SAM SEATTLE ASIAN ART MUSEUM
SEATTLE ART MUSEUM
OLYMPIC SCULPTURE PARK

Olympic Sculpture Park
Environmental Fact Sheet

Environmental Vision:

The new Olympic Sculpture Park transformed a major industrial site into a nine-acre park that is free and accessible to the public. The Seattle Art Museum entered into a partnership with the Trust for Public Land to raise funds to purchase the land in 1999, and with the City of Seattle to transform a surface parking lot to public green space. From the start, the Seattle Art Museum aimed to return the site as much as possible to a functioning ecosystem, while providing a unique setting for outdoor sculpture and public recreation. This was no small task given a century of change amidst the state's largest urban environment. The project's lead designers, Weiss/Manfredi Architecture/Landscape/Urbanism of New York, developed an innovative Z-shaped design that joins three parcels into a continuous landscape. This design afforded environmental recovery in multiple ways, including brownfield redevelopment, salmon habitat restoration, native plantings and sustainable treatment of stormwater runoff.

Brownfield Recovered:

Elliott Bay's original shoreline followed the centerline of present-day Elliott Avenue and comprised small beach areas between densely forested bluffs. Shallow tidelands extended outward, providing habitat for salmon and other wildlife. Over a 120-year period, Seattle's rapid growth brought significant land alterations to the site, including the 1910 development of a fuel storage and transfer facility by Union Oil of California (UNOCAL). These industrial operations severely contaminated the soil and groundwater with petroleum products. In the 1990s, UNOCAL, in partnership with the Washington Department of Ecology, began cleanup of the site, removing 120,000 tons of petroleum-contaminated soil and installing a groundwater-recovery system.

Shoreline and Salmon Restoration:

Key to SAM's original vision was restoring the shoreline to a pre-urban state and creating near-shore habitat to provide refuge and foraging to juvenile Chinook salmon migrating from the Green/Duwamish River to Puget Sound. The Olympic Sculpture Park accomplished these goals by removing rip-rap rock, which posed a barrier to both fish and people, and developing a pocket beach with native shoreline plantings. During the park's design

phase, the full extent of a weakened seawall was discovered, so the project combined seawall repair with shoreline restoration. By creating a shallow subtidal habitat bench with a kelp forest, SAM was able to both stabilize the weakened seawall and improve the salmon habitat in the Puget Sound estuary.

Native Plants Restored: From the project's beginning, a major goal was to integrate native plants and sculptured soils to create natural drainage on the site. To that end, dense native understory vegetation now helps retain rainfall above the soil surface. Native plants are the most visible part of the restoration effort and re-establish a landscape progression from upland to shoreline in four distinct precincts: the *Valley, Grove, Meadows* and *Shore*.

The Valley
Adjacent to the park's PACCAR Pavilion and the Gates Amphitheatre, the *Valley* is an evergreen forest most typical of the lowland coastal region, featuring tall conifers such as fir, cedar and hemlock, and flowering shrubs and trees associated with moist conditions. Living examples of ancient trees once native to Washington, such as the ginkgo and majestic *metasequoia* (Dawn redwood), are also found. Flowering perennials, groundcovers and ferns define forest edges and pathways.

The Henry and William Ketcham Families Grove
The *Grove* is a forest of native aspen that define the park's transition from city to shore. Although most closely associated with the dry landscape east of the Cascade mountains, aspen is also found in dry coastal sites in the Puget Sound region. The *Grove*, with its understory of native currant and iris, dramatically reflects the changing seasons, in contrast to the *Valley*'s continually green backdrop.

The Barry Ackerley Family East Meadow and the Kreielsheimer North Meadow
On both sides of Elliott Avenue, *Meadow* landscapes with expanses of grasses and wildflowers meet the bordering sidewalks to achieve the "fenceless" park that SAM originally conceived. Both the *Meadows* and the *Grove* are regenerative landscapes that provide flexible sites for sculpture and working artists.

The Shore
At the *Shore* and newly created beach, plantings support habitat for salmon recovery while enhancing public access and generating interest in the Puget Sound's unique shoreline ecosystem. The naturally developing tidal garden will feature kelp, algae and other

intertidal-zone plants that are revealed and concealed with the changing tides.

Sustainable Design: The "restorative engineering" design introduced soil throughout the site, allowing surface rainfall to percolate through the soil and drain naturally out to Elliott Bay. This begins to replicate the site condition prior to urban development and prevents the need for stormwater runoff treatment. Habitat complexity was reintroduced by restoring the original topography, which created microclimates and offers more diversity for plant and animal life.

In the late 1990s, this site was the last and largest undeveloped property along Seattle's waterfront. One development scheme would have created more than 800 new condominium units, 250,000 square feet of office space and a small marina. Alternatively, this public-private partnership created a new green civic space, and through a major private endowment, the operations and maintenance of the new Olympic Sculpture Park are ensured in perpetuity.

Public Access: As the Olympic Sculpture Park is situated in a major urban area, its design embraces and integrates the transportation infrastructure, unifying three separate land parcels that had been divided by a four-lane road and mainline railroad tracks. Pedestrian pathways provide safe access to the waterfront, and a separate bicycle trail, the Boeing Company Bicycle Path, affording an important link and safe passage to and from Seattle's central business district. The park also creates a new entrance and seamless connection to the city's Myrtle Edwards Park, creating a combined 13 acres of green space in the heart of the city.

Location: The nine-acre site is located in the Belltown neighborhood at 2901 Western Ave., Seattle, WA 98121

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Web Site: Visit SAM's Web site for current information on the Olympic Sculpture Park at www.seattleartmuseum.org.