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**City of Seattle and Port of Seattle Announce Visionary New Public–Private Partnership to Connect and Revitalize Parks on the Elliott Bay Waterfront**

***Private donation to fund proposed new greenway and improvements to Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Parks***

***Friends of Waterfront Seattle also to receive gifts in support of Waterfront Park campaign***

SEATTLE – August 23, 2023 – Today, Mayor Bruce Harrell joined Port of Seattle Commission President Sam Cho, philanthropist Melinda French Gates, Seattle City Council President Debora Juarez, Downtown Seattle Association Board Chair Sung Yang, Friends of Waterfront Seattle President and CEO Joy Shigaki, and Chairman of the Suquamish Tribe Leonard Forsman to announce Elliott Bay Connections (EBC), an unprecedented public-private partnership to connect, restore and revitalize parks along the Elliott Bay waterfront. Elliott Bay Connections will be undertaken at zero cost to taxpayers with the goal of delivering a new greenway and park improvements by June 2026 when Seattle hosts the World Cup.

Elliott Bay Connections [\[link to map\]](#) would construct a new pedestrian and bicycle greenway connecting the new Waterfront Park to the Olympic Sculpture Park (from Pier 62 to Pier 70) and would restore and revitalize Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Parks, including the restoration of public fishing at Pier 86. Private funding will underwrite the estimated \$45 million cost of construction. Philanthropists Melinda French Gates and MacKenzie Scott, The Diller-Von Furstenberg Family Foundation, and the Expedia Group are the donors to the EBC project. Community engagement kicks off in the fall.

“Seattle’s waterfront is a truly one-of-a-kind place with something for everyone: visitors, families, residents, and workers alike,” said Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell. “Elliott Bay Connections advances our decades-long efforts to reconnect the city to the waterfront, ensuring a seamless transition from downtown and safe, accessible pathways to experience the natural beauty of our region. This public-philanthropic approach is a shining example of bold Space Needle Thinking and a **One Seattle** effort, and we are so grateful to these donors for their commitment to help

make Seattle's waterfront a vibrant, world-class destination in time for the 2026 World Cup when thousands of soccer fans from around the world will come to our city."

The new landscaped, protected greenway for pedestrians and recreational cyclists would run along the east side of Alaskan Way for nearly a mile from the northern end of Waterfront Park at Pier 62 to the Olympic Sculpture Park. The greenway would update existing sidewalks and replace the obsolete former trolley tracks with an accessible path designed for walkers and those using scooters, wheelchairs or bicycles. The greenway would total more than two and a half acres of new public space. This new greenway complements the Alaskan Way Safety Project, previously announced by the City of Seattle, which will provide a protected bike lane on the west side of Alaskan Way.

Located just north of the Olympic Sculpture Park, Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Parks share a spectacular waterfront location with exceptional views of the Olympic Mountains, Mount Rainier and Puget Sound. Elliott Bay Connections would update visitor amenities and landscapes, modernize park facilities, restore public fishing and improve accessibility for park users while expanding sustainable landscape practices. The City of Seattle owns and manages Myrtle Edwards Park, and the Port of Seattle owns and manages Centennial Park. Together, these two public parks total 16 acres along more than one and a half miles of waterfront.

Community engagement will kick off in the fall of 2023 with the public invited to give input on the proposed greenway and desired park improvements. Following public input, design concepts will be developed and presented to the public before actual design, permitting and construction proceed. Upon completion, the donors will provide funding for a decade to support stewardship, with concurrence by the City and Port of Seattle on sustainability and standards of care.

"Elliott Bay Connections gives us a once-in-a-generation chance to finish the job on our waterfront," said Port of Seattle Commission President Sam Cho. "Partnership is playing a critical role in launching the Waterfront Park project to the south. Partnership is critical for finishing the job on the north end. We are really eager to hear community feedback on these proposals and begin building a waterfront for the next generation."

With Elliott Bay Connections announced today and the opening of Waterfront Park in 2025, the connected, new and revitalized parks will total 50 acres of world-class public space accessible to all running for close to three and half miles along the Elliott Bay waterfront.

"Having lived in Seattle for more than three decades, I know we thrive on being so close to nature," said Melinda French Gates. "Public parks connect us to green space and water, but they also connect us to each other. This network of waterfront parks will be a shared space for everyone and bring our city together. I am grateful for the partnership with MacKenzie Scott, The Diller-Von Furstenberg Family Foundation and Expedia Group, the leaders of the City and Port, and the public as we work to bring Elliott Bay Connections to life."

"I am excited to see community voices from around the city come together to help shape these beautiful, shared community spaces," said MacKenzie Scott.

“The Elliott Bay Waterfront is one of the wonders of the city of Seattle and it’s great to participate in improving it for the benefit of all who live and visit the city,” said Barry Diller, Chairman and Senior Executive of Expedia Group.

