

Incredible Parks Want Incredible Names

Testimonials, Outcomes & Next Steps



SEATTLE **PARKS** FOUNDATION

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Summary

Testimonials about the “Incredible Parks Want Incredible Names” community engagement project present a positive picture of the process and outcomes from the project. In this report we outline the outcomes and lessons learned from this in-depth and carefully constructed project to rename six Port-owned parks and shoreline habitat sites along the Duwamish River to reflect the cultural, historical, and environmental significance of each site and satisfy the criteria set forth by the Commission and community partners at the start of the project. We conclude by making recommendations to the Port of Seattle to build on the momentum and positive reactions about the names and the naming process.

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Excluded from this report, a series of deliverables was issued to the Port of Seattle by Seattle Parks Foundation in May and November 2020 including:

- *Equity Tools & Guidelines*
- *Project Management Structures*
- *Stakeholder Mapping & Park Specifics*
- *Summary of Naming Review Committee*
- *Weekly Timeline & Process Flow*
- *Process Report*

Stakeholder Review Committee Testimonials



Elevating the voices of those that are many times not heard is what I came into this renaming process. Today I am honored and happy to have been part of this group that dedicated time, effort, and different voices to bring these new names into Port of Seattle parks. Thank you for the inclusion and we look forward to more changes like such. (Magdalena Angel-Cano)



The Port of Seattle and Seattle Parks Foundation conducted an outstanding public outreach process to allow a diverse range of Indigenous, immigrant, and other communities to participate. The mission and process elicited valuable cultural information documenting the history and significance of the parks for so many people. The review committee carefully weighed and honored the many proposed names and had well-reasoned discussions regarding the merits of and cultural and historic connections of the suggested names to these important places. I raise my hands in honor of the hard work of the review committee, the Port of Seattle staff, and the Seattle Parks Foundation project team. (Dennis Lewarch – Suquamish Tribe)



The process was very open to the public to nominate and vote for new names at Port Parks along Seattle's only River, the Duwamish. I enjoyed engaging with the different river communities and working with other committee members, staff from the Parks Foundation and the Port of Seattle. I hope more park renamings can happen with more Tribal leadership and a more thorough education on cultural and historical importance to non-indigenous communities so nominations and votes can be properly done. (Rosario-Maria Medina)



I appreciated having a thoughtful, inclusive process that engaged the community, allowing us all to deepen our understanding and connection to these special places, through learning about their cultural, historical and environmental importance. Names help shape and reflect our region's identity and honor that which we most hold most dear. Thank you, I am deeply grateful to have been part of this project which honors the river and its peoples. (Sharon Leishman)



It was an honor to participate in a democratic naming process that both crowdsourced the naming of our public shorelines and centered the voices and experiences of the river's indigenous and immigrant community members who served on the review committee. Kudos to the Port and Seattle Parks Foundation for an excellent design and thank you to everyone who participated for leading us to such an inspiring outcome. (BJ Cummings)



Wow! Congratulations to all. My hands go up to all of you for your time and effort. (Warren KingGeorge – Muckleshoot Tribe)

Comments from the Commission Meeting October 27,2020



Position 1 | Commissioner Ryan Calkins

I want to offer my thanks to everyone who participated in the process. I think of this as one of a number of steps towards rectifying some of the historical inequities that occurred along the Duwamish River but also as an opportunity to take future steps to reactivating a lot of these green spaces and public spaces. I was thrilled to have the chance to meet with Jolene and a few other members of the Duwamish recently to hear about some of their aspirations for these areas. It is exciting to think about where we could go from here creating opportunities to draw the communities in together, and not just tribal community members, but community members from up and down the river representing lots of different ethnicities. I am excited for this first step and look forward to supporting how the Port can continue engagement with the communities along the river. Thank you all so much. (Transcribed from 10/27/2020 Meeting)

