

## **Japanese Gulch Sub-committee Meeting 7/15/2015**

**Members Present:** Tom Little, Susan Gearheard, Dustin Weller, Demaree Clay, Tyler Thompson, Chris Mueller, Randy Lord, Nic Morin, Jennifer Berner, Karl Almgren

The fourth work session opened with a revision to the minutes of July 8, 2015 regarding a misspelling of a subcommittee member's name and discussion on trail etiquette regarding who yields to whom along the trail.

Karl Almgren continued the discussion about revisions to the minutes regarding a clarification to the conversation about the yielding protocol between dog walkers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. The subcommittee clarified that bicyclists yield to everyone, and pedestrians have the right of way with dog walkers yielding to pedestrians.

As the conversation continued to discuss the prior week, the Subcommittee discussed that the conversation on July 8, 2015:

- Didn't talk about changing trail location for sustainability
- The Trough Trail is continually eroding
- Methods and process for determining the changes for the overall trail plan.
- Rules for usage
- Criteria approach for the trail relocation is ideal

Jennifer identified that the primary purpose of the meeting tonight was to focus on the 76<sup>th</sup> Street Trailhead and that the criteria discussion could be circled back to at the end of the meeting if time allows.

As Jennifer introduced the 76<sup>th</sup> Street Trailhead, she reiterated that the property is just 8 acres of the entire area and that there may have been some confusion related to that on the survey. Jennifer also stated that previous work by EarthCorps and detailed that the 76<sup>th</sup> Street Trailhead has a significant amount of invasive plants that may threaten the overall integrity of Japanese Gulch. Currently within the Upper Gulch, there are areas of 'hot spots' with limited invasive species that have been kept in check over the years with the use of volunteers. Unless the 76<sup>th</sup> Street Trailhead has something done to mitigate/eliminate the invasive species, the Upper Gulch's forest health will be threatened.

Staff continued to discuss that the Design Game and how initial surveys may have led to Concept A & B being 'overdeveloped' concepts. While respondents designed and put a lot of options on the pages, the results were viewed as 'too much' for the area. This reaction led to the more natural approach within the design concepts of Concept C.

Concept C included the removal of the amphitheater, removal of the basketball court and included an area of transition into a natural classroom/outdoor space that ties into the accessible trail. In order to provide better analysis and images to the Subcommittee, a site visit was set up for Tuesday, July 21 to the Trinity Lutheran Church on 196<sup>th</sup> in Lynnwood to review their outdoor classroom/natural playground.

The Subcommittee responded that overall, Concept C is a preferred design, but discussed the concerns related to the lack of light of sight from the parking lot to some of the lower spaces. Chris Mueller,

added that intimate places are always enjoyable, but are always challenging with policing and finding the balance. Staff continued that Concept C provides a clear structure of entry that creates the defined “natural feel” that needs to be conceptually continued throughout, was agreed upon by the Subcommittee as a critical vision.

As the property borders a piece of property owned by the Mukilteo School District, Staff explained that at this time, the School District is not looking at implementing the Arboretum that the property is deed to. Staff did explain that the property, per deed, cannot have any parking. The Subcommittee added that the area appears to be fairly healthy forest, but there is currently illegal dumping that is occurring on the site.

Nic, continued the discussion related back to vegetation and identified that the overall plan concept reflects the different vegetation that exists within each sub area.

As Nic transitioned the discussion from the overall plan back to the 76<sup>th</sup> Street, the Subcommittee noted that the manicured field felt that it was not natural enough for Japanese Gulch. Nic, explained that the revised natural meadow would be a transitional area that essentially buffers the forest from the park area. This natural meadow would still allow the area to be mowed 1-2 times a year allowing ample usage with some picnic tables and opportunities as well to tie back to the Natural Play Area that can tie families into the Community Garden. The ultimate vision, as agreed upon by the Subcommittee, is that this plan provides the opportunity to connect with nature in many different ways. By activating these spaces, the areas develop natural surveillance within the park. One key aspect noted was that representation of the ‘Salmon Slide’ that was well liked at Carkeek Park must be incorporated as an iconic piece representing Japanese Gulch and should not be a shelf plan.

