



Library podcast

How Can Seattle "Grow" More Public Space?

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[00:00:36] Hi everybody. My name is Valerie Wonder and I'm the Community Engagement Manager here at The Seattle Public Library and I'm very glad to welcome you here tonight. The library is deeply committed to creating opportunities for dialogue around issues that are important to community. And for creating opportunities for you to hear from and share with thought leaders and government agencies and others that create the policies and implement the policies that affect your lives. Because of this we're very pleased to be partnering with the Office of Planning and Community Development and KUOW on this program tonight. The second to the urban innovation speaker series. Our partner KUOW is recording tonight's event as is the Seattle channel and the Seattle Public Library. So you'll have lots of opportunities to listen to it later or tell your friends about it. And now it is my pleasure to introduce Sam Assefa the director of the Office of Planning and Community Development.

[00:01:37] Thank you.

[00:01:42] Thank you. Valerie and thank you all for coming in this beautiful evening to talk about public spaces indoor. You're doing it in this fantastic library beautiful library so I'm pretty sure it means a lot to you and we really appreciate that you're here at OPEC launched this speaker series last March. I think some of you participated as a community forum to explore best practices on issues and forces that are shaping Seattle today and in the future.

[00:02:18] So through this process we bring experts from around the country to share new perspectives and ideas on urban planning housing transportation climate change public spaces among others our first event on March focused on affordable housing. Tonight's event will focus on outdoor public spaces and future events will focus on integrated transportation solutions trends in environmental resilient resiliency and sustainability and other pertinent topics that would inform our own policies here in Seattle I want to start by thanking our co-sponsors for tonight's events. Obviously Seattle Public Library for this fantastic facility KUOW Public Radio who has been our sponsor at the

last event as well. Collins Warman local architecture and planning and design firm and Seattle Public Utilities for collaborating with obesity on tonight's event.

[00:03:23] I also like to thank my own staff Jason Kelly our communications director and Patrice Carroll strategic advisor for helping facilitate put together tonight's event.

[00:03:35] So this evening will explore the challenges of protecting expanding and enhancing public outdoor space in a dense fine city and is no it's no secret that Seattle is experiencing that challenge significantly today. So as Seattle's growing faster than any major city in the US we added about 27000 new residents just in 2016 alone and current trends seem to count from every projection will continue over the next decade anywhere from hundred twenty to one hundred fifty thousand new residents are possible in Seattle.

[00:04:14] We know people are choosing to move to Seattle because of its strong economy and job growth but it's also because because of its vibrant culture stunning natural beauty plenty of sun as you've experienced over the last few weeks. And yes it's great it's great outdoor spaces one of the pressing questions for Seattle is how we can continue to grow without jeopardizing what makes this city a livable and vibrant city. Now that we are more than 700000 people and we expect to add as I said about hundred twenty two hundred fifty thousand people in the next decade. Tonight we ask the question how can Seattle grow more open space as cities grow. We need to invest in public space acquiring new public open space in urban areas is becoming cost prohibitive under underdeveloped undeveloped land is limited and there are many competing priorities for the land that we have as a growing city. We're not unique with this challenge. We have much to learn from other cities that are innovating in interesting ways to address this challenge which is why tonight's discussion promises to be informative.

[00:05:27] This discussion is not going to stay here. We are going to have this information and what we learned from here feed related ongoing work that the city's currently engaged in. We are just launching a new effort in Seattle called outside citywide. This effort will be a fresh and integrated look at how we can leverage existing assets and new innovative ideas to ensure high quality and diverse outdoor public spaces for all Seattle lights from urban plazas to natural spaces from the neighborhood scale to the citywide and regional scale and are offered in the city as we grow.

[00:06:07] We'll be working with our colleagues across city government with other agencies like King County and the Port of Seattle with Seattle public schools with our universities with community partners and many others.

[00:06:22] Our goal through this process is to ensure that current and future generation generations can continue to enjoy the beauty of this place and what made Seattle a great city with access to all the benefits that being outdoors can provide.

[00:06:37] So we look forward to hearing from our panelists this evening but to inform our work especially on outside outside citywide that it's also very important to hear from you and Seattleites

about new ideas. What is working what's not working for the future of public spaces in Seattle. So we would like to get you engaged in that process just to give you an example. I recently got a wonderful letter from a 9 year old Adeline who lives near Roosevelt reservoir. She had a lot of ideas about how we should use the Roosevelts reservoir. Her letter started as dear city planner I have a suggestion to make. What if and then she listed all of its wonderful ideas and I can tell from the writing that she actually wrote that so I sent her a note back saying I'd love to meet with you and explore your ideas. So we made an appointment at the Roosevelt reservoir and when I got there she waited for me with her dad in Jeddah. An aerial photo of the Roosevelt reservoir. With all these drawings wonderfully illustrated a creek a pond. Different kinds of trees and we're walking around she's explaining each type of the tree and what it would do if we added those amenities to that area for her which where she lived a few blocks away.

[00:08:02] And she actually corrected her dad about the type of trees in that kind of wildlife that exists in the area. Every time he tried to explain she would just cut him off and say Dad no that's not what that is and this is this is what this tree is. And it is really impressive. So in effect and a header letter I'll read it. She said quote We might be able to add some sand and gravel and plants fish and all sorts of things into the reservoir. Then all we need to do was add water. I know it would be expensive but I personally I personally think the results would be worth more than cash. Plus it could be like a refuge for wildlife in the city so if a 9 year old can be that engaged I think I hope you have no excuse not to engage. So please sign up for email updates on outside city wide. I think that site is on the screen.