The connected Elliott Bay Parks will include:

- Waterfront Park, a constellation of lush, open public spaces linked together by a pedestrian-oriented promenade. Waterfront Park features the Overlook Walk, which ties together two iconic destinations, Pike Place Market and the Seattle Aquarium’s new Ocean Pavilion opening in 2024. Waterfront Park totals 20 acres and is scheduled to open in 2025.
- The proposed new greenway from Waterfront Park to the Olympic Sculpture Park, totaling more than two and a half acres.
- The award-winning Olympic Sculpture Park with nine acres of extraordinary contemporary sculpture and topography.
- Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Parks together offer 16 acres of restored and revitalized lawn, plantings, visitor amenities, beach coves and paths.
- The Beach, just south of Smith Cove, is a contemporary public landscape of more than two and a half acres of native plantings, driftwood and seating.

The Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) will serve as the implementation partner for the Elliott Bay Connections project, bringing together a local project team of Seattle-based firms experienced in public-private partnerships, public space improvements, and community engagement. DSA has a track record of partnership and stewardship of vital park and public spaces in the heart of Seattle.

The Mayor’s Office and the Port of Seattle will work directly with the EBC team to ensure that park improvements are delivered in accordance with public regulations and requirements and completed in time for the hosting of the World Cup in 2026. Construction will comply with public WMBE (Women and Minority Business Owned Enterprise) goals and labor initiatives. These parks and public spaces will continue to be owned and managed by the public agencies.

“Elliott Bay Connections is a major game changer for downtown’s waterfront. The greenway and park restoration improvements will benefit Seattleites of all ages and abilities with more opportunities to recreate and enjoy nature in the heart of the city,” said Sung Yang, Chair, DSA Board of Directors and Principal, Pacific Public Affairs. “DSA is pleased to partner on this project and grateful for the significant investments being made. This is more proof of the progress being made to revitalize downtown under Mayor Harrell’s leadership.”

“Since what is now known as Seattle was first settled by Indigenous peoples, our relationship with the landscape has been defined by the Salish Sea and the lakes, rivers and streams that are a source of nourishment, commerce and recreation,” said Debora Juarez, City of Seattle Council President. “By connecting the new Waterfront Park to the parks along the Elliott Bay coastline, we provide an opportunity for people to come together to play, relax and enjoy the

benefits of touching the water. The parks, with improved and updated amenities such as a play area and restrooms, will be more welcoming to everyone.”

Mayor Harrell also announced that Friends of Waterfront Seattle will receive a \$10 million challenge grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and an unrestricted \$10 million grant from MacKenzie Scott in support of the Campaign for Waterfront Park. This campaign is raising \$200 million to finish construction of Waterfront Park and to ensure this new world class civic space will be safe, well-maintained, and programmed by Friends of the Waterfront. French Gates is Co-Chair of the Gates Foundation.

“The donors’ generosity, vision and leadership spearheading Elliott Bay Connections are truly remarkable,” said Joy Shigaki, President and CEO of Friends of Waterfront Seattle (Friends). “This is a catalytic moment for our city, which shows the power of public space to bring community together. Their leadership, coupled with their support for Waterfront Park, are amazing gifts to everyone who lives here. I hope these gifts inspire others to join the Friends’ campaign, as we work to complete Waterfront Park and ensure that it will be welcoming and beautiful now—and for generations to come.”

The Muckleshoot and Suquamish Tribes have been briefed on the Elliott Bay Connections project, which restores public access to fishing in Centennial Park.

“The Suquamish Tribe is excited to learn more about Elliott Bay Connections and how the project will improve the shoreline and uplands within our ancestral lands and waters on and adjacent to Elliott Bay,” said Leonard Forsman, Chairman of the Suquamish Tribe. “Providing public access to these waters is also a tribal priority as we educate the public about the importance of preserving water quality and therefore helping all of us protect our treaty reserved resources, including salmon and shellfish.”

Consultation with representatives of the tribes and Urban Native community throughout the design and implementation of Elliott Bay Connections will ensure inclusion of Native perspective, knowledge, practices and language.

Information about Elliott Bay Connections, including schedule, groundbreaking and construction phasing, will be available and updated on DSA, City of Seattle and Port of Seattle websites.

### ***More details on Elliott Bay Connections***

The new pedestrian and bicycle greenway along the east side of Alaskan Way from Waterfront Park (Pier 62) to the Olympic Sculpture Park (Pier 70) would:

- Total three quarters of a mile in length and add more than two and a half acres of accessible, new public space.
- Replace the obsolete trolley track and sidewalk on the east side of Alaskan Way with a two-way, multi-use path designed for recreational cyclists, pedestrians, and people in wheelchairs.
- Improve and add streetscape amenities, including improved wayfinding and signage, to welcome and support a wide range of people from across Seattle.
- Add native trees, shrubs, and ground cover plantings along the path, increasing Seattle's urban tree canopy and creating a natural, green experience for users.
- Improve existing sidewalks and key crossings for pedestrian safety and comfort.
- Complement the Alaskan Way Safety Project, previously announced by the City of Seattle, which will provide a protected bike lane on the west side of Alaskan Way.

