

# Longfellow Natural Drainage Systems

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Mayor

**Samuel Assefa**  
Director, OPCD

**John Savo**, Chair

**Ben de Rubertis** Vice Chair

**Justin Clark**

**Rikerrious Geter**

**Rachel Gleeson**

**Laura Haddad**

**Brianna Holan**

**Mark Johnson**

**Rick Krochalis**

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## Commissioners Present

John Savo, Chair  
Ben de Rubertis, Vice Chair  
Justin Clark  
Rikerrious Geter  
Rachel Gleeson  
Laura Haddad  
Brianna Holan  
Mark Johnson  
Rick Krochalis

## Commissioners Excused

Ross Tilghman

## Project Description

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) plans to improve the water quality within the region by preventing roughly 15,000 tons of pollutants from entering creeks within each of the City's three largest urban watersheds. SPU will partner with Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and other local agencies, community organizations, and private developers to construct bioretention systems within city rights-of-way (ROW). The plan calls for the creation of four miles of bioretention systems within the ROW by 2025 to help treat runoff from 44 acres.

As part of this plan to improve water quality, reduce flooding, and increase partnerships between departments and organizations, SPU has identified four project sites to implement natural drainage systems within the Longfellow Creek Watershed. The project sites include:

- SW Kenyon St and 24th Ave SW
- 24th Ave SW between Barton St SW and Thistle St SW
- Sylvan Way SW & SW Orchard St
- 29th Ave SW below Barton St SW (still being evaluated as a potential site)

Natural drainage design features will include special soil and vegetation to clean pollutants and reduce flooding, new pathways, lighting, street trees, and reduced road widths.

## Meeting Summary

This was the Seattle Design Commissions (SDC) first review of the Longfellow Natural Drainage System project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the concept design for the project. After the presentation and discussion, the SDC voted, 9-0, to approve the concept design for the Longfellow Natural Drainage System project with several recommendations.

## Recusals and Disclosures

Brianna Holan disclosed that her employer, LMN Architects, previously bid on an SPU project located within the same area as this project.

**November 1, 2018**

10:00 am - Noon

**Type**

CIP

**Phase**

Concept design

**Previous Reviews**None**Presenters**Shanti Colwell  
SPUApril Mills  
SPU**Attendees**Jonathan Brown  
SPUMarcia Iwasaki  
OAC**Summary of Presentation**

Shanti Colwell and April Mills of Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) presented the concept design for the Longfellow Natural Drainage System project. This is part of a larger strategic plan to improve the city with 'green' stormwater infrastructure (GSI) and will help the City of Seattle achieve its goal of managing 700 million gallons of stormwater runoff using GSI by 2025. The location of this project is between the West Seattle Bridge and White Center, along Delridge Way SW. After rainfall, polluted stormwater enters Longfellow Creek, which drains in to the Duwamish Waterway, ultimately draining into Puget Sound. Along with environmental stewardship, SPU states that these 'green' systems can save rate-payers money, create green space, encourage traffic-calming, and prevent flooding. *See figure 1 for more detail.*

The project team detailed SPU collaborating with other agencies towards implementing green system strategies. Since 2013 SPU has worked with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and the Seattle City Council in the Natural Drainage System (NDS) Partnering Program to ensure improvements are also made for pedestrian access, air quality and enhanced green spaces. SPU is also working with the Washington State Department of Ecology to create an integrated plan that meets all regulations.

The project team then described efforts to minimize disruptions of the Delridge and West Seattle neighborhoods. SPU has facilitated this project through an equity plan toolkit and hopes to focus on underserved communities. Outreach strategies included a stakeholder analysis, resident surveys, ranking criteria through race and social justice, local drop-in informational sessions, and door-to-door follow-up.

