


DUWAMISH
WATERWAY
PARK

# THE CAMPAIGN FOR DUWAMISH WATERWAY PARK

## RECONNECTING COMMUNITY AND RIVER

# LINKING SEATTLE'S PAST AND FUTURE

The Duwamish River Valley was the cradle of civilization in our region. For more than 10,000 years, the winding Duwamish River hosted an abundance of wildlife—including salmon, seals, and herons—and the Duwamish Tribe looked to the river for both nourishment and transportation.

After the city of Seattle was founded, the river and surrounding valley became the center of the region's industry. An early 20th century public works project dredged and straightened the river for shipping and drained the wetlands, and in the ensuing decades, industry along the river polluted the water and shores. In 2001, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency designated five miles of the Lower Duwamish Waterway as a Superfund cleanup site.

South Park, the largest residential area in the valley, has suffered from this industrial impact more than most communities in Seattle. South Park residents are exposed to some of the worst air, water, and soil contamination in the city and have fewer green spaces and parks than almost any other neighborhood.

Despite these challenges, South Park residents have a history of activism and finding creative solutions to community challenges. One of these is the vision for a revitalized Duwamish Waterway Park. After many years of preparation and community input, the project is in the final planning stages and will be moving toward construction in 2019.

As cleanup and restoration efforts gradually revitalize the Duwamish Waterway, it's time to reconnect the river to the community. **You can be a part of transforming Duwamish Waterway Park into the centerpiece of a thriving South Park neighborhood and Duwamish Valley.**



# THE URGENT NEED FOR PARKLAND IN SOUTH PARK

**The community's young people have been left behind.** South Park has the largest proportion of children of any Seattle neighborhood and one of the lowest amounts of green space per capita. Most of these children are from low-income families that rely on public services, and the only playgrounds in South Park are at the elementary school and the community center. For this multi-generational community to thrive, young people need welcoming places to be active and participate in recreational opportunities.

**South Park residents suffer disproportionately from pollution and poor health.** South Park has more known or suspected contaminated waste and toxic release sites than any other neighborhood in Seattle.[1] Childhood asthma rates are the highest in the city, and rates of hospitalization related to air pollution are the highest in the Puget Sound region.[2] A higher proportion of adults in South Park, Georgetown, and Beacon Hill report "fair" or "poor" health compared to Seattle overall.[3] In fact, the life expectancy of South Park residents is eight years lower than the King County average and 13 years lower than in more affluent Seattle neighborhoods.[4]

**Noise and safety are constant concerns.** Sixty years ago, Highway 99 was built right alongside the South Park Playground, one of the few parks in the neighborhood. Both Highway 99 and Highway 509 bisect this neighborhood, making access to existing parks and amenities difficult—especially for bicyclists and pedestrians. Heavy freight traffic creates high levels of noise and air pollution and poses other safety hazards.

1. 2013 Duwamish Valley Cumulative Health Impacts Analysis
2. Puget Sound Clean Air Agency
3. Futurewise 2016
4. 2013 Duwamish Valley Cumulative Health Impacts Analysis




# NEIGHBORS WITH A SHARED PURPOSE

**South Park is among the most ethnically diverse and lowest-income communities in Seattle.** Immigrants and their families, young people and seniors, business owners and artists, machinists and community activists all call South Park home. Public information is often printed in several languages. Neighbors contribute their varied perspectives to build a more welcoming and prosperous neighborhood for families and businesses alike.

**South Park residents share a sense of responsibility for the well-being of their community.** To give residents a voice in the cleanup of the Duwamish Waterway, the community formed the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition. Young people in the neighborhood planted trees to support better air quality, and residents started the Duwamish Rowing Club to provide more recreation and activities. Now the community has a bold vision for immediate and long-term public space investments that will address generations of injustice, starting with the revitalization of Duwamish Waterway Park.

## SOUTH PARK AT A GLANCE

**40%** Latino

**17%** Asian

**12%** African American

**38%** nonwhite or multiracial (including Pacific Islanders and Native Americans)

**23%** speak English "less than very well"

**28%** below the poverty level

Median household income is **34%** below the city average

**78%** of students at Concord International Elementary School qualify for reduced-price lunch

**28%** of population is school-age children (compared to 14% citywide)

# A COMMUNITY VISION FOR A STRONGER, HEALTHIER DUWAMISH VALLEY

The South Park community led a visioning process that resulted in the 2014 South Park Green Space Vision Plan. The plan identified eight promising public space improvement opportunities, including Duwamish Waterway Park. In 2016, the neighboring community of Georgetown completed its own Open Space Vision Framework, which identified 10 public projects for significant enhancement and expansion, including pedestrian and bicycle connections to South Park.

