



Summary of Public Meeting
Pro Parks Levy Neighborhood Park Acquisition: 16th Avenue and East Howell Street
Miller Community Center
June 14, 2007

The meeting began at 7 pm, and was facilitated by Donald Harris, manager of Property and Acquisition Services for Seattle Parks and Recreation. Approximately 30 citizens attended.

Donald Harris provided background on the project, including:

- The 2000 Pro Parks Levy provided funding to acquire two park sites in the Capitol Hill Urban Center Village.
- The Neighborhood Plan identified some potential park sites, both in east and west Capitol Hill.
- One site on the west side of Capitol Hill (Summit Ave E & E John St) was purchased in January 2007 as a replacement for the originally proposed Bellevue Substation site (still in use by City Light)
- The Neighborhood Plan identified some Group Health parking lots as potential park sites on the east side of Capitol Hill, but these are not available.
- Parks sponsored a public meeting in February 2006 regarding the recommendation of Parks acquisition staff to abandon the project on East Capitol Hill due to the unavailability of sites. Community members said to keep trying and suggested possible alternative sites.
- The site at 16th and East Howell was identified by a citizen after the 2006 meeting. The City has now negotiated a deal to acquire the site, and wants to make sure the community is supportive of this acquisition
- This acquisition is scheduled to go before the City Council's Parks, Education, Libraries and Labor (PELL) committee on June 20 at 2:00. There is an open comment period at the beginning of the meeting – citizens are invited to attend and speak at the open microphone.

Bill Blair, Seattle Parks acquisition planner, described the proposed park acquisition site on the 16th and Howell block. The Christian Science church building has been sold to a developer who is planning to redevelop the building into residential units. Another developer purchased the approximately 17,000-square-foot (s.f.) parking lot south of the church building, as well as the 7,200-s.f. parking lot west of the church building for new townhouses. The City has signed an agreement to purchase the 17,000-s.f. south parking lot for park purposes. Blair also described criteria that Parks considers in evaluating properties for acquisition for new neighborhood parks, including good sun exposure, “eyes on the park,” site area of at least 10,000-s.f., and willing sellers.

Harris led a question and answer period, and then took comments from meeting participants.

Comments and questions included:

- Clarification of site location – the developer who bought the 17,000-s.f. site south of the church block was ready to begin construction of townhouses, so the City needs to complete the acquisition in a short timeframe.
- More discussion about the open-mike period at the beginning of the PELL committee.
- Responses to questions about how the public can e-mail the committee members: David Della, Richard Conlin, Jan Drago, Sally Clark (alternate).
- A plat map shows a different configuration than that legally described in the ordinance. Lise Ward, Seattle Parks senior real property agent, explained the new legal description is the result of a lot boundary adjustment.
- One attendee said she tried to get the church to sell for a P-Patch ten years ago and she is happy the City purchase is happening now.
- There were questions about the park development process. Harris replied it's typically one year for design and one year for construction. In this case, park completion would be a little bit after the formal end of the Levy in 2008.
- One person noted the high concentration of elderly and disabled residents in the area and described a recent sunny day when a woman in a wheelchair sat in the middle of the vacant site, taking in the sun.
- A participant thought the park is a fabulous idea, but asked how the community can absorb the lost parking. Harris replied that surface parking lots are often an interim use. In this case, the parking lot would have been replaced by townhouses. Another citizen noted that the zoning requires parking for new residential projects, so there should be minimal impacts in the adjacent streets. Another attendee noted that the parking lot has typically been used by Group Health employees and noted that while Group Health provides employee parking, it costs more than this lot.
- A citizen asked whether the site could be developed with subterranean parking with a park on top – to help turn the church into a performance hall. Another citizen replied that it is very expensive to build underground parking.
- There were questions about leasing the site for construction staging and applying that revenue to the park's development, or in exchange for in-kind work, e.g., removing the existing asphalt. Harris replied the City could look at those proposals but they could require Council approval.
- One attendee wanted to confirm the approximately \$450,000 available for the design/construction budget. Harris confirmed the funding and said it could be supplemented with a Neighborhood Matching Fund grant, but the Levy money cannot be used as a match.
- A member of POWHAT (Pine-Olive Way-Howell-Area Triangle) asked if anyone has approached Starbucks for park development funding for the west Capitol Hill site at Summit and John. Harris said that while he didn't know, Parks has just assigned a project manager to that site, Kevin Crouthamel (684-7040, kevin.crouthamel@seattle.gov), who will organize planning meetings soon. [Note: Jon Jainga (684-7054), jon.jainga@seattle.gov) was subsequently assigned to work on this project with Kevin.]

- An attendee said the condition of the 17,000-s.f. parking lot site has deteriorated since the church sold it. Harris replied there are few resources to maintain the site between the time of purchase and park development and said issues would probably be handled on a complaint basis during that time. Bill Blair noted the community around a future park site on lower Queen Anne (at Queen Anne and Roy) has used that site for neighborhood events during the interim phase.

Donald Harris asked the group if anyone present was opposed to this site: there was no response and the room erupted into applause. Attendees asked whether they would be notified when the planning and design process starts. Harris said everyone on the signup sheet would be notified and asked participants to make sure they signed in.

Notes drafted by Lise Ward, Seattle Parks, 06/25/07