



Washington Park Arboretum
South Entry / Madrona Terrace
Charrette #1 - Concept Development August 26-27
Meeting Notes

Participants:

Client Group:

Deb Andrews	Executive Director, The Arboretum Foundation
Chris Berry	University of Washington, Educational Coordinator, WPA
Van Bobbitt	South Seattle Community College Department of Horticulture
Wallis Bolz	Montlake Community
Mindy Cameron	Lehrman / Cameron Studio
Ashley Clark	Arboretum Foundation, Director of Development
Rory Denovan	Seattle Parks and Recreation, Arboretum Gardener
Allen Ferrin	Arboretum Foundation
David Goldberg	Department of Parks and Recreation - Project Planner,
Donald Harris	Department of Parks and Recreation - Property and Acquisitions Manager
Dr. Tom Hinckley	Professor, Center for Urban Horticulture
Randall Hitchin	University of Washington
Fred Hoyt	University of Washington, Arboretum Grounds and Facility Manager
Fred Isaak	Arboretum Foundation
Doug Jackson	Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks
Chuck Lennox	Cascade Interpretive Consulting
Jon Martin	Seattle Parks and Recreation, Crew Chief
Sue Nicol	University of Washington, CUH Outreach Coordinator
Dick Olmstead	University of Washington, Professor of Biology
Sarah Reichard	University of Washington, Assistant Professor of Urban Horticulture
Iain Robertson	Seattle Design Commission, Japanese Garden Advisory Council
Michael Shiosaki	Seattle Parks and Recreation, Pro Parks Manager
Dr. John Wott	Director, Washington Park Arboretum Center for Urban Horticulture

The Design Team: The Portico Group (TPG) and Consultants:

Dennis Meyer	TPG - Landscape Architect / Project Director
Kathleen Day	TPG - Landscape Designer / Horticulturist / Project Manager
Paul Stromdahl	TPG - Interpretive Planner
Dan Hinkley	Director of Collections for Heronswood Nursery, Horticulturist,



- Enhance the rockery, entry, entry boulevard and connections to other areas of arboretum
- Sense of a ‘garden’ with a cohesive collection plan
- Careful design with an ‘artistic’ approach
- Potential to relate new development to visitor’s interests
- Use the native plant community to mimic other eco-geographic locations: demonstration-compare/contrast/educational component
- Remove some of the Big Leaf maples to foster new collections
- Improve aspect and exposure
- Relocate plant materials where possible
- Approach site development with an emphasis on restoration/renovation
- Stewardship means active management practices
- Take a more radical approach: maximize WPA as a site to develop collections and not protect native plant communities displayed elsewhere in the city; collections within the native plant tapestry may not be possible

What are the key historical components that need to be preserved?

- Lake Washington Boulevard
- Japanese Garden connections
- Holmdahl rockery with a new paradigm for how the public perceives rock gardens
- The best locations within WPA are those areas where planners took a visionary ‘long view’ 50-100 years ago with the results enjoyed current and future generations
- Connect new trails to historic trails

What are the key contextual conditions that need to be considered?

- Paths, signage, street, buildings (current built features)
- Traffic noise – canopy provides buffer and screening
- Scale vs. native trees and size of space
- Convex rather than concave – intimacy of space vs. exposed views
- Size of site and scale – key collections and design considerations
- Potential for high use with new paths, bicycle access and parking



Mission, Goals and Audience

Washington Park Arboretum Mission Statement - 1996:

“The Washington Park Arboretum is a living plant museum emphasizing trees and shrubs, hardy in the maritime Pacific Northwest. Plant collections are selected and arranged to display their beauty and function in urban landscapes, to demonstrate their natural ecology and diversity, and to conserve important species and cultivated varieties for the future. The Arboretum serves the public, students at all levels, naturalists, gardeners, and nursery and landscape professionals with its collections, educational programs, interpretation and recreational opportunities.”

Revised Mission:

The mission of the Washington Park Arboretum is to be a museum of living plants, emphasizing trees and shrubs that are hardy in the maritime Pacific Northwest.

Goals to achieve mission;

Our plant collections are selected and arranged to display their beauty and function in an urban landscape.

Our plant collections are selected to demonstrate their natural ecology and diversity.

Our plant collections are selected to conserve important species and cultivated varieties for the future.

Serve the public with our collections, educational, interpretation and recreational opportunities.

Mission Discussion:

Visitor ranges from the: Scientific-Horticulturist » Horticulturist-Gardener » Gardener-Casual Visitor

All types of visitors need to be included in garden designs

Perspectives on what a garden is and should be range from:

1. Functional “.....space designed, deliberately arranged assemblage of plants, selection of plants purposefully chosen, arranged attractively, a collection, for cultivation purposes....”
2. Spiritual “.....sanctuary, beauty, respite, a form of art, tranquility....”