[00:09:03] It's the Web site is Seattle dot gov slash obesity. That if you're on social media hashtag outside outside city wide to share your ideas and innovate and innovations that you can come up with in Seattle or other places through that Web site. So we'll be sending you more information through that site about this integrated effort so bed tonight. I want to start now to introduce KUOW Posey Gruner who will serve as a model for moderator for tonight's discussion Posey produces content for KUOW the region of boom team which explores how Seattle's growth is affecting the region. As a producer. Pauses identifies Posey identifies people with something important to say whether they're making their news analyzing the news or affected by the news.

[00:10:02] When talking about growth that has meant talking to environmentalists about why they're investing in affordable housing. Talking to artists about why they're capturing vanishing Seattle or talking to a small town. Tour guides about ghosts. Ghost towns in the mountains. She's produced a series of interviews about Seattle 2035 the Regional Comprehensive Plan and about Seattle's creation of a metropolitan parks district. In short Posey talks to people about growth for a living and then tries to make sense of it for people like me the 9 year old and 19 year olds as well.

[00:10:43] So please help me welcome Posey to the podium applause Hello everyone.

[00:10:52] Thanks Sam. I'm Josie greener as Sam mentioned I am a producer for KUOW as region of boom team. So as Sam mentioned I talked to smart people about growth all the time but I don't always get to do it well dressed nicely and looking at people's actual faces so thank you for this opportunity. Just what to expect from the evening for the rest of you know this next hour. We're going

to have three short conversations between myself and each panelist and then we're going to open it up to a conversation with all of you.

[00:11:23] So you know a big goal of this evening as Sam said is to get you to participate. So think about this 9 year old. Think about what you want. Start imagining start investing yourself in this process it'll totally be worth it. Before we get into the discussion I just wanted to make sure everybody's on the same page about what we mean by open space and why it matters. And so for that I'll turn to some things that our panelists have said to me. When I asked over Brandeis who is this fellow right here. What he means by open space. He said I'm pretty liberal with the definition. It's not just parks it's streets. Everything that the public controls even mundane stuff like the space between the streetscape and the retail.

[00:12:03] So think big but also think small think of stuff you may have overlooked. That's my interpretation. Why does open space matter that's for Bailey who's sitting at the end there. He says our parks and public space system is the best barometer for our city's overall health and happiness and its commitment to equity. That's a sentiment by the way that's echoed by the other panelists. And why now. Mommy Hara who's here in the middle says here in Seattle we're at a critical time for determining how to make investments in open space that reflect what we value as a society. So think about this. What do you value in society. What kind of space would reflect that. We're at a critical time. So let's not waste a minute. UVA so Brandis is a professor of practice at Georgetown University.

[00:12:50] He served as a senior vice president at the Urban Land Institute where he directed research and global programs on climate change and sustainable urban development. And from 2000 to 2008 he was the managing director of the Anacostia waterfront initiative in D.C. which he's going to tell us all a little bit about.

[00:13:06] Welcome to.

[00:13:10] So you've said that big ideas by urban planners and policymakers have to be translated into real projects and that needs to be done through the public and private investment process. So Anderson you can give us some examples of how that works. Yeah.

[00:13:25] So first of all thank you so much. Thank you Valerie and Sam for for inviting me here. It's wonderful. It's wonderful to be here in this building and to have this conversation. It's a real treat for me. Thank you. So what I mean by that is especially with parks we have lots of aspirations associated with our public realm. Of course we have lots of aspirations associated with our cities. But when it comes to realizing those goals we have to get pragmatic and practical. And one of the things that I find so fascinating about public open space is that there are a series of steps sometimes big steps sometimes little steps.

[00:14:12] But they are incremental steps that are finite tangible usually involve money and usually thank you.

[00:14:22] Usually involve money and that money can come from any number of different places usually it comes from the private sector through capital improvement plans but more and more and more we're seeing a whole host of partnerships emerge around the public realm. And so I'll talk about that a little bit more in a second. So I'm just I've brought a couple of slides with me here from Washington and these are just slides of parks that have been built over the last 10 years or so. So this is a park called Canal Park. It's the site of an old canal used to be one of the most important parking lots for public school buses and through a public private partnership including through private donations. This park was built. Next slide please. And this is the same park in the summer. Next slide. We've done a lot of work as many cities have on our waterfront. This is an example of a long term public private partnership where the city partnered with a private developer to organize a new public realm where there was none. This is a former brownfield site. It's actually a superfund site and now is a regional park not just for this neighborhood but not just for the city but really for the region.

[00:15:51] This is a new place for people to come together Yards Park part of yards. Park was responding to a problem that we have in Washington and that is the challenge of heterogeneity. We have lots of federal parks controlled by the National Park Service that are expanses of green on the other hand. We have lots of city parks that tend to be organized around community centers and schools. And what we didn't have in Washington until very recently is a set of new public realm projects not always parks but public realm that also invite a new kind of commerce to happen. Some of this summer I'm thinking now about special markets in this case a restaurant a very high end restaurant accompanied by other price points and in dining but located within a park so that you can imagine this public school open space being accessible to people who just want to sit and have a glass of wine. Unimaginable in Washington until just a couple of years ago. And finally these are some slides taken from a new neighborhood in the city called NoMa North of Massachusetts Avenue. This is a good example of how public realm strategies are being driven into the regular quote unquote the regular public realm.

