

PARKS AND RECREATION

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Livable South Downtown study area includes several parks, plazas and other facilities for the diverse residents, employees, tourists, business patrons and stadium eventgoers in this area. These facilities are primarily located within the central parts of the Pioneer Square and Chinatown/I.D. neighborhoods, with limited open spaces available in other portions of the study area such as Little Saigon and the industrial-zoned stadium area. A summarized list of neighborhood parks, open space, recreational features and public-private open spaces includes the following:

Pioneer Square

Occidental Park and pedestrian mall
City Hall Park
Pioneer Square Park
Pedestrian plaza north of King Street Station
Washington Street Boat Landing
Waterfall Park at 2nd/Main*
Qwest Field north plaza*, Occidental promenade
Safeco Field plazas*
Colman Dock
Prefontaine Place

Chinatown/I.D.

Kobe Terrace/Danny Woo Gardens
Hing Hay Park
Children's Park
Plazas in the Union Station block*
Lane Street plaza at Uwajimaya*
Community Center, Library

Nearby outside the study area:

Yesler Terrace community center and playfields
Bailey Gatzert School playfields
Dr. Jose Rizal Park

(Note: Locations identified with a "*" are publicly used spaces that are maintained by private or public entities other than City of Seattle.)

The variety of neighborhood parks and open spaces serve multiple purposes. Aesthetically, they provide open space, visual relief, greenery and distinctive character elements that complement the historic character of these neighborhoods. They attract daytime use by many pedestrians and passersby. A few of these parks and plazas also provide active recreational opportunities for residents, with play equipment and gardening spaces. These include the Kobe Terrace/Danny Woo Gardens (which has active vegetable gardening spaces) and Children's Park in Chinatown/I.D. In addition, a community center and library near 8th Avenue S./S. Dearborn Street provides facilities for indoor athletic and recreational activities. Newer features of Occidental Park such as "bocce ball" courts also provide for limited active recreation. In Little Saigon, a nearby community center and playfield facilities at Yesler Terrace and Bailey Gatzert School also provide for some active recreation opportunities. Otherwise, the existing park and plaza spaces throughout the study area are more attuned to passive recreation, such as people-watching, sightseeing and photography. Occasional art-walks, weekend markets and street-vending activities also enliven these spaces.

Planned or possible future park/recreation improvements include: a future expansion of Hing Hay Park to the U.S. Post Office property to the west; landscaping improvements along Maynard Avenue S. south of S. Main Street; addition of a kiosk structure at Occidental Park; possible renovation of City Hall Park; and future development of park/plaza space in the Public Safety block (between James and Cherry Streets, 3rd and 4th Avenues).

In 2005 and 2006, Seattle Parks and Recreation (Parks) explored numerous properties for possible acquisition in Chinatown and Little Saigon vicinities. This effort included funds available from the 2000 Pro-Parks levy and King County. The proposal to expand Hing Hay Park to an adjacent property is the intended result of that effort (Blair, 2007).

In planning for park needs, Parks uses the following guidelines for distribution of park and open space:

Neighborhood Park or Usable Open Space, in Urban Village

Publicly-owned or dedicated open space that is easily accessible and intended to serve the immediate urban village. This encompasses various types of open space for passive enjoyment as well as activity and includes green areas and hard-surfaced urban plazas, street parks, and pocket parks. Dedicated open spaces should be at least 10,000 square feet in size.

Desirable: One acre of open space per 1,000 households and one-quarter acre of urban space per 10,000 jobs in the Downtown Urban Core. One-quarter acre within 1/8th mile of all locations in urban village density areas.

Acceptable: One-quarter acre within 1/2 mile, or community approved offset to lack of usable park space.

Offsets: School grounds, recreation facility, green streets, boulevard, and trail.

Using these measures, most of Little Saigon and the Jackson Place edge east of Rainier Avenue S. are areas identified as further than 1/8-mile from a usable open space. The existing aforementioned parks in Chinatown west of I-5 do meet proximity goals, however. In Pioneer Square, the neighborhood meets the proximity goals except in the stadium vicinity. Parks in its 2006 “gap analysis” identifies the Pioneer Square neighborhood as meeting its open space per household goals currently and for 2024, but not the Chinatown/I.D. neighborhood. According to goals for 2004 household presence, this urban village is about 0.3-acre short on usable open space, and for 2024 goals (per growth projected in the City’s Comprehensive Plan) is about 1.3 acres short.

Parks planners also use several other guidelines for suggested proximity to active recreation facilities. For example, one soccer and baseball field is desirable within one to two miles of all Seattle residents. A community center should be available within one mile of Seattle residents, and community centers should serve populations of about 15,000-20,000 people (Seattle’s Parks and Recreation Plan, 2000). The relatively recent construction of community centers in Chinatown and Yesler Terrace has addressed this active recreation space demand to some degree, and athletic fields are also present in Yesler Terrace and at Bailey Gatzert Elementary School near 14th Avenue S./S. Main Street.