The subcommittee’s discussion returned to the concerns with how to patrol the park and posed the question ‘What is the maximum amount of infrastructure? The subcommittee’s conversation identified:

- Few picnic tables with minor improvements
- Goal is to create the interface with the other users
- Culture could allow the community garden to spread to continue natural surveillance

As the subcommittee discussed the Community Garden, a larger historical opportunity was noted regarding the original usage of newly cleared land, the orchard. The subcommittee discussed:

- Concept of orchard should be tied within the outdoor classroom
- Ties well into the garden
- Common historic uses of cleared land is the orchard

The subcommittee dove deeper into the concepts presented in Concept C with the Native Plant Restoration Area including

- Is it supported by the community?
- That area is fairly limited to the neighborly aspects
- Could be an expansion of the community garden
- Wouldn't be fenced and would allow some walking paths, but would be based on public functions.
- Area would allow storage of materials and stock piling

The subcommittee continued to discuss one of the large inconsistencies in the surveys, parking. One subcommittee member identified that the surveys stated that there needs to be more parking while other surveys indicated the desire for the most minimal development. The Subcommittee continued to

identify what opportunities for parking exist. The Subcommittee identified the follow as the primary keys to configuring parking:

- Parking should be maximized within an initial phase including removing the mid-turn around and potentially adding additional parallel spaces on one side.
- Parking expansions should be identified on the plan, but not implemented initially but installed when the demand exceeds the capacity.
- A possible joint agreement with the neighboring Slavic Church on 78<sup>th</sup> could provide parking opportunities with providing a connection trail to the property. This agreement would maximize developed parking areas, and decrease the amount of new impervious surfaces required. Additional shared agreements could include connection to the Sterling Business Park.

Staff noted that the ultimate goal with an area like Japanese Gulch is to not arrive by car or by parking lot, but arrive by foot or pedal. The Subcommittee noted that the infrastructure on 44<sup>th</sup> and 76<sup>th</sup> lack the pedestrian facilities needed to provide the required connections for pedestrian and bicyclists. Staff and the subcommittee continued the discussion including:

- Parking lot landscaping provides the entrance with the atmosphere of Japanese Gulch.
- 'Pretty parking lots' are only good if there is a space to park.
- More potential stalls within existing footprint with a bioswale
- Some signage should be repurposed as a welcoming gate way
- One key consideration is the requirement of a minimum of 20' turnaround space for a fire truck.
- Design may require additional stormwater retrofit as required.
- Signage at other trailheads is important to the importance of the Primary Trailheads to prevent large parking demand on 19<sup>th</sup> and other trailheads within neighborhoods.
- Money is going to be a key aspect for the parking lot design.

The subcommittee then discussed additional infrastructure and how should the current structures of the community garden be tied into with other structures including the potential of a Senior Center or Multi-Use Center. Staff noted some of the motivation for this site is to be able to provide the Seniors of Mukilteo with their own place. The subcommittee discussed:

- The site should not be used as for a large indoor meeting space such as a Senior Center or Multi-Use Center.
- The any future building should be very pragmatic, but also attractive, and placed together into a compound like setting creating walking spaces and a courtyard like setting.
- The restroom facility should include a storage area for park maintenance and tools for volunteer projects and a small open air covered portion similar to the bandshell in Lighthouse Park that may provide for some park meetings, but that is also easily accessible and can be patrolled.
- The Grange Hall concept may provide some historical influences, but the concept of a 'hall' for the community is too much for the site.
- Councilmember Lord identified the challenges with the maintenance a building including the maintenance and operation costs. While volunteers may provide custodial duties, there are still costs related to lights, plumbing, and mechanical repairs that the City must maintain.

The subcommittee inquired about the seniors use at Rosehill Community Center to have a better understanding of needs. The seniors have first use of the Christiansen Room, however, it is also a shared space, when they are done the room is used for other recreation classes and is rented to the public. The seniors would like a space that is dedicated just for their use. Rosehill offers many senior programs that are offered in a variety of rooms depending on the type of class offered.

The final recap of the discussion included:

- Something has to happen to preserve the Upper Gulch,
- Designs should be pragmatic and attractive,
- Parking should be maximized and expanded based on demands,
- Structures should be limited in scale contributing to the vision of a natural welcome area with established the natural surveillance through symbiotic relationships between structures.
  - o Structures may include tool storage, restrooms, office/community garden structure.
- Multi-use structure should not be located at 76<sup>th</sup> Street Trailhead.
- 'Easy Wins' for volunteers should be identified within Master Plan Project List to provide quick responsive park-development pieces.

Resident from Mukilteo:

Renee Ripley:

- Old Town, The lower Gulch pretty adamant about limiting the future user groups to limit the amount of demand and new users.
- Minimalist view and neighborhood feel versus a touristy feel

Jennifer closed the meeting with identifying what the fifth meeting was going to entail:

- Getting everyone in the room at the same time and agree to the findings,
- Coordinate the overall conversations into bullet points,
- Ensure that the notes reflect the last four meetings and answer 'did we get it right?'