[00:17:21] This is a street that includes a major stormwater retention strategy as well as a multi-modal transportation strategy and is really the main street for a series of new a new population in the city. And this is taken from that same streetscape. You can see the legacy of of a street is really changed in this case and turned into a place to just hang out. And next slide in a place where many people can come together and I'll talk about that a little bit more and in conversation.

[00:18:00] So this is all great but what about us. So what are the lessons that you can see in this place for cities like Seattle or other cities.

[00:18:09] Well I think Washington and Seattle actually have a lot in common right now. Certainly have a lot in common in terms of the public discourse around changing neighborhoods.

[00:18:20] Gentrification a new group of young people you know some people thinking young people invading the city but certainly a new class of people coming into the city.

[00:18:33] And we've used our public realm strategy to try to bring different people together. It's been the overarching goal for all of our parks. Park projects and similarly and this is not unique to Washington and Seattle. We have a new agenda with respect to the public realm.

[00:18:56] Some people call it green infrastructure. There are other technical issues associated with stormwater management. These are realities that need to be resolved within the infrastructure of the city. And what we've tried to do in Washington is to start doing that in the public realm through the creation of new public space and new public spaces. And I think that's something that we we have have in common. And it's a huge challenge for for many cities and I think Seattle and Washington are at the vanguard of those strategies.

[00:19:30] Public private partnership can be a dirty word for some people. What would you say to them.

[00:19:36] Well it's a reality.

[00:19:41] The private sector builds the city. It's the reality the public sector has a small sliver of investment that it makes in building cities. And so those investments have to be thought of together. They're often thought of sequentially as catalysts pub the public realm and so many cities was really you think of Central Park in New York. Right. This was a catalyst to attract private investment to the city. More and more though with greater levels of vigilance greater greater sensitivity to the multiple stakeholders in the interests of multiple stakeholders we can weave this process together and accelerate an investment into the public realm. Some of the examples that I've shown you are to illustrate that where the public has actually not taken the lead in the investment has acted more as a regulator and the investment has come from the private sector. But again you know close working relationships and transparency are key to making those kinds of projects happen right.

[00:20:50] I see we already have lots of questions. So we'll we'll get to those in the question portion. But that's that's a good sign.

[00:20:57] And for now we'll move on and speak with mommy. So Mommy the eyes some of you may recognize her face or the name.

[00:21:05] Not me her as the general manager of Seattle Public Utilities. She is in charge of making sure that great drinking water comes out of your tap and she's in charge of reducing the waste that's and that sent to landfills. And she helps to keep stormwater waste out of our rivers and lakes. So what does it take to be good at that job. If you go by Mommy's experience it is degrees in design from two Ivy League universities two and a half decades of experience in planning and design and a track record of planning and designing civic projects on a really big scale. We're talking about waterfronts and river corridors open space systems trail networks neighborhoods and cultural institutions. Mommy was also the consultant to Hoover on the Anacostia water project that we mentioned before before Seattle. Her was the chief of staff at Philadelphia water where she helped implement national

models for green stormwater infrastructure that Seattle looks to as a model. She was appointed in 2016 by Mayor Ed Murray so we're really just getting started here. Welcome.

[00:22:04] Mommy thank you. So help explain this for me.

[00:22:09] So you're the GM of a public utility you manage wastewater among other things. Why are we here talking about open space.

[00:22:17] Most folks are familiar with the the idea of protecting watersheds for clean drinking water. That's something that's been embedded in the American consciousness for many many decades. But increasingly stormwater management is an important part of utilities responsibilities and urban and urban communities responsibilities particularly with the exacerbating effects of climate change. We see that that's even more of an issue.

[00:22:46] And so really water management is increasingly about land management. It always has been but not really posited strongly in people's minds.

[00:22:59] So we're talking here about open space innovation. That's the point of this whole exercise that we're doing open space innovation sounds kind of trendy like the same people who like natural popsicles would like open space.

[00:23:12] Is it new though we use the term open space because unfortunately our field hasn't really come up with a lot of great names. But you know the kinds of terms that are used come and go. Just like the kinds of typologies of open space that are traded that capture people's imaginations at any given time you'll find that you know at one point you know people are really really passionate about covering highways. Right. Or it might become about you know another typology but that. But in those in their reverberation of those typologies there's an opportunity to reclaim space for public use. So you know I'm all for the cycle of interest and in different types of open space. Seattle has really led out on innovation in many areas covering highways for example with Freeway Park Community Gardens at a large scale through pea patches. Oh the preservation of scenic vistas like the University of Washington's Rainier Vista and also volunteer park. You know that's a really big contribution to open space planning. You know the green infrastructure if Seattle and Portland experimented with it well before other cities who adopted green infrastructure at scale. Even had what we thought was a glimmer in their eyes. Right. So the. But first for Seattle there's another kind of. Generation of innovation that I think that they could look to for cities have taken Seattle's ideas and implemented those innovations at scale. Right. Which is an innovation itself. You know programmatic and you know to bring programs up to a big scale requires a lot of different kinds of financing and management and stewardship innovations. So you know you look at Philadelphia who's taken grid infrastructure you know what a can I get a much bigger scale or

[00:25:11] Communities like Copenhagen who are looking at flood management through green infrastructure which I think Seattle was also a leader on you know and you know you look at the Atlanta BeltLine for large scale implementation of brownfield conversion which Seattle let out with on

Gasworks Park you know. So I mean the list goes on and on in terms of you know how retail how those ideas have really captured people's imaginations.

[00:25:37] If I could just insert two things though there are two areas though that I think that Seattle has not really been a leader in that I think that there is a lot of room for that I've seen a lot of discourse about and that is schoolyard greening.