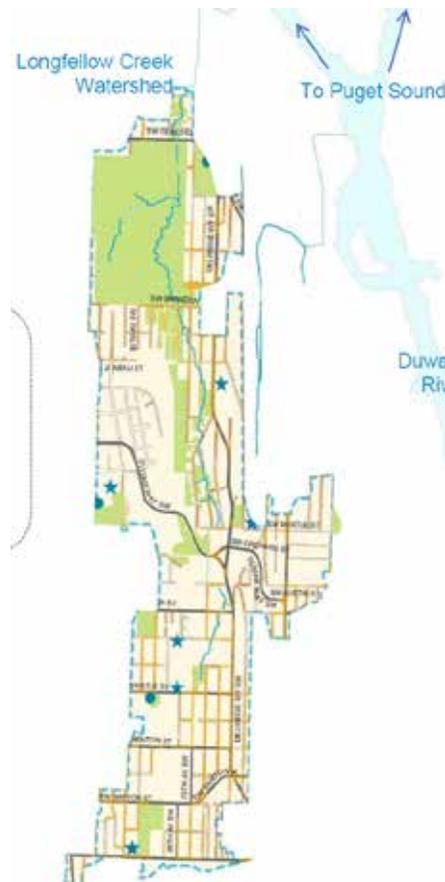


Figure 1: Longfellow Creek Watershed



Figure 2: Project site locations

The proposed project includes the creation of NDS on four project sites. Design elements typically include side slopes, conveyance systems and road edge treatments, new sidewalks, trees, and ADA ramps. Special design elements such as a trail, bridge, lighting, and art are specific to one project location along SW Kenyon St. Since concrete curb and gutter treatments are very costly, more cost-effective alternatives like asphalt-thickened edges have been explored. The project team iterated that these designs are early in the concept phase and subject to change. See figures 2-4 for more detail.

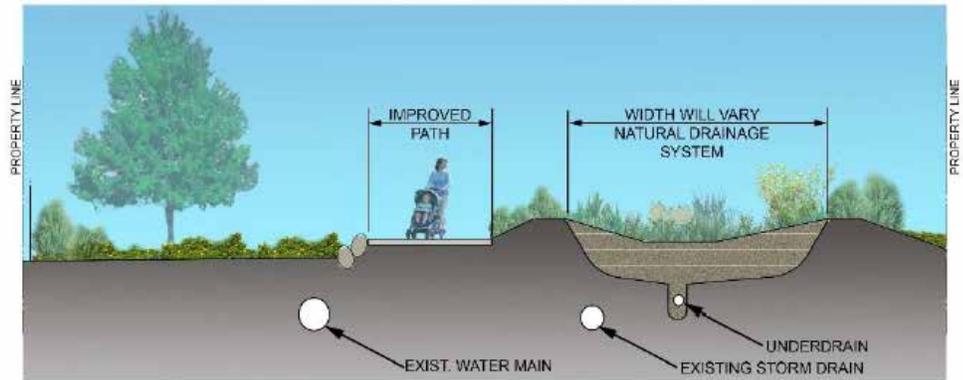


Figure 3: Section of proposed design near SW Kenyon St and 24th Ave SW

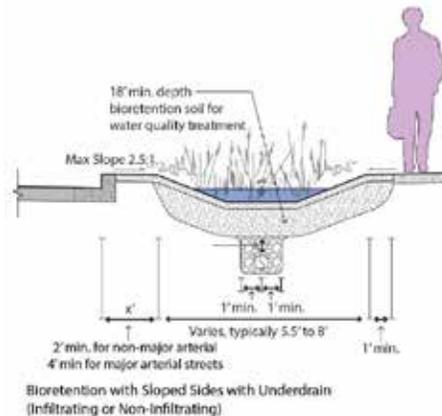


Figure 4: Example of Natural Drainage System with side slopes along street edge.



### Agency Comments

**Marcia Iwasaki**, OAC, stated that the Office of Arts and Culture is excited about this project. Ms. Iwasaki then mentioned that OAC has received several highly qualified applicants to be considered for the artist selection. OAC is hoping to have the process moving within the next few months.