Position 2 | Commissioner Sam Cho



I want to commend Christina on such a tremendous process. I really appreciate how we were inclusive of tribes, and other members of our community. I think we did an excellent job. This is a model going forward for us on how we should be receiving input on future projects beyond just naming parks. I look forward to how we apply this method and this system to other areas of the Port. I also had the opportunity to go visit the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center and it was very enlightening for me, and I really appreciated the hospitality and all the education that I got on the history of our tribal communities. (Transcribed from 10/27/2020 Meeting)



Position 3 | Commissioner Stephanie Bowman

I thank the staff and everybody in the community who participated. I really think the process you all created for reaching out and getting input on these properties is absolutely critical. Over the years I've always kind of wondered why you just had these generic terminal names that nobody else in the community really had an idea of what they were, and certainly didn't speak to historical and cultural significance of the land, and so, the names are incredible. Christina, I cannot thank you enough, I know we all have shared that sentiment. You have been an incredible leader for the Port in reaching into the community and having them engage with the Port. I hope that this is a new way that we can get community input on not just parks but all of the things that we work on. But just really incredible. The last thing I would add to that is that I was raised in Hawaii and the cultural significance of the Indigenous people is core to how the community needs to relate to one another. I really appreciate that we start all of our meetings recognizing the support of the Duwamish, and this feels as though this is another step towards recognizing significance to our community and honoring it every day. Thank you to everybody involved. (Transcribed from 10/27/2020 Meeting)



Position 4 | Commissioner Peter Steinbrueck

This process has been nothing short of truly remarkable in terms of the public engagement, the effort at community outreach, this is really a community led process I think that has resulted in the renaming. As Seattle I think is the only City in the United States named after a Native American Chief, we do not recognize nearly enough of those who came before and who stewarded these amazing lands. So, this is a very good start at restoring our cultural connections to the past, and as others have said so eloquently to share with future generations. The deeper meaning and significance of Seattle's only river, of which these parks, these six parks, are treasures, each and every one of them embedded in the communities of today and the future. Hopefully, this will lead us as Chairwoman Hansen has said in her statement to greater understanding, respect, appreciation and healing that we know is necessary. Thank you so much for this incredible work. It is truly inspiring. (Transcribed from 10/27/2020 Meeting)

What would you like the public to know about the Port's commitment to maintaining these parks and habitat areas? ***By maintaining these riverside parks and restoring habitat areas, the Port of Seattle acknowledges and honors the indigenous peoples of the Duwamish and Coastal Salish, their cultures, histories, and traditions.***

What motivates you to support this project at the Port and in the community? ***In renaming these parks and making improvements, we have an opportunity to celebrate community spirit, and heritage of the Duwamish people, while improving public access to our riverside park system.***

What do you envision as next steps to make sure this project creates long-term positive impact in the communities surrounding these park and habitat areas? ***Move forward with community inspired renaming of the parks, and following through on making the improvements identified by stakeholders as highest priorities.***



Position 5 | Commissioner Fred Felleman

It is such a clear indication that when the Port reached out to the community in a thoughtful and open-minded way how great the community comes back and works with us. It's obviously got to be a two way street to continue having a productive relationship with our neighbors and what the Port staff did with this situation, this particular example is so extraordinary and I think really put us on a really, positive path for many future engagements and I just can't tell how much I'm appreciative of both of the Port staff and of the community's willingness to participate. This had every opportunity and every chance of being a train wreck, names are very important to people, and certainly to tribal country, and the fact that we've come up with community agreement is a spectacular example of what true Port community engagement needs to be. Thank you again. (Transcribed from 10/27/2020 Meeting)



