



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

Kenneth R. Bounds, Superintendent

October 26, 2004

To: Board of Park Commissioners

From: Kenneth R. Bounds, Superintendent

Re: **Occidental Square Park Improvements**

This memorandum transmits my decision to accept the Board of Park Commissioners recommendation to proceed with the Occidental Square Park improvement project.

As you know, Seattle Parks is undertaking a Pro Parks Levy project to transform Occidental Square into an active, vibrant, neighborhood-enhancing public space so enjoyable that it is sought out by the people who live in, work in, and visit Pioneer Square. On August 26, the Park Board held a briefing and public hearing on the proposed schematic design and on September 9 recommended approval of the design to me.

In accepting the Park Board's recommendation, I have taken into consideration the lengthy public process. Input from community members at numerous meetings in the past year indicate consensus around the community's expressed desire to increase activity, complete physical improvements to support activities, and brighten and beautify the park.

I concur with the Board's recommendation to remove some elements which the Project for Public Spaces report proposes but which do not fit the character of Pioneer Square, such as artificial turf and painting of buildings.

The improvements listed below will create the environment needed to transform the park while retaining its character-defining elements and maintaining the integrity of the original design.

Create Active Edges to the Park

- Remove pergola. Seattle Parks will conduct a feasibility study to construct a building to accommodate concession such as a café or news stand.
- Add infrastructure to support markets along Occidental Mall.

Reflect the Character of the Historic District

- Preserve the existing totems.
- Relocate history panels within park.

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- Incorporate existing cobble as design elements in new structures and totem garden.

Increase Usability and Safety

- Replace existing uneven cobbles with concrete pavers.
- Increase lighting. Upgrade lighting throughout park.
- Remove trees north of the central plaza and in the center of Occidental Mall to allow construction of stage and to increase daylight.

Increase Opportunities for Activities

- Install bocce courts and chess tables.
- Install a performance stage.
- Consider a play area in the future.

Funding for these improvements is included in the Mayor's proposed 2005-06 Budget and Capital Improvement Program.

I appreciate the Board's careful review of the proposed changes to this important park in the heart of the city.

cc: Mayor Greg Nickels
Seattle City Councilmembers