail
  - ⑲ Nature play/ outdoor classroom
  - ⑳ Fitness/ interpretive learning
  - ㉑ Sand volleyball courts
  - ㉒ Informal seating/ steps
  - ㉓ Stairs, typical
  - Right-of-way line, typical
  - - - Security fencing, typical
  - - - SPU drainage swale



# Whirl

Average rating **3.36**  
Most common rating **5**

- LEGEND**
- ① Reservoir
  - ② Existing stormwater facility
  - ③ Existing pump station
  - ④ Existing maintenance storage area
  - ⑤ Existing play area
  - ⑥ Existing p-patch
  - ⑦ Maintenance access
  - ⑧ Bioretention planting, typical
  - ⑨ Plaza/gathering, typical
  - ⑩ Play area
  - ⑪ Tool shed/ information kiosk
  - ⑫ Shelter
  - ⑬ Picnic tables
  - ⑭ Expanded p-patch
  - ⑮ Land art opportunity
  - ⑯ Open lawn
  - ⑰ Overlook plaza with seating/ picnic
  - ⑱ Paved loop trail
  - ⑲ Dog off-leash area
  - ⑳ Fitness/ interpretive learning, typical
  - ㉑ Stairs, typical
  - Right-of-way line, typical
  - - - Security fencing, typical
  - - - SPU drainage swale



**WHIRL CONCEPT** | Seattle Parks & Recreation | BITTER LAKE RESERVOIR PARK & OPEN SPACE PROJECT | 1998, MAY 2012 | **consor** **HBB**

# Wave

Average rating **3.32**  
Most common rating **4**

- LEGEND**
- ① Reservoir
  - ② Existing stormwater facility
  - ③ Existing pump station
  - ④ Existing maintenance storage area
  - ⑤ Expanded p-patch
  - ⑥ Maintenance access
  - ⑦ Bioretention planting, typical
  - ⑧ Plaza/gathering, typical
  - ⑨ Play area
  - ⑩ Shelter
  - ⑪ Tool shed/ information kiosk
  - ⑫ Land art opportunity
  - ⑬ Open lawn
  - ⑭ Overlook plaza with seating/ picnic
  - ⑮ Slope play area
  - ⑯ Paved loop trail
  - ⑰ New maintenance access
  - ⑱ Informal trails/ seating
  - ⑲ Elevated boardwalk
  - ⑳ Multi-purpose sport courts
  - ㉑ Grand staircase
  - ㉒ Stairs, typical
  - Right-of-way line, typical
  - - - Security fencing, typical
  - - - SPU drainage swale



**WAVE CONCEPT** | Seattle Parks & Recreation | BITTER LAKE RESERVOIR PARK & OPEN SPACE PROJECT | 1998, MAY 2012 | **consor** **HBB**



## Feedback

The input received through the survey and in-person events helped the project team collect detailed feedback on key aspects of the project including SPR's three conceptual park designs, SPU's reservoir viewpoint, and ARTS's public art theme ideas.

We heard **positive opinions** about the following aspects of the site and conceptual park designs:

- Walking paths and trails
- Trees for shade and native plants
- Expanding the existing P-Patch community garden and play areas
- Food forest
- Benches and picnic tables
- Areas designed for gathering and for activating the site
- Steeper grassy areas for kids to play and sled
- Natural play areas
- Reservoir viewpoint
- Fitness areas
- Land art opportunities
- Boardwalk

We heard **negative opinions** about the following aspects of the site and conceptual park designs:

- Sand volleyball courts
- Replacing the existing P-Patch community garden and play areas
- Locating a maintenance access road on N 138th St

We heard **mixed opinions** about the following aspects of the site and conceptual park designs:

- Off-leash dog area
  - Community members in favor of an off-leash dog area would like to formalize an off-leash area since the general sentiment is that the entire park is currently used informally in this manner. Some also noted that it would be very beneficial for neighbors at the SHAG Interurban Senior Living Apartments. Others preferred separate areas for small and large dogs.
  - Community members opposed to an off-leash dog area don't want it to take away from other areas of the park. Additionally, there are concerns about the fence, smell, noise, cleanliness, and maintenance of the grass (or surface material) in the off-leash area.
- Sports courts
  - Community members in favor of sports courts prefer multi-use courts over sand volleyball courts due to worries that sand volleyball won't be played in Seattle and the sand will accumulate litter and sharp objects. Community members expressed interest in playing the following sports at the site tennis, pickleball, soccer, and basketball.

- Community members opposed to sports courts worry about the maintenance of the courts, noise, light pollution, and/or feel that the space should be used in other ways since the nearby community center already has sports courts. Community members would prefer a location further from Linden Ave N where most people nearby live.
- Maintenance
  - Community members noted worries about the need for maintenance and a lack of confidence in the city to provide it (particularly in relation to the off-leash dog area and sand volleyball courts). Community members feel hesitant to advocate for more complex park designs because they fear the facilities won't be well maintained. Many expressed a desire to opt for a simpler design to reserve funds for ongoing maintenance.
  - Community members feel concerned about maintenance particularly in relation to the off-leash dog area and sand volleyball courts. Between litter, sharp objects, pets, and wild animals, community members feel maintenance won't be frequent enough to keep the spaces usable.
- Stairs
  - Community members in favor of stairs liked the aesthetic appeal and the convenient entry to the center of the park. Community members agreed that stairs should be equipped with handrails.
  - Community members opposed to stairs feel they are an inaccessible feature that will exclude many people from certain park entrances and easy access to the center of the park. Community members would prefer ADA-accessible ramps with handrails in place of stairs.

People, in general, want to see more of the following in the site design:

- |                                                                  |                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| ● Seating                                                        | ● Artistic or aesthetically pleasing fence        |
| ● Bathrooms                                                      | ● Lighting or solar-powered lighting              |
| ● Parking                                                        | ● Areas designed for multi-generational gathering |
| ● Trees for shade and native plants                              | ● Expanded playground                             |
| ● A continuous multi-use path that loops around the park         | ● ADA-accessible pathways and ramps               |
| ● Paths and trails for kids and seniors separate from bike paths |                                                   |

In addition to the site design alone, people want us to consider:

- Long-term maintenance of the new park features
- Prevention of encampments, drug use, and crime
- Incorporating accessibility into all aspects of the design
- Minimizing parking loss, dust, exhaust, and noise during construction
- Site and park features that can be used year round in any weather
- Taking inspiration from other parks including Maple Leaf Reservoir Park, Gas Works Park, and Greenwood Park

- Considering the growth of the neighborhood and the increased attraction of the park in plans for parking
- Creating a programming plan to encourage gathering and activation

## Next steps

SPU, SPR, ARTS, and DON will continue working together to design this new community destination. Here's what we'll be working on next:

- SPU will continue working on the reservoir design and keep engaging with the community, helping educate community members about the reservoir's role in Seattle's water system.
- SPR will develop a preferred design concept and refine the park design.
- ARTS will continue engaging with the community to identify public art concepts and start the process of commissioning artist(s) to create public artwork(s).
- DON will continue supporting the projects with in-language engagement and reaching diverse audiences.