Duwamish Tribal Council Chairwoman, Cecile Hansen

We would like to say to the people watching and listening, and those that participated in the voting and scoring process, thank you. You all played a part in making today a reality for the Duwamish. Activating these place names will create a new era of understanding the Indigenous community, our history and our connection to the land. We pray it will create an opportunity to heal our relationship with one another as Indian people and to the citizens of the City of Seattle. Thank you so much, I appreciate all the good work that was put in by Seattle Parks Foundation, Port of Seattle, Christina and everybody. (Transcribed statement prepared by Cecile Hansen, read by Jolene Haas, Duwamish Long House Director at 10/27/2020 Meeting)

Outcomes

Port Commissioners and Stakeholder Review Committee members described the success and value of this process with immense positive feedback, with ***all commissioners publicly stating that this was a new model and standard for the Port to collaborate externally with community and partners.*** This process also built new internal capacities in:

- A successful community engagement process that involved the Tribal, environmental, fishing, historical, and multi-lingual residential communities. Together, we completed a sensitive place renaming campaign, building trust and relationships that set the stage for future work. This project showed that multi-stakeholder decision making can be done successfully and in a respectful manner that all parties find valuable.
- New media and communications tools including place-specific video.
- Enhanced and broadened “River Worldview” for Port through visual and park profile creation, e.g. videographer getting out on water, Port staff vetting Indigenous histories of village sites.
- Data powered community input technologies like Google forms and SurveyMonkey.
- Formally operationalizing the previously draft-level Equity frameworks of the Port of Seattle.
- Creating a standard site research method using census tract data.
- Remote meeting technology using Zoom and Microsoft Teams.
- Use of Slack as a productive and collaborative form of team communication and document storage.
- 13,000+ unique visitors and long-time community-based organizations and media outlets participated, building a strong new foundation of relationship to these Parks and to the Port of Seattle.

- Six new park names that are culturally, environmentally, and historically relevant and valuable with broad, direct community input.
- Four selected names are in Lushootseed, the historically under recognized Indigenous language of our region, bringing more public value and prominence to the language and to the Indigenous Tribes that once shared this language.
- Built stronger partnerships with the Seattle Parks Foundation, Duwamish River Clean up Coalition, University of Washington, and other Community Based Organizations and independent media.
- Gathered data on values and preferences of the public on present and future park amenities.
- Six in-depth, historically vetted written park profiles.
- Further value to the “Duwamish River Brand” for the Port and the Community at large through positive renaming relationship building and positive media, along with new names for six place-defining landmark Parks.
- Strengthening relationships among many people in a positive way, through a year of focus on these Parks, increasing the chances for beneficial, long-term stewardship.
- Creation of a database of community-based organizations and stakeholders.

Lessons Learned

Collaboration / Technology / Tribal Engagement

Evidence exists that this project was highly successful, and Port Commissioners expressed interest in using it as a standard template for community centered design and community engagement. Intricacies of the process have been covered in the *Process Report*, but from the perspective of the Seattle Parks Foundation team here are three big additional takeaways and lessons learned:

1. The desire, conceptual foundation and operationalized methods used for this project were collaboratively created. We talked with, listened to, and collaborated with many different people who offered valuable insight. We prioritized giving power to voices that traditionally have been under-represented in infrastructure development decision making.

2. Meeting frequently and communicating using different platforms was efficient and built trust. Professionals on the team had niche expertise in high stakes institutional level community engagement and held a constant eye on the horizon, navigating “shoals” from March to October, with consistent twice weekly meetings. This proved to be an efficient way to keep the project and the messaging tightly connected and on course. The team used multiple methods of communication internally including email, SLACK, phone, zoom, and text messages. Externally, the team used email, phone, zoom, text and on the rare occasion, in-person communication. The multiple methods of communication and frequent check-ins was necessary for building a collaborative process.
3. Digital tools improved transparency and accuracy. COVID-19 forced our project out of in-person community engagement traditions that would have relied heavily on in-person meetings and face-to-face interaction at the parks. Digital media and communications, a website used as a portal and a tool for participation, combined with local networks and phone/video calls, allowed for participation at exponentially higher numbers with similar effort. Key to this was the communications staff from the Port who produced video, social media, and promotional material on professional timelines at high standards. When we emerge from the current pandemic, there will be more fluency with these methods, and they should be used in partnership with in-person outreach.