[00:25:51] You know particularly for stormwater and you know other kinds of community benefit and also large iconic centrally located parks so Seattle has more people now than it had when it created some of these facts that you mentioned.

[00:26:07] Which means we have less space and more needs.

[00:26:12] What can we do about that. What can.

[00:26:14] Oh well it's many cities who are facing constrained areas for open space but increased need you know environmentally and socially are looking at hybrids of open space types you know really might have very multi functional design that that that brings you know a lot of benefit. But it's you know it takes really tailored approaches right for any of the ideas that we talk about today there. There's always the issue of fit right. You have to fit to the place and the people and the needs of your time. But for example you know green infrastructure in schoolyards right.

[00:26:57] You know that's instead of just greening it for recreation that's a kind of hybrid. You know the Anacostia waterfront initiative I think was a big hybrid. You know Hoover didn't even talk about a lot of the kinds of functions that were included in the planning for those kinds of open spaces.

[00:27:13] So I think you know I think you have some examples more of. Yeah. Here we go.

[00:27:19] I'm not going to speak to them individually. You can just let them roll as I talk to you. You were asking me to include these so that I could talk about some of our work in Philadelphia. Exactly around water and a lot of the work that we did around water is absolutely I'm sure not interesting to this audience but with respect to open space Philadelphia is an interesting city to look at because affordability is a huge issue. You know I guess in Seattle the median household income is over 90000 household and in Philadelphia it's still around it's still less than 38000 per household. So that's a big big difference in the fort and what people can afford with respect to open space investment and and management and capital work and but to see Philadelphia just like Seattle has clean water mandates that it needs to address. And so we were able to negotiate with our regulators a novel approach that was really predicated on on the issue of just people not having the money to pay for extraordinary measures. That that's predicated on the development of green infrastructure.

[00:28:31] So theoretically in spending instead of spending you know 10 to 12 billion dollars on tunnels over a long period of time it would be investing a two and a half billion dollars in green infrastructure to change the way that water is managed. And that meant that. We had to drive a lot of

partnerships with different kinds of land owners or land managers into different kinds of NGOs which was great right. You know that that turned the utility from a very inward facing utility into one that was you know that really had to address the needs of its community. And so you know it was a great experience for me and that we got to. I got to really look at the nexus of workforce development and economic opportunity and a kind of really wealth building strategies for this community through the clean water funds that we were spending it's really helping me get a perspective on the like the large scale that I introduced you about.

[00:29:34] We'll get to this in the question section but I have a question specifically for you for now.

[00:29:40] Thank you Mommy. We appreciate it. And if you have any again if you have any questions comments don't feel shy. And we're collecting them we'll get to them at Thatcher. Hi. Hi. That's your Bailey is the executive director of the Seattle Parks Foundation the Seattle Parks Foundation envisions a thriving system of public spaces throughout this city. They believe that's possible through connections with community philanthropic and public sector partners. And that's your point that something simple which is people love parks. And he also points out that when people talk about how they love parks they almost always talk about connections to friends family and community.

[00:30:20] So what do you mean by that. I think. Weirdly for something that is so emotionally important for all of us we tend to dismiss the power of that fact or tend to put it off to the side when we think about the city challenges and opportunities that face us but we're confronted every day and in our office working with 60 or 70 different groups of all sizes in all neighborhoods around the city about this kind of deep connection people have to one another not only in their experience of their public spaces but in their creation of these public spaces and we're convinced that that really is a kind of a super power that we have as a city and that there is a quote that I've overused a million times because a woman up in Lake City was trying to reclaim a piece of s stop property live stream going through it and no one been paying any attention and over a lot of months with a lot of effort she finally got volunteers together and they've done an amazing job and her line was you know we started as a neighborhood we ended up as a community. And those are tough words because they seem a little hackneyed but I think as we face problems of displacement and affordability and transportation crises we have an opportunity to think in bigger terms about the idea of the livability that often gets left to the side that actually encompasses all those challenges and addresses issues of equity and in a way that actually is more like dessert than vegetables it's about as about rewarding. So I think. What we mean by by you know. People's emotional connection to parks is that Parks build great communities and great communities build and sustain parks. And that's something that really will drive change in a positive way for the city or does drive change in a positive way.

[00:32:30] Sounds good. So how do we. I mean that's the topic of how do we grow more open space. What do you think.

[00:32:38] I think there's actually lots of ways that we're there right in front of us and where we're not mostly paying attention to them all the time we don't think of them at top of the list one. And I imagine everyone in this room can think about a certain park or public space that you know where very few

people go and say well hey let's make these places that people go. Our office is very near to Central Park and we were part of an effort to invest in some of the DSA programming Occidental and West Side parks to make them more welcoming for all people. And it started off as a park that people would or as a square that people would walk around to avoid because there were just a few sketchy folks maybe selling drugs. And now it's a vibrant urban gathering. So in a way you're creating a new park by making it a place that people want to go. I mean with the others you guys have talked about making streets places that people want to go not just go through that starting in Seattle and there's enormous numbers of great ideas on the books to kind of make that happen more effectively and more dramatically on our public realm is just open for opportunities to create these kind of places.

[00:33:52] And I think we have the to create parks out of out of places that are you know basically out of thin air. You know we're we're happy to be involved with all that I have five folks here's an opportunity to expand on what's happened with Freeway Park or in Mercer Island or even with all of the new LED BY Mortlake and recognize that that's just real estate that can be park land it can be housing it can address a whole range of social needs and it's right there in front of us. I think a key element is designing all these places. So there are parts of connected systems. I mean we're a great city in so far as we're fortunate to be part of the Olmstead legacy. So we've got his hand baked into our thinking about how do you you know great parks connected by great Boulevard.

