



May 13, 2011

To: Sally Bagshaw, Chair of Parks and Seattle Center Committee

From: Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent

**Re: Othello Park Safety and Lighting Improvements
Response to SLI 78-1-A2**

Project Intent

There have been numerous problems at Othello Playground in recent years raising on-going concerns with overall safety. The neighborhood is undergoing tremendous changes with the new light rail station nearby and new multi-family residential developments just across the street on the west side of the park. The surrounding neighborhoods have populations of great diversity that the City and Seattle Parks and Recreation have been committed to including in the public process for the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy project for Othello Park Safety and Lighting Improvements.

The intent of the project is to address safety concerns within the park and to make improvements to the park lighting system, including upgrading/replacing existing lights and adding new lighting to more of the park. Additional renovation has been proposed with the intent of activating the park with more uses and features that can be used by a greater number of people.

Project Description (from CIP)

The Othello Park (Playground) 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy project is defined as creating “safety and lighting improvement at Othello Park.” The total capital budget is \$250,000. This is the smallest project budget in the Levy, but the community is providing additional support. Levy funds will be used for lighting and security improvements, and a donation of \$150,000 has been committed by a family in the neighborhood. The donation will be used to leverage Neighborhood Matching Funds that will upgrade entries, stage and other park features.

Site History

The park currently has a play area, two basketball courts, shelter house (restroom building with additional storage and small concession space), paths, picnic tables, benches and landscaping in varying conditions. The park is 6.4 acres in Southeast Seattle, and is just one block east of Martin Luther King, Jr. Way S, along S Othello Street. The park includes active play features on the east side near 45th Avenue S, a large open grassy area in the central portion of the park, and a hillside up to a large level green space with large trees on the west side along 43rd Avenue S.

Throughout its history, Othello Playground has, unfortunately, been the site of several serious violent crimes. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) issues have been re-emphasized and, for the past two years, park resources staff have done an excellent job to open up sight lines throughout the park by significant pruning of trees and shrubs, and have kept the site well maintained. Additional recreational programming in 2009 and 2010 helped the overall visibility of Othello Playground as a positive element of the community through activation.

Public Involvement

The public process on this project has been extensive and thoughtful with a focus on meeting the community where they live, work, play and worship. We hosted traditional-style community meetings, and held many additional meetings with small immigrant or refugee groups. In addition, we created a Project Advisory Team (PAT). The small-group meetings are typically organized in coordination with social service or not-for-profit agencies, and respond to Goal 2 of the Race and Social Justice Initiative -- strengthen the way the City engages the community and provides services.

Community Outreach to Diverse Populations in Southeast Seattle

One of the primary barriers facing many departments is meaningful engagement of diverse populations, both citywide and in Southeast Seattle. Cultural differences, customs and practices have been identified as the main barriers. Parks is committed to dismantling these barriers by face-to-face meetings, and relationship building around parks and long-term use of the park by everyone.

Staff and consultants attended the Othello Park International Music and Art Festival on August 22, 2010 to discuss plans and distribute multi-language surveys. More than 1,000 people attended, and staff collected about 70 surveys, including several in different languages. Staff also attended the Department of Planning and Development's Othello Neighborhood Action Plan Neighborhood Planning Community Workshop on May 18, 2010 to discuss the Othello Park issues, and park issues in Southeast Seattle in general.

Stakeholders Participating in the Public Process

- Friends of Othello Park
- Othello Neighborhood Association (ONA)
- Othello Parks Alliance (OPA)
- Ribbon of Parks Alliance (ROPA)
- The Station at Othello Park
- Vietnamese Friendship Association
- Lao Highland Association
- Somali Community Service Coalition
- Neighborhood House
- New Holly Family Center

Designing the Park

A design consultant, Johnson Southerland, whose office is located in Columbia City and whose employees have strong ties to Southeast Seattle, was selected for the project. Parks and the consultant have worked with the community through the design and public process, and Johnson Southerland is moving forward with construction documents.

We held three public meetings in 2010 -- June 30, September 20 and November 8. This is a partial list of issues and considerations discussed by the community in these meetings include:

- Safety (cited in Levy) – plan for the safety of the public using CPTED guidelines, other safety and lighting guidelines, and other design principles; develop ways to activate the spaces and use the park more fully.
- Lighting/lighting system (cited in Levy) – plan for comprehensive lighting for safety concerns and that encourages more pedestrian use year round, but with minimal impacts on nearby residences.
- Site activation – increase site activation based on current conditions; use existing site elements and install new elements that are used by many.
- Visual access – create clear sightlines throughout the park and the perimeter for viewing throughout and into the park from the streets and neighborhood.
- Pedestrian access – plan trails/paths to maximize recreation opportunities and to help, through placement and design, park users, park neighbors, and passers-by to see each other.

The Johnson Southerland plans for Othello (Attachment A) respond to safety; site activation; visual access; pedestrian access; and lighting through pathway, vegetation management and lighting improvements. Better pedestrian access will include renovation of existing paths, new paths aligned for use and circulation patterns, and adding new paths or entry points to complement park connections and access points to the neighborhood.

The plan accomplishes greater safety, visual access and site activation through additional emphasis on vegetation management, including tree removal and re-landscaping to make sight lines even more open, and remove heavily shaded areas that are often perceived as unsafe. Opening up these areas of the park will also create more open space for informal use.

Lighting improvements include coordinating with Seattle City Light for perimeter street lighting upgrades, adding more lights to the middle of the park, upgrading lights at the restroom for better quality and efficiency, and improving lighting throughout the park for better quality lighting, energy efficiency and overall enhancement to assist with recognition and natural surveillance – being able to see and recognize people as they approach and use the park at night. (See Attachment B for the Lighting Schematic.)