### Public Comments

None

### Summary of Discussion

The commission organized its discussion around the following issues:

- NDS principles and elements
- Implementation program
- Site selection – character and functionality

#### *NDS principles and elements*

The SDC commended the project team for their approach to community outreach, leading with green/sustainability measures, and for their collaboration with other city agencies and organizations. Commissioners agreed that the project provided an opportunity for the public to experience landscape architecture up close and to understand how green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) works. The commission then recommended the project team continue to develop landscape architecture and placemaking elements for each project site.

While the Commission understood the project team not wanting to include detailed renderings early on the design process, commissioners recommended the project team develop renderings to better communicate with community members.

The SDC also encouraged the project team to emphasize the priority of the project, which is stormwater mitigation, when reaching out to community members. Commissioners then recognized that the project is introducing a significant amount of vegetation to the area which will potentially have a positive impact on public health and environmental benefits within the community. The commission recommended the project team communicate how the project provides public health and environmental benefits to the surrounding community.

### *Implementation program*

The SDC commended the project team for overlaying the project area with other city plans such as the pedestrian master plan to help guide site selection. Commissioners agreed the benefits identified through other plans that would be implemented as part of this project, such as sidewalks, were just as important as water quality benefits. The Commission then strongly encouraged the project team continue to be transparent with the community if the scope of the project area were to change and/or reduce.

The SDC then commended the project team for their approach to community outreach. Commissioners encouraged the team to continue communicating with the community throughout the design and construction of the project. Although commissioners mentioned that the project team should balance the wants of the community with the needs of the larger city, they stressed the importance of the project team to listen, understand, and respond to the reasons why the surrounding community might or might not want the project to occur.

The Commission then recognized the project as a unique transition from public space to private land and encouraged the project team to think about providing adjacent property owners with tools to help care for the system.

### *Site Selection - character and functionality*

The SDC agreed with all four proposed site selections. The commission strongly advocated for the continued inclusion of the 29th Ave SW, between SW Cambridge St and SW Barton St project location. Commissioners mentioned that they were encouraged to see that not all of the project sites were located along the street edge. Commissioners agreed with including art at one site rather than spreading the small budget to cover all four project locations. Commissioners also agreed that the SW Kenyon project site was the most appropriate location for art. The commission recommended the project team provide the location of art on the site as well as the artist's design approach.

Commissioners then discussed the materiality of each project site. The commission recommended the site include a plant palette with variety and season color change. Several commissioners also encouraged the project team use plants varying in height in certain areas. The SDC then recommended the project team be mindful of the materials selection, specifically for the retaining walls and pavement edge treatment. Commissioners cautioned the project team from using a raised asphalt edge as a pavement treatment. The commission then mentioned that the proposed retaining walls could serve as a unique design element of emphasis.

### **Action**

The SDC thanked the project team for its presentation of the concept design for the Longfellow Natural Drainage Systems project. The Commission appreciated the project team leading with green/sustainability measures, working the NDS at multiple scale, partnering with other organizations and agencies, approach to community outreach, and the overlay of the project with other city plans. The SDC voted, 9-0, to approve the concept design phase of the Longfellow Natural Drainage Systems project with the following recommendations:

1. Provide further development of landscape architecture, placemaking, and rendering and materials for future community outreach events
2. Keep site of larger regulatory and goals for CSO agenda
3. Consider communicating, in a compelling way, how the project provides larger public health and environmental benefits to the surrounding community
4. Pursue the 29th Ave SW, between SW Cambridge St. and SW Barton St. project location
5. Provide more details about the proposed art such as the location within the SW Kenyon St project site as well as the design approach the artist is taking
6. Consider specifying a plant palette to include variation and seasonal color change
7. Be mindful of materials selection, specifically for concrete, retaining walls and other vertical elements.
8. Take care in the use and specification of edge treatments, be conscientious of the surrounding community when selecting materials.