[00:34:42] We'll just dial that up and recognize that doing one off public space improvements in this neighborhood in that neighborhood can be so much more effective if we think about how we link those those centers together with green safe places for people to travel a point a to point B to point C.. And finally I'm going to keep I'm going to hammer on this all night making sure that we're supporting communities leaders and volunteers to make all this happen. That's where the creativity is that's where the resources are. Anything we can do to drive more resources to those groups to connect those groups up one with another with other NGOs and with the public agencies that are bringing dollars to the table makes this city a more diverse welcoming place for all users of public space in the city.

[00:35:35] So can you highlight an example of this thing.

[00:35:37] Yeah I mean I have a there's I think you can get there. So this actually is a map that was that came out of a neighborhood planning process we had nothing to do with it. All they were huge advocates for kind of what this represents and we're involved in some of the projects here and this is how you think really holistically about addressing a whole set of needs that a neighborhood with a whole set of kind of significant problems is is working together with enormous numbers of clusters of community groups to recreate Rainier Beach. And I think. What's. The there there's there's a sweet little opportunity if you look at Henderson right in the middle there which connects up the light rail station and goes all the way east across to the water there's a little project called now link to Lake and that is a connection that now is barely there because anybody who walks down Henderson it's not experience that you want or have it's like the traffic is awful there's sketchy corners there's places you don't feel safe and you certainly don't feel connected but if you look at the possibilities of how that connects up to green space on the west side and then down to an actual beach and one of the

questions is you know where is the beach and Rainier Beach was right there at a boat ramp. So you'll see in a second a picture of how that beach can be reinvented and right next to that is Beer Sheva Park and right next to that.

[00:37:15] Is Rainier Beach urban farm which is finally opening after any number of years was an abandoned parks department nurseries site that the community got together and said Hey why don't we create a working farm here and you can go on to that next picture. And I I show pictures of kids working at this farm not because kids and parks are always the kind of picture you want to show but because in this particular neighborhood having gone to a lot of different community meetings there is a huge focus on how do you make public spaces as alternatives for other kinds of activities that are far less desirable for kids to get involved in. And this farm which produces enormous amount of produce and job training and environmental training is a testament to a community getting together to make that happen. And finally the last picture which is that that beach at the end of the lake to lake corridor what is now a boat ramp with no real sense of being a beach can be multi-purpose into being another access point into Lake Washington connecting up to this whole set of green spaces. And once again kind of being a signal turning point for a community that's working in many different ways to transform itself into something livable and welcoming for the diversity of residents who live there.

[00:38:35] Right. Thank you.

[00:38:37] So thank you Bachir. Thank you Mommy. Thank you. That is the end of this portion of the evening. And now we'll get to your many questions. I also have some questions here in my desk from people on Facebook people who wrote in but the first one actually Thatcher I want to give to you which is what will it take to accelerate the community efforts to reinvest in Freeway Park and expand it by letting a 5 4 acres of non new public space.

[00:39:04] What will it take.

[00:39:06] Well I love that question because I think I was talking to someone earlier about we're fortunate to be directly involved with the folks championing that I find that I find projects were awesome team of people and we obviously are we've worked closely with the freeway parks folks as well. What it will take is what's already kind of in place. These are folks who have done amazing organizing within the Capital Hill and downtown and first hill communities who are making the kinds of connections and slowly incrementally building a case for something that at first seemed like an insanely expensive outrageous idea but very patiently they've made the case to decision makers and community leaders like wait here's why this here's why this makes sense. Here's kind of how it can happen. Here's the next step and the next step is a very expensive study of what it would actually take to physically make this transformation. But all along the way with the eye on the prize and when this happens you're getting real estate transformed that didn't exist before at a cheaper cost per square foot that you can get it anywhere near that part of town and you're addressing a whole host of public space needs and possible housing needs and other development needs are also drive an economy that makes a living project like this happen. I think it's again what takes is community leadership and they've got it.

[00:40:38] And also money right.

[00:40:39] Well it takes an enormous. You know here's the thing about money. It's just money. And I mean truly we've got to remember that that. There's no such thing as too much of a good park. There's still notice thing things like we have too many great public spaces we can't afford anymore. No. The benefits from these things are are generationally significant. So you make the case the money will be there and there's endless numbers of mechanisms and political will to make that happen.

[00:41:13] Thank you. So I feel like that leads into this question which I'm going to direct towards UVA but any of you if you have contributions you can add to it.

[00:41:21] So this question is how do we create new funding sources to support our public spaces. It seems our current approach isn't keeping up with demand.

[00:41:29] That's great. That's a great follow on to. That's a great follow on to the previous question. So I agree. It's just money. But behind the money is value. And so I think the conversations in cities like Seattle in Washington and many other cities that are fortunate enough to be in the midst of a building boom. The conversation needs to get beyond the street public aspirations for open space and to really get into a much more nuanced holistic understanding of how public and private value is created in tandem. And when you get to that place and when you get to those sometimes very difficult conversations between stakeholders and people that are not used to talking to one another you get to a place where you realize that there is tremendous value created in the private sector. When you create sound long term public value and when you get to that place the money appears often magically as you've just suggested but you have to be able to think about the integration of the public realm into the larger city and think about and really work through sometimes difficult sometimes easy questions around who benefits and how and so those are the conversations that get you to an implementation conversation that sometimes can produce extraordinary very large projects like like the freeway freeway.