Collecting and compiling data was much easier using digital participation tools than it would have been if we were compiling information collected in-person at different sites from different participants. Future projects should also rely on digital tools to build transparency.

We mostly replaced email with Slack, a collaborative workspace tool that provided digital media enabled, organized, and efficient communication that resulted a streamlined way to track conversations and drafts. For a project with multiple partnerships and contributors, we recommend moving away email to this tool or one like it.

4. Tribal Engagement was essential. Because the Duwamish People are not a federally recognized tribe, it was necessary to manage potential conflict and unease around tribal outreach. For example, the Port has official channels for approaching and involving the federally recognized tribes of the Muckleshoot and Suquamish but cannot approach the Duwamish as a sovereign nation in the same way. Fortunately, through a different way of understanding tribal relationships, approaching the Duwamish people as a community/river stakeholder, the discourse changed to cultivate connections

with Duwamish tribal representatives through one-on-one conversations early on, incorporating their feedback, suggestions, and ideas into project design.

The success of this project is due in large part to the decision to reach out, talk with, and invite the Tribes to sit on the decision-making Stakeholder Review Committee. If we had not done this, we would have shown we did not value the Tribes or their unique and complex relationships to the river, we would have been unable to navigate in the world of Lushootseed Place Names that the public requested over 4000 times, and we would have damaged tenuous trust built between the Port and Tribes. We cannot state the many ways in which Tribal involvement early on and as part of the decision-making body was absolutely necessary.

The Lushootseed language, and Coast Salish Lushootseed Ancestral Place Names are part of a rich tradition that non-indigenous project participants began to understand through this naming process. This was of value to the public and to the Stakeholder Review Committee, with four of the six new names in Lushootseed, and three of the four Lushootseed names referencing ancestral place names.

Lushootseed needs careful linguistic review. Certain software corrupts the language, different specialists can have slightly varying beliefs, and the Dəxʷləšucid Keyboard must be used to correctly write the language digitally. Available technology and maintaining an ongoing relationship with the Tribes as advisors can provide careful review.

Next Steps

Branding, Data Collection & Signage

This project has improved awareness of the Duwamish River, the Duwamish River Valley, its Peoples, and the Port of Seattle and its parks as an interconnected community of culture, ecosystems, lands and waters. Specifically, these six parks are now, more than ever, considered a highly valued, special riverfront system of public park lands along Seattle's only river. These six parks will continue strengthening as beacons of a new vision with their new names, especially in the context of a cleaner Duwamish River and associated community building in the neighborhoods along it. To strengthen the emerging place identity around these parks, and to honor this moment we recommend that the Port:

1. **Create a riverfront park systems brand.** A professional team should be mobilized to translate the emerging identity of the Port’s Riverfront Park System into a unifying brand with visual and conceptual language, to unify and familiarize the Port Riverfront Park System to the public. This would include a wayfinding and signage plan, for which the renaming effort would serve as the foundation.
 - a. **Gather circulation and use data.** As part of this effort, gather data on current use of parks and the way people get to these parks, e.g. on-the-ground observation, cellphone metadata, interviews with people with experience in the parks. This data can drive where and how to place signage.
 - b. **Design and install physical and digital signage.** Create different sizes and types of signage that maximize ease for people passing to find value in these parks and return to them. Types of circulation to design signage for may include: car, bus, bike, foot, truck, and google/apple maps. This likely would be a large sign by roadways, a smaller more detailed sign by the entry edge of the parks, along with “digital signage” with registry and data entry into systems like google maps. Hold a reunion with IPWIN Stakeholder Review Committee members to gather feedback on an early stage of the new signage and celebrate their accomplishments in helping rename the parks in 2020.
 - c. **Branding should contribute to environmental education, climate adaptation, and community readiness for climate change impacts.** Environmental education that is experiential, oriented to environmental-justice and service-learning, and applies civic science activities may be particularly successful with the Duwamish River as it is an highly urban, hard to access River system that is also in an active political landscape needing civic advocates for social-justice and ecological restoration outcomes. Climate adaptation branding could focus two-fold, one on how these parks will experience expected climate challenges such as king tide flooding and storm surge, and two, their role as places to mediate flood risk (e.g. soak up flood waters) and provide clean air and cooling water to residents nearby during heat waves and fire seasons.