A purposely chosen collection of plants, arranged in deliberately designed spaces, creating a place of beauty and respite.



How will you define success for this project?

Memorable destination:

“where people keep wanting to come back...excitement...safety...”
“leave with a sense of wonder”
“...the arboretum is a special place....”
“...enjoyment...without thinking about it...”

Community Ownership:

“enjoy...not...angry...feel like you have been heard...”
“diversity of ideas and interests...considered...”
“community (city, university, WPA, neighborhood) support.”
“...kindles interest...sense of anticipation...effective model....”
“renewal...”

Ecological and Diverse:

“...appreciation for the ecosystem...”
“...horticultural requirements...rather than change existing...conditions.”
“...existing...new ecosystem planting.”

Main Interpretive Message(s) for visitor who is there for information – What do you want the visitor to take away from the arboretum?

THIS (specific plant) WILL GROW IN THIS MARITIME PACIFIC NORTHWEST URBAN LANDSCAPE & WHY (ecologically based or horticulturally based response)

Small Group Exercise-Discussion Questions and Summary:

Questions

Of the six eco-geographic regions identified for Madrona Terrace, which locations and plant collections interest you the most and why?

How do your preferred eco-geographic regions for plant collections fit with the Arboretum’s mission/goals/objectives?

Which areas do you think offer the most interesting horticultural contributions and seasonal displays?

What programs and activities can convey interest and passion about your preferred collections to the visitor?

What facilities and resources are needed to support your recommended programs and activities?

What are the potential issues and impacts that concern you about this project?



Summary

Plant Collections:

- Bridge the Mediterranean gradient using the madronas as the tie
- Reduce the number of eco-geographic immersive experiences for the site (6 are too many)
- Emphasize the Siskiyou focus, plants should tell relevant stories i.e. plant communities and habitats
- Demonstrate sustainability; some collections may be higher water use than others; not all will be water conservation plants
- Vary sizes of spaces open vs. intimate
- Chilean focus at south entry, provide a temperate forest comparison
- Asian collections offer cultural opportunities within the community as well as plant diversity
- Maintain some native trees
- Uses water-wise plants
- Right plant-right place consideration in plant selection and placement
- Consider sister city connections, develop partnerships with other botanist and plant collectors, focus collections on the uncommon

Site and Circulation:

- Too many trails;
- Need more open space to view gardens
- Circulation is too linear north and south
- Nexus at Lake Washington Boulevard and Arboretum Drive
- Use high point for vistas

Shelter Facility:

- Shelter facility should be linked to gardens
- Shelter and infrastructure and utilities should tell sustainability story and be integrated in environmental approach to the design
- Cost should drive decisions
- Stay with proposed master plan especially regarding type of facilities and structures
- Facility needs storage area, classroom space, and possible reservation space for group use

Visitor:

- Offer wonderful experiences for everyone; a blended approach to the collections would provide this
- Design for children is key; focus on children as they are the stewards and conservationists of the future



- Balance diverse users in the design – bicyclists, school groups, cars, families, scientists, gardeners
- Focus first on an invitation to visit and be entertained followed by information and learning

Maintenance/Management:

- How to manage plant growth change
- Design more self-sustaining gardens for fear of donor burn-out
- Wise use of water should be key message
- Considering maintenance costs and needs

Concept Alternative Analysis

Positive impacts common to all concepts

- Views from Japanese Garden can be enhanced appropriately
- Entry improvement
- Interpretation
- Japanese Garden connections
- Sustainability/Water consumption
- Opportunities to match plant to site
- Demonstration for home gardeners

1. Pacific Rim – Master Plan Refined - Geographic Collections -

Concept:

This alternative includes four of the six collections identified in the master plan for Madrona Terrace: the existing New Zealand collection, Asia, Chile and Cascadia (Northern California, Oregon and Washington).

An organizing meadow includes open space, and an education shelter. Associated with the shelter and meadow are collection preview plantings for each of the eco-geographic collections that act as trailhead and introduction to the larger adjacent exhibits. The 30 car parking lot is also sited in this location. The Cascadia collection area includes the knoll and the south facing slope and incorporates the existing madronas. The Chilean collection marks the southern entry to the Arboretum and is located at the intersection of Lake Washington Blvd. and Arboretum Drive. The Asia collection includes the west facing slope above the Japanese Garden extending north toward the existing overlook. The New Zealand collection is expanded in area and content to include some representation from Australia.

Positives:

- Asia complements Japanese Garden well



- Allows for preservation of some native trees, on knoll particularly (reserves Madronas) but also in Asia,
- Showy entry with Chilean plants
- Collections previews allow for rich cultural and botanical interpretation at shelter as well as good transitions to immersive displays
- New Zealand collections and can be retained and expanded
- Collections are sizable enough to work well
- Meadow captures opportunity for creating open space and subsequent public use
- Modest holly retention opportunity

Negatives:

- No Mediterranean Basin, nor South Africa (limited anyway)

Ranking:

The ranking exercise rated this concept the most preferred option with 15 participants identifying it as their first choice; 3 participants ranked it their second choice.