[00:43:13] So our audience member has written a very smart follow up question to that in the past.

[00:43:20] So their question is how can we pivot away from ineffective and inaccessible privately owned public spaces such as the proposed roof garden for the convention center expansion that will be five stories above ground.

[00:43:32] So I'm not familiar with that project so I'm not going to comment on that but I do think that in addition to what I just said there is vigilance necessary right. The public needs to own the public space. And so if benefits are created and accrued and not properly maintained and accounted for and if the stewardship practices are not put into place then of course that value system can break down and sometimes bad things can happen. I think the poster child for that is the legacy of publicly accessible private spaces in New York City. Now there's a huge program created in New York in the

70s and 80s. It was never properly cared for or just so or designed. And in those spaces were created they didn't live up to their promise and it was a breakdown in the trust between the public and private.

[00:44:33] May I go back to his comment about magic. You know. I just want to add that I mean I agree entirely with the idea of a value and designing and planning to maximize the value and return for both the public and private sector. But the design of those instruments to those magical instruments that capture value and and to make clear what their respective contributions are you know is an art and and it's an evolving one. There are also there are value capture instruments so we could talk about you know at length

[00:45:11] And I think that's a different conversation. But they're also old ways of thinking about funding for open space and you know at a regional or even larger scale you know where cities like Seattle and others are looked as kind of donors to open space conservation and exurban areas. And that leads to you know great conservation strategies but not necessarily sustainable ones because we're not looking at how to make cities livable and to promote densification and reduce development pressure reduce congestion you know through making cities more livable. Right. And so that's. And I think that that's an important consideration and how we should be looking at the flows of funds. You know at different scales of governance you know and also looking to more novel ways of investing in open space. You know I'm not advocating that that the utility can pay for everything but leveraging utility funds through different kinds of investment schemes. You know that's kind of the magic that we should be looking at.

[00:46:26] Have a specific question for you from this audience member says I am especially interested in a response from mommy Hara. So this audience member says I am interested in hearing your positions on existing green spaces especially surplus lands and or assets that could be transformed or restored into green spaces. I am one of the many residents of Lake Forest Park who have been raising money is through local donations and grants to assist the city of Lake Forest Park to purchase Five Acre Woods. As an urban park to be restored and enhanced Republican enjoyment and education etc. I'm sorry I can't read the rest because I have to hold on to it. So what is your position. I mean the member is interested in hearing and your position on existing green spaces especially surplus lands or assets that could be transformed or restored.

[00:47:13] Well you know the idea of surplus land is one that you know has lots of different perspectives right. You know whether something is in excess or needed for risk management later on in the future or whether you need to consider it. We have respect what we have. Utilities have financial responsibilities that go beyond the know their abilities just to convey land. You know at much reduced prices you know to the public because we have rate rate responsibilities to our ratepayers. But that said you know with all those caveats. You know it isn't really important for the public sector to look hard at how to partner. And in order to create the best possible open space there you know that that it can help to support

[00:48:03] A five acre Woods is outside Seattle. It just has a little background. The utility owns this land and has

[00:48:12] Held back from selling it for over a decade. So that the citizens of Lake Forest Park could afford to buy it at market rate and turn it into a park. And I understand that the community is trying their very best to collect the funds and we have deferred and deferred and deferred and we continue to allow to create some kind of window for them. But ultimately we do have responsibilities to our ratepayers.

[00:48:44] Thank you.

[00:48:45] So this is a question for everyone and it's kind of a pushback on the whole notion of this panel itself. It's not as scary as I make it sound. This is a question actually that came to us through the Facebook event page for this event. Dante says are people just not being resourceful. There are about one hundred and five parks and open spaces listed on the Seattle Parks Department Web site and 167 on the King County Parks Web site. I don't really think that we're short on public spaces even with an increasing population density. There are still plenty of resources within reach.

[00:49:20] So comments that well let me just kick it off and I'm sure you'll have local examples. There is a absolute revolution going on with respect to public space stewardship. And so I think even you know up until 10 15 years ago most of the conversation about the public realm was about building new parks about creating more stock. And we are now in the middle of an incredibly creative wave of communities using public open space in so many different ways and you know it's it's almost kind of like a cliché now to see you know the promotional photograph of people doing yoga in a park right. That's that's become like a cliché but if you think about all of the festivals and the active programming that's occurring in public open spaces I think we're just at the beginning of that and it's really thinking about parks less as an end and more as a means. You can think about that in terms of you know green infrastructure but I think you can also think about that in terms of the culture of the city itself. And so back to my liberal understanding of the public realm.

[00:50:36] It's not a dirty word in Seattle.

[00:50:39] You know parks are vehicles for people and we're just beginning to figure out how to unlock that I think right.

[00:50:51] So we have another question from the audience and what he wanted to.

[00:50:54] Please I just wanted to piggy back on that a little bit. I agree with you entirely. But just to get back to the question about do we need more. I don't know the answer in every detail but you know in lots of cities people ask that question. But it's not the quantity of parks that you have. It's where they are. It's who they serve. It's the way that they're designed in order to serve the people and their communities better so they can act as true platforms of both environmental and cultural production. And so you know that's where it's at.

[00:51:32] So I think that that question of whether you have enough is a bit reductive.