As suggested by recent property acquisition efforts, the Downtown urban environment can be a difficult place for the City to acquire individual properties to provide additional park and recreation facilities due to limited availability and high costs. However, to the extent funding becomes available in the future Parks will consider opportunities for additional park and recreation investments (Blair, 2007)

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Analysis for this EIS anticipates more residential and employment growth than was previously evaluated in parks planning. Compared to previous studies that assumed the growth projected in the City’s Comprehensive Plan to 2024, the additional increment of residential growth studied in Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 amounts to about 3,700 to 4,100 more households by 2030 (see Table 3-33). For the No Action Alternative (Alt. 4), the additional residential growth amounts to about 1,400 additional households. The additional increment of growth would result in additional demand for parks, open space and recreational facilities, which can be evaluated at a programmatic level for its potential impacts.

**Table 3-33
Net Additional Growth Contributing to Park/Recreation Demand Under the Alternatives**

Comprehensive Plan Growth Assumptions, to 2024 (households)	Livable South Downtown EIS Growth Assumptions, to 2030 (households)	Net Difference Between EIS and Comprehensive Plan Growth Assumptions, to 2030 (households)
Pioneer Square: 1,000	Overall Total: Alts. 1, 2, 3: Appx. 5,700 – 6,100 Alt. 4 No Action: 3,400	Net Additional Amount Of Growth Evaluated in EIS:
Chinatown/I.D.: <u>1,000</u>		Alts. 1, 2, 3: Appx. 3,700 – 4,100
TOTAL 2,000		Alt. 4 No Action: 1,400

Source: DPD, 2007

Using the DPR acreage-per-household guidelines, the net additional amounts of residential growth through 2030 would translate to an additional residential-based demand for usable park/recreation open space of:

- Alternative 1: 3.7 acres (equivalent to a space about 400 x 400 feet)
- Alternative 2: 4.0 acres
- Alternative 3: 4.1 acres
- Alternative 4: 1.4 acres

The projected demands from additional employment growth would be relatively small, amounting to less than one acre under each of the alternatives.

If neither the City nor future development provides additional park/recreation open space sufficient to meet Parks’ acreage-per-household guidelines, additional deficits in open space would be generated. Such deficits are identified as potential adverse impacts of future growth on parks and recreation. Other aspects of potential parks and recreation impacts are summarized below.

Increased Use of Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities

Future residential and employment growth would tend to increase the overall use and activity levels of existing parks and open spaces. In many instances this would better activate and improve the safety of public spaces. However, with large increases in resident and employee populations, there could eventually be volumes of use at some parks or recreation facilities that would represent “overuse” of such facilities. An example would be maximized use of community center athletic facilities.

Increased Need for Usable Open Space Distributed Across the Study Area

With the probable trends of increased residential infill development across non-industrial portions of the study area and increased commercial/office development in IC zones, the residential and employee populations would be more densely distributed across the study area than under existing conditions. This would generate additional demand for usable open spaces that are distributed more evenly across the study area. Examples of areas with increased demand for open space over time include Little Saigon, where there is no dedicated park space, the south-of-Dearborn vicinity, the Qwest Field north parking lot and “over-tracks” vicinity west of 4th Avenue S., and the 1st Avenue S. corridor south of S. King Street. Similarly, even though there are park or plaza features in or near certain areas in Chinatown and Pioneer Square, local resident and employee populations would benefit if additional open space amenities were available.

Conclusion of Adverse Impacts for Alternatives 1, 2 and 3

The impacts identified above represent adverse impacts of future growth attributable to the zoning alternatives. Options for addressing these added demands include:

- seeking to ensure that sufficient usable open space is provided on-site or in nearby off-site locations, as part of future development projects, through requirements, incentives, public benefit improvements, or other strategies; and/or
- future City actions to acquire and improve properties for parks and open space; and/or
- improve properties already in public ownership.

It is also noted that under the proposed South Downtown Mixed (SDM) zone, an increased importance is attached to achieving open space amenities in future development. Assuming this zoning strategy would be successfully implemented, Alternative 3 would have a lesser potential for adverse open space impacts due to the greatest presence of SDM zones. Comparatively, Alternative 2 would have a greater potential for such impacts due to the lack of SDM zones, and Alternative 1 would have an intermediate potential for impact between Alternatives 2 and 3. In other areas of the Pioneer Square and Chinatown/I.D. neighborhoods, the overall potential for adverse open space impacts is roughly comparable under Alternatives 1, 2 and 3, and lesser for the No Action Alternative (Alt. 4).

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Due to a lack of identified significant adverse impacts, no mitigation strategies are required. City agencies may consider actions that would provide additional parks and open spaces in this area over time.

SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

None are identified.