The restoration and revitalization of Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Parks would:

- Honor the parks' spectacular waterfront setting and respect their extraordinary experience of green landscape meeting the Bay.
- Create a unified experience for park users enjoying the combined 16 acres of free, open public park which extends for a mile along Elliott Bay.
- Respond to people's aspirations and desired uses for the parks.
- Modernize park facilities to be more sustainable, resilient, and accessible for people of all abilities.

Proposed improvements to Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Parks would:

- Restore and enhance lawns, plantings and tree canopy by adding native species that flourish in maritime conditions.
- Add needed park amenities including restrooms, wayfinding, picnic tables, seating, and lighting.
- Restore two existing beach coves in Myrtle Edwards Park, enhancing shoreline habitat and improve direct public access to the water.
- Add new play features for children and families.
- Restore public fishing access and update existing concession and restroom structures at Pier 86.
- Repair and improve the network of bike and pedestrian trails.
- Restore existing artworks.
- Develop interpretive signage honoring Indigenous, environmental, and historical context.
- Introduce artistic projections on the Terminal 86 Grain Facility.

Additional information about Elliott Bay Connections is available on the DSA website.

## **What people are saying:**

### **Monty Anderson, Executive Secretary, Seattle Building & Construction Trades Council**

“This project represents another great opportunity to provide Seattle with excellent, local Union jobs and apprenticeship opportunities. We look forward to working with the project partners on this effort to link our waterfront parks together through the Elliott Bay Connections Project.”

### **Rebecca Bear, President and CEO, Seattle Parks Foundation**

“As a world class city, Seattle’s extensive and historic park network is our biggest strength. Elliott Bay Connections will allow Seattle to showcase our new Waterfront Park, creating green access to downtown and addressing gaps in the pedestrian infrastructure. Seattle Parks Foundation is thrilled to see this vision come to life and we look forward to partnering with the city and community to ensure its success.”

### **Amada Cruz, CEO, Seattle Art Museum**

“The Olympic Sculpture Park and the two publicly owned parks immediately adjacent together create 25 acres of shared public space along the waterfront. By improving and revitalizing the connection between all the Elliott Bay parks, we further activate civic spaces where all kinds of people can have a shared experience and celebrate our shared humanities.”

### **Bob Davidson, President and CEO, Seattle Aquarium**

"This new effort to connect our waterfront parks amplifies the value of innovative public-private partnerships and is the perfect complement to the Ocean Pavilion project. It provides a connection right down to the water's edge of Elliott Bay and in Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Parks."

### **Lee Lambert, Executive Director, Cascade Bicycle Club**

"Cascade Bicycle Club is excited about this historic investment in making Alaskan Way more bikeable, walkable, and safer for all users. Along with the planned bike lanes on the western waterfront side, the green space and additional bike path and better sidewalks on the eastern side of Alaskan Way will support multiple user groups—leaving the western side for transportation and the eastern side for recreation."

### **Andrew Lewis, City Councilmember of District 7**

"The Elliott Bay Connections project will take advantage of the unused trolley tracks on the east side of Alaskan Way to connect some of Seattle's best parks and open spaces. I'm excited to see this exciting new thoroughfare for walking and rolling in action."

**Michelle Merriweather, President & CEO, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle**

"This is an exciting project for the Waterfront and our city, a true testament to community collaboration and leaning into the possibilities. The bike paths, the green space, and the refresh of the parks are remarkable gifts to residents and visitors alike. Our downtown is truly like no other and this will be the cherry on top!"

**Gordon Padelford, Executive Director, Seattle Neighborhood Greenways**

"We welcome this generous donor contribution to upgrade the walking, biking, rolling, and strolling experience along Seattle's downtown waterfront."

**Donny Stevenson, Vice Chair, Muckleshoot Tribal Council**

"The Muckleshoot Tribe has worked closely with Seattle officials over the past decade after the removal of the Alaska Way Viaduct and replacement of the Elliott Bay Seawall on a common vision to reconnect the waterfront to the city, highlight its history as a working waterfront and tell the story of Native people of Seattle. Elliott Bay Connections will further that vision by connecting and revitalizing Myrtle Edwards Park and Centennial Park on the Elliott Bay waterfront."

**Kelly Susewind, Director, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)**

"We're thrilled at the prospect of revitalizing the Elliott Bay Fishing Pier, which has served as a community institution providing recreation and environmental education opportunities that link the city of Seattle with Puget Sound, from jigging for squid to casting a line for salmon. WDFW is grateful to the donors and Port of Seattle for moving this effort forward, and we are committed to continued partnership on the Elliott Bay Connections project." *The Department manages the public fishing pier also known as Pier 86—which has been closed since 2016 due to structural concerns—at the Port's Centennial Park.*