[00:51:39] I thank you both. And I'll just add one more thing which is. What Sam and his department are doing is looking at the whole universe of publicly owned land and how that gets deployed and I think that becomes a really interesting conversation when you're talking about say solving a traffic problem that's going to emerge in downtown Seattle over the next three years like we've never seen before. And by focusing just on how do you get wheels from one end of town to the other you're maybe missing out again on kind of how do you think about that as public realm that's available for a whole host of experiences. So again discrete parks are great. But how do we have park like social experiences throughout the city that are relevant to our lives. So I think this panel is a lot of thought a lot more than just building some new parks. So park like social

[00:52:39] Experiences are sort of the topic of these I'm going to combine these two questions. If you recognize your question here and combine them

[00:52:47] How can we ensure that the development of public spaces are indeed accessible for everyone differently abled senior citizens young children and families. And then this other audience member also wants to make sure that that's extended to people who are considered sometimes sketchy or undesirable.

[00:53:04] How can we make sure that parks are for everybody it just has to be a core value. Any you know there's a wonderful program I was reading about in Portland where there's it's I think the thing is called new parks for new Portlanders or something like that where they are specifically rejiggering park design and uses to welcome a new immigrant communities moving into the cities so that those parks are meeting the needs of the people who live around them. And I think that go back to the Occidental Park example. There was a real concern because a bunch of private money is supporting this new programming that this was just a park cleansing program and it's really just going to be for that the well-paid employees of warehouses or whatnot. But in fact nobody wants that. Here's another secret about these public spaces that people want to be together with everyone in these parks. So it was a principle from the get go that the only people not welcome in Occidental square where people actively selling drugs or are selling you know prostitution everybody else is welcome it's just a matter of making it feel good for everyone if you go down there all sorts of people are there in a city like Seattle. I don't think we have much to worry on that score. We are committed to notions of inclusion. I don't know what it's like in other cities but I think that that's what parks bring out in people. You're not creating rarified zones for only a certain economic class or a certain cultural class. It just doesn't make it doesn't work that way for folks. People celebrate our most diverse parks. They want to be there. Everybody wants to be there.

[00:54:49] I think this question is a really important one.

[00:54:53] It's increasingly important maybe in other countries as well where there's greater political instability the ability to interact with people who are unlike you you know to really be on equal terms in a public space is in a sense fundamental to a democratic society right.

[00:55:12] It's the. Oh it's one of your primary opportunities to really authentically engage with other perspectives than your own. And so you know it's a big issue in some countries that you know that are worried about the impacts of exclusion. And in and so you know this is a real area of focus for those countries and I think that you know it it should be in the United States as well. More you know ten years ago we weren't talking about equity and inclusion and open space quite as much. There's a lot of good research. Seth Lowe who's a you know who's written a lot for a couple of decades about that issue I think has done a lot of good work as well as Melissa Curie. So you know I would encourage people you know to kind of look at the strategies that they advocate for and some of the principles that they advocate for our accessibility specificity authenticity affordability and functionality. Right. And you know their definitions behind them but you know those you can kind of imagine what those mean and it really does mean a lot about fitting to place and breaking down their cultural cultural barriers that may promote people to feeling excluded.

[00:56:26] I just want to weigh in as well and just say I actually think this is the question. This is the question that we really need to struggle struggle with in a very sober and conscientious way. Inclusion doesn't just happen on its own. You know you can't just put up a sign and say this park is accessible to everyone and then go home and feel like you've done your job. We have to make parks accessible. We have to welcome people into them. I think one of the exciting things about the way in which public parks are being program now is that it's not just a big cultural festival for one cultural group it's thinking about food as a way in which it brings people together obviously thinking about music and how music brings people together. And in Washington the one example that I showed is actually thinking about commerce. How does commerce bring people together in the public realm. I think bringing people together in our cities is is much more difficult than we think it is since it's a question Can I piggyback onto that too.

[00:57:36] It's not just the design but it's the design itself. But it's the process to the design right. It's how people are engaged in and figuring out how the park should function or where it should be. You know there are a lot of great heroes of mine who have done work for decades on these issues you know and spurn with the West Philadelphia landscape project. You know she figured out ways to empower and educate people through really active participation even paying community members so that there was you know you know so that they were being compensated for their for their time and participation just like a consultant would be or an academic. You know I think that Brett Brown in Dallas is doing some great work with D.C. workshop and his urban design cities urban design workshop that is leading where they're really working on inclusive approaches for collaborative decision making with community members.

[00:58:35] You said you think people are thinking about issues of inclusion more in the past 10 years than they were before. Why do you think that is. What have you noticed. Why do you think that is. What what did you notice that's different and why do you think there's a difference now. Why do you think people are thinking about it more.

[00:58:51] I just think that evolution of the urban scene in the country has been such that the separation between classes and cultures has grown more acute. And it's just more in everybody's

face. And we recognize that our public spaces are maybe the antidote or the potential antidote for addressing those kinds of concerns. I would really go back to this. There's so much to be learned from the communities who care the most about the public spaces that affect them and their families. If you want to learn how to create or how to help create or support the creation of truly meaningfully inclusive spaces listen carefully to the people that you say that you want to make feel welcome and invest in their capacity to achieve these ends. And I think the real struggle for a lot of public agencies that have these huge mandate kind of for inclusive inclusiveness in the abstract is to kind of be able to operate at that level of specificity around site A B or C and in the various needs that emerge around that. But I think that is that is the project and that's the only way we're gonna get it right. We're never gonna figure it out from above and in impose inclusive outcomes.

[01:00:14] So how do we reconcile this thing that we're talking about right which is that it's very important that public spaces be inclusive. We want them to be places for everybody even sketchy and undesirable people. Everybody sort of comes together in these parks combined with this other thing that we're talking about right which is that we need to leverage private investment to create public spaces and I would assume you guys know more than I do. But I would assume that people who make private investments have some sort of investment in the kind of people are the kind of activities that happen in these spaces.