Refinement:

An additional study laid out the three main trails traversing the project site: the multi-use trail, the hillside trail and the ridge top trail, responding to slope and collections. Parking, meadow and the collection preview gardens were further defined.

2. Winter Rain – Geographic Collections

Concept:

This alternative is also geographical based but includes only those collections that share Seattle's winter rain climate: Pacific Slope (wet Puget Sound, the Cascade Crest and the dry Klamath knot), the Mediterranean Basin and the Southern Andean Incline.

The Pacific Slope extends from a low point opposite the Japanese Garden near the terminus of Azalea Way up hill to the knoll -the high point of the Arboretum. The Mediterranean Basin is located at the intersection of Lake Washington Blvd. and Arboretum Drive. The Southern Andean Incline is located on the northern upper slope of the site. The education shelter is sited at the summit of the knoll to take advantage of territorial views. The glade provides an open space, gathering area and space for parking.

Positives

- Good sustainability message about water conservation
- Andean already partially in place and therefore retained
- Excellent opportunities for retaining appropriate native trees
- Captures two exotic floras with enormous landscape potential; others can be developed elsewhere
- New Zealand retained, but not interpreted as part of this cluster



- Shelter location captures best opportunity for views out
- Mediterranean basin collection offers a moderate opportunity for showy entrance (Chile better)

Negative

- Hollies must be propagated and/or relocated
- Does not capture full opportunity for promoting underused plant material (master plan holds numerous additional opportunities for retaining and enhancing natives elsewhere on site)

Ranking:

The ranking exercise rated this concept the third most preferred option with 10 participants identifying it as their third choice; 4 participants ranked it their second choice and 1 participant rated it their first choice.

3. Pacific Blend - Geomorphology

Concept:

This alternative begins with an analysis of landform, geomorphology and microclimate to gain an understanding of plant growing conditions that will inform the siting of plant collections. Instead of locating plants together from areas of common geographic origin they are combined and located based on the criteria of right plant for the right location.

The four areas are the Dewy Glade, the Sandy Knoll, the Rocky Scree, and the Woodsy Slope. Three immersion exhibits occur at the intersection of these areas and represent a particular geographic area and variety of growing conditions. The Chilean immersion area lies at the intersection of the Sandy Knoll, the Rocky Scree, and the Woodsy Slope. The Asian immersion occurs at the intersection of the Dewy Glade, the Sandy Knoll, and the Woodsy Slope. The existing New Zealand collection remains as a third immersion exhibit. The shelter is located within the Asian immersion area and could stylistically incorporate attributes of Asian architecture.

Positives

- Extraordinarily showy plant combinations can be created throughout
- Best opportunities for jaw-dropping entry
- Immersion experiences created also
- Best use of landscape for optimal siting of plant material; greatest flexibility for out planting
- Appropriate retention of healthy madronas and other native trees as warranted
- Opportunity for culturally themed shelter design if desired
- Promotes good sustainability by siting right plants in right places
- Creates better, more practical homeowner models – a better home demonstration garden



- New Zealand retained and enhanced
- Captures opportunities to improve views from Japanese Garden
- Presents best opportunities to create taxonomic clusters (e.g. Mahonia, Gaultheria)

Negatives

- Blending plants from different regions creates a potential loss of focus, may pose orientation and interpretive challenges

Ranking:

The ranking exercise rated this concept the fourth (least) preferred option with 3 participants identifying it as their third choice; and 1 participant ranked it their second choice.

4. Northern/ Southern Blend

The fourth alternative organizes the collections by hemisphere of origin, placing individual plants either in more open and sunny areas or within shaded forest areas. The education shelter is sited on the boundary between the four areas.

In the southern hemisphere the sunny area is located atop the knoll, extending down the south facing slope while the shady area occupies the lower slope adjacent to Lake Washington Blvd. The geographic origins of the collections are New Zealand, Australia, Chile and South Africa.

In the northern hemisphere collections the sunny area is located in the flat and open area adjacent to Arboretum Drive, while the shady areas extend down the west facing slope to Lake Washington Blvd.

Positives

- Allows for fullest use of geographic floras, including all six listed in plan
- Good opportunities to match plants to site
- Provides a good deal of latitude for plant placement for attractive display
- Equator concept possesses opportunities for creative interpretation, both with plantings and shelter design
- Excellent potential for showy entry at Rock Garden

Negatives

- Substantial blurring of focus, creating orientation and interpretive challenges
- Some constraints emerge from separating the two hemispheres

Ranking:

The ranking exercise rated this concept the second most preferred option with 4 participants identifying it as their third choice; 12 participants ranked it their second choice and 3 participants rated it their first choice.