Equitable Economic Development

2. **Create a Park-Oriented Equitable Development (POED) fund, similar to Seattle’s Equitable Development Initiative, to generate equitable economic development by leveraging this new Riverfront Parks System.** Combined with cleanup efforts, and projects like the new Duwamish

People’s Park and Shoreline Habitat, the Port’s Riverfront Park System will increase real estate values. To reduce green gentrification, The Port needs find ways to generate equitable revenue for the current residents of the Duwamish Valley. Building on the new parks as “anchors” for new investments by the Port through “Park-Oriented Development, ” Port investments could take the form of low-interest loans and cash, to shore up local businesses and community based organizations by allowing them to own and develop their properties.

- a. **Mobilize an equitable business development team for POED** to promote the River’s edge and its Riverfront Park System as a “port” for economic activities such as: outdoor recreation, gastronomy and specialty foods, cultural activities and tourism, and special event hosting. Use the POED Fund to shore up and support vulnerable populations and small businesses interested in these new business opportunities.
- b. **Collaborate with Port of Seattle revenue staff, and local business leaders, to vision a mutually beneficial economic partnership of “Community interests” and “Port interests”** to support the long-term health of the Duwamish River and Valley the people living there to both generate and earn revenue, together in a way that does not further contribute to environmental injustice.

Rapid Data-Driven Park Retrofit Improvements

3. From the comments provided through the website, the community is hopeful that the Port will provide additional enhanced maintenance, stewardship opportunities and park activation. To build on the momentum of the naming and relationship building, conduct a community driven gap analysis of these six parks with a stakeholder advisory committee. Collect data from the community on what is missing in the Parks, and what they value most.
 - a. **Mobilize a rapid response team of designers and public works builders to do an Infrastructure Gaps Analysis at the six parks.** This team would take their own expertise, combined with community responses to identify small works or events that could be rapidly built or held in batches or in succession, to meet community demand.
 - b. **Build small works with Green Jobs Program.** Public works staff experts from Port of Seattle could run a rapid training program to get near-Port Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) trained and enrolled in unions as fit to assist in a “small works surge” to build out the small works identified in the gaps analysis. As many ground staff at the Port are union,

these newly trained workers could work alongside, and be on a path to join, career union grounds staff at the Port of Seattle.

- c. **Coordinate with City and County efforts.** The Port has significant power to leverage efforts around connectivity, habitat restoration, climate adaptation, and green infrastructure investments that are underway or in planning stages at the City of Seattle or with King County.

In Closing

This project is evidence that community-driven place development projects, with adequate support and planning, can result in a productive and collaborative process with well received outcomes. Stakeholder and Port Commissioner testimonials, and the variety of significant outcomes attest to the success and value of this approach. This project provided the opportunity to try out new approaches in new media and digital public participation and successful methods of collaborating with Indigenous tribes. This project can serve as a new standard for the Port of Seattle in valuing, understanding, and implementing collaboration with external stakeholders for mutually beneficial results.

Exciting prospects await “downriver:” Building a Port Riverfront Park Systems brand, integrating its values into physical and digital signage, rapidly improving the parks with newly trained, green job union workers, and driving equitable development in the area by investing in the economic opportunities of local people who live and work nearby. With these new names, and the legacy of a great collaborative process, the future is bright, challenging, and along the Duwamish River, always unique.