[01:00:43] No I don't I don't I back to the value proposition that you put you know that's actually I think of not always a false assumption but I think more often than not it is a false assumption that you can tell the story of the value that's that's generated by having these super successful spaces that are welcoming to all people and that value accrues to the bottom lines of the people whose buildings are nearby or on a cruise to the you know the social cohesion of the community or the city itself.

[01:01:17] So I don't and if there are donors who are sort of saying we want to make a park that doesn't allow X Y and Z to happen there they're not part of our conversation. I think it's a it's a it's more of a false question.

[01:01:32] It's like it's also an older way of looking at philanthropy. Philanthropic contributions to open space investments that might have happened maybe in the generation that Pershing Square or a post office Square were developed.

[01:01:47] You know where there were you know very strong corporate interests with the landed in the land adjacent to those. It's a new development but. I just don't think that is part as much part of the conversation these days because people have a broader understanding of that there are lots of pots of money required and no one interests can prevail shouldn't prevail.

[01:02:15] I also just sort of want to transition to like nice ideas how do we make it real. What would you like to see from people in the audience.

[01:02:24] People in the city what can what can people who want this to happen do so I just want to also explicitly recognize a major trend that's occurring. I know here in Seattle and in so many other

cities and that is the incredible rise of the non-profit sector. We have so many friends of fill in the blank groups now some we were joking before some focused on one traffic island and others of course focused on broader missions related to the public realm.

[01:03:03] I think that there is a lot of social innovation occurring within the nonprofit sector and from my experience in the public sector you know so much of what we wanted to do was only effectuated by the non-profit sector. So whether that's special cleanups or a youth engagement or you know stewardship of wildlife you know there's so many things that only come alive when the nonprofit sector kind of jumps in and makes it happen.

[01:03:36] And I just wanted to kind of recognize that as a major trend so I just want to be clear The question is what would we what.

[01:03:45] What if you could say one thing to every person in this audience about what they can do to help if they like these ideas and they want them to be real in the world. What can any one person do.

[01:03:56] Speak up speak up and find ways to facilitate other people's voices to be heard right. You know that's trying to find the right ways to you know. I mean this is an extraordinary audience right. People on a beautiful evening they're here sitting in a dark auditorium you know talking about the assets that they should just be enjoying in real time right. You know and but not everybody is so altruistic or it has the luxury of doing this. And so you know trying to figure it out it's a challenge to try as a public space manager to try to figure out you know how to access the voices and the energy of people in a way that's really meaningful. So speaking up and I'll helping other people to do so is important.

[01:04:45] Are there any immediate opportunities that you feel like we should just take advantage of this one.

[01:04:51] I think maybe piggybacking on what you just said I think that the fun of it and the challenge of it is to really use this conversation to make new connections across communities. I think that's really what's exciting about this conversation. And and those are those are networks and connections that you know happen at so many different scales. So here tonight we're kind of having this conversation at a larger civic scale. But I really do find those conversations at the most localized scale incredibly interesting. You know we come into contact with one another we meet new people. We draw relationships between different organizations. That's that's the work of building strong communities. There's a lot of literature emerging now around that as a key strength of urban resilience. And so we're kind of all in it already it's just a matter of of how motivated we are and how activated we are.

[01:05:57] I think that's a brilliant response.

[01:05:59] You know our understanding of how networks can how to grow networks and how to leverage the power of networks is is pretty incipient still.

[01:06:07] You know there's a lot of of initial theory about how that works but it would be incredible you know if if Seattle could really lead out on that to show how not just to reach this special audience but all the people who live in neighborhoods and connect them to watch each other so that we understand mutually you know are our needs and in terms of investing in the public realm and as this circle right back to Sam and what his office is doing around this issue which is literally mapping out the connections between all the publicly owned property the public realm that we all have access to they're all making decisions about and and recognizing that that's a changed way of thinking about our parks and public spaces. It's a connected way. And that the more frictionless that can be the better. So my urging is when ever any of us encounter a situation that feels like wait that thing's not happening right away. We should make sure this is preserved in this way or if whenever we find ourselves slipping back into ways of thinking about our public spaces that maybe are just a little retrograde or maybe not quite. Red flecked live of the moment we're living in.

[01:07:29] Take a breath and recognize wait we're all connected now in all sorts of ways. And whenever you're in our conversation about transportation. Speak up about public space whenever you're in a conversation about affordable housing housing. Speak up about public space. We're we're still not putting that all together. You were talking earlier before about a couple of developments one not in Seattle and one in Seattle. I use example of yes or terrorist which is going to which is a major development for a housing subsidized and. Commercial use and would be one of the densest neighborhoods in the city. The public space aspect of that is really good. But it wasn't there. It didn't start from a public public realm perspective it started from. How do you address a whole set of housing needs for the population in the city. We need to think a little bit more holistically about all the opportunities we have in Seattle to get it right. And we need to kind of let go of whatever feels residual and work with Sam and his folks on coming up with that work being the driver of livability for everyone in this city and all of its nuance and all of its possibility.

[01:08:48] I feel like that's a great place to leave it.

[01:08:52] I mean a lot of the things that we've talked about here about speak up you know there's new ideas. Talk to people and be heard. For now I just want to thank you so much for coming for giving us a little bit of your evening or thinking about open space. Please keep thinking about open space and join the conversation on outside city wide. Thank you so much

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