Inter-Departmental Coordination

Most of Parks’ capital projects require some coordination with other City departments. Othello may have more coordination than most, particularly for the safety and lighting issues. Below is a brief summary of part of that coordination, not including permitting and land use issues, which are not documented here.

Department	Coordination/Action
Seattle Police Department	Discuss community issues related to park and past criminal activity in the park; attend PAT meetings; review plans for CPTED and lighting issues.
Department of Neighborhoods	Provided community contacts and information for outreach to overall community and diverse populations; assist with broader outreach to immigrant and refugee communities.
City Light	SCL provides existing lighting off of street poles and street electrical system; coordinate new LED street light replacement (2012), if funded, with new park lighting plans.
Department of Transportation	Coordinate with potential Bridging the Gap project along South Othello Street at Othello Playground, if funded.
Department of Human Services	Provided community contacts and information to assist in outreach for diverse populations.
Seattle Public Utilities	Review drainage and green storm water infrastructure issues related to park development.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Strategies

CPTED is generally defined as design that eliminates or reduces criminal behavior and encourages people to keep an eye out for each other. There are four CPTED strategies considered, including natural surveillance, territorial reinforcement, natural access control, and target hardening that will be applied to the project through the design process.

Parks has been working directly with the Seattle Police Department to address the safety and lighting concerns about the park and its use. South Precinct staff have met with Parks staff, attended the public meetings and attended Project Advisory Team (PAT) meetings. Parks will review the final schematic plans and lighting concepts with SPD staff. SPD staff has commented that this project will be an opportunity to take the CPTED principles and guidelines to the next level (particularly with park lighting changes).

Project Advisory Team (PAT)

Late in 2010, we developed a Project Advisory Team (PAT) to further review lighting issues in detail. A Project Advisory Team is a specially selected group of stakeholders who meet for a pre-determined number of meetings to address a specific issue about a project. Eight community members, Park staff, the design team and Seattle Police are on the PAT.

It has been very beneficial for everyone to meet as a smaller representative group to review the more complex technical issues related to lighting, CPTED and safety. Meetings were held on November 29,

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January 10 and January 31, and we discussed the most effective lighting solution. The PAT's recommendation for the lighting was publicized via e-mail back to all public meeting attendees and the general public via the Parks website.

The recommendation includes amount of lighting desired throughout the park and certain areas, schematic plan and light layout and recommendation on the type of lighting in various areas. Specific technical lighting information will also be reviewed with the final technical specifications decided by the design team and Park maintenance staff.

Long Term Expectations and Benefits

In the long term, the expectations for the park and the nearby community are for a healthier and safer environment. Projects usually benefit from comprehensive public involvement by allowing the development of better parks or better projects. Better overall awareness is often raised in the public process, and the park and other community issues are brought to the forefront. The long term benefits of the project are anticipated to be a desirable community site with activities throughout the year for many members of the community. This will lead to more use by the diverse neighborhood with participation from a greater number of people with the intention of displacing undesirable uses and activities.

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Timeline and Notes

Date	Task	Notes
October 27, 2009	Begin coordinating with other community outreach or park projects	NMF project and ROPA efforts and UW grad student project
October 30, 2009	Assemble list of stakeholders including ethnic and immigrant support services and churches.	We continue to update this list throughout the process
October 30, 2009	Develop preliminary schedule for planning process	Part of scope for preliminary project
November 2009 (contract by end of December)	Identify consultant for RSJI related outreach/involvement	Should be familiar with neighborhoods and issues in SE Seattle and with City and DPR RSJ and SAP goals.
January 2010	First Department informational meeting/process review	Present information, update status and gather reactions or input before public meeting
February 2010	Meeting with consultant and staff most directly involved.	Present analysis of consultant recommended outreach processes including recommendations for more face-to-face outreach with groups with strong culturally based population in the area and strong cultural differences in communication and working relationships. This is enhanced specifically to meet RSJI goals.
Late February - March 2010	Attend various ethnic and immigrant support services meetings to inform them of project, and try to gather early reactions and information about their use of Othello Park.	Present information, update status and gather reactions and comments on Othello and other park issues attendees may have an interest in (similar to some meetings for the RBCC planning). Scheduled and designed to meet RSJI goals.
April 2010	Develop full documentation of process and outcome; develop design program for funded project; negotiate design contract	Continue relationships and communication with groups and community.
May 18, 2010	Attend DPD Othello Neighborhood Action Plan Update Community Workshop	Discuss Othello Park project and park issues.
May 2010 - December 2011	Implement development process.	Complete design and construct project.
June 30, 2010	First public meeting for funded project.	Reviewed information from ROPA and student project; added observations and analysis by Parks and consultant.
August 22, 2010	Attend Othello Park International Music and Art Festival	Parks staff and consultant attended and discussed project and got further comments from festival attendees; about 1,000 attended, and 70 surveys returned.
September 20, 2010	Second public meeting	Presented schematic alternatives.
November 8, 2010	Third public meeting	Presented preferred schematic and discussed PAT.
November 29, 2010	PAT meeting #1	Review CPTED and lighting issues
January 10, 2011	PAT meeting #2	Review schematic lighting layout
January 31, 2011	PAT meeting #3	Review and approve final schematic lighting layout
November 2010- July 2011	Complete design development and construction documents	Keep public updated through PAT meetings and website.
August 2011- December 2011	Construction	Keep public update through website.