Together, the South Park and Georgetown plans present a transformational opportunity for the Duwamish River Valley and the Seattle region. **A connected system of beautiful public spaces along both sides of the river is an important investment in the health and well-being of everyone who lives and works in the Duwamish Valley.**

The realization of this vision is already underway. Since 2009, Seattle Parks Foundation, in partnership with community donors, has invested some $1 million in planning and completing some of the high-priority projects outlined in the South Park Green Space Vision Plan—including Riverside Park and the first phase of playground renovation at Concord International Elementary School.

**"This community has been waiting a long time for more and better open spaces. Every day this park is not done, their health is impacted."**

—Amy Shumann, Built Environment Planner, Public Health - Seattle & King County



# A REVITALIZED DUWAMISH WATERWAY PARK WILL RESULT IN MEANINGFUL CHANGE FOR THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY

- **Livability.** With the Duwamish Valley experiencing rapid growth, the South Park neighborhood will be stronger and more inclusive if people of all generations have a welcoming place to gather and connect.
- **Health.** The community cannot wait any longer to address mounting health inequities. An additional playground and expanded open space for physical activity will help improve the health and well-being of all residents.
- **Recreation.** The park will help minimize the impact of recreational activities on the river's health at a time when the waterway is increasingly being used for watersports and fishing. It will also enhance opportunities for rowing, kayaking, canoeing, boating, fishing, and observing wildlife.
- **Environment.** This is a crucial time for river cleanup efforts. The park will reintroduce vegetation and habitat, help manage polluted runoff and provide pollutant filtration, and educate visitors about harmonizing the natural and built environments in South Park.
- **Community empowerment.** The park will enhance residents' sense of community pride and ownership by providing a place to celebrate the neighborhood's vibrant cultures and historical identity.

# REALIZING THE PARK'S POTENTIAL

**Duwamish Waterway Park is the only park along Seattle's only river.** In 1974, Seattle Parks and Recreation created the park and named the 1.3 acres of grass and muddy beach to honor the Duwamish Tribe. It is one of only five green spaces in South Park. Duwamish Waterway Park has some basic amenities, including barbecue grills, picnic tables, benches, a small play feature, and a hand-carry boat launch. Many community members use it for river access, dog walking, and community celebrations and festivals. **But the park needs significant improvements to become a healthy and welcoming space for families, young people, and seniors.**

## The park's current shortcomings include:

- Lack of amenities and programmed activities for all generations and abilities
- Contaminated rainwater from the industrial neighborhood
- Limited sightlines and dark corners that attract crime and drug activity
- Chunks of concrete, fishhooks, and broken glass littering the beach
- No designated trail for river access
- Low visibility into the neighborhood because of nearby industrial buildings

A group of community volunteers known as the Friends of Duwamish Waterway Park is working with Seattle Parks Foundation and other partners to translate the community's vision for the park into a final design. The plans are rooted in past visioning efforts for South Park and the Duwamish Valley, including the Seattle Parks and Recreation Development Plan, South Park Action Plan, South Park Green Space Vision Plan, and Seattle's Comprehensive Plan.

**"Water is life. We want to be connected to the river. With the river walk, kids will see fun, and parents will see a safe and clean place."**

—Edwin Alberto Hernandez Reto,
Grupo Asesor Latino



# A COMMUNITY GATHERING PLACE AND RIVER GATEWAY

## Construction on Duwamish Waterway Park is slated to begin in 2019. Key design features will include:

- An entry plaza that welcomes park visitors with a river view.
- An expanded, ADA-accessible river walk that features steel inlays engraved with interpretive information about the complex history and ecology of Seattle's only river. The installation will be created in partnership with the Duwamish Valley Youth Corps.
- An all-ages accessible playground that includes a climbing structure and zip line. The playground design will honor the industrial history of the neighborhood.
- Improved beach access.
- Enhanced recreational amenities, including bike racks and easier water access for launching hand-carried boats.
- Open space that highlights river views and improves sightlines, including a lawn area for recreation and festivals (such as the South Park Queer Pride Picnic, Lucha Libre, Dieter Hotz Cup Regatta, and Duwamish River Festival).
- New riparian plantings that control erosion and help filter and keep water clean.
- Artwork by local artists.
- Drinking fountain.



## A COMMUNITY VOICE

### Paulina Lopez, Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition and Friends of Duwamish Waterway Park

Paulina Lopez is a community and environmental activist, South Park resident, and mother. Despite the pollution and health challenges in South Park, she values the community's strengths. "It's a vibrant and diverse place with a lot of character," she says.

Lopez has been deeply involved in the visioning efforts for South Park, especially Duwamish Waterway Park. "We have worked hard to make sure the community has had a voice in creating the plan for the park," she says. Involving different voices and perspectives has led to a long process, but she is confident that it has been done the right way. "We have meaningfully engaged people who speak different languages and are from different cultures, which takes time," she says. "We now have everyone's perspective that will be served by the improved park."

Lopez believes the time has come to reimagine Duwamish Waterway Park. "This park will change that narrative for everyone here," she says. "It will be a point of pride."

**"This effort is a great example of how public agencies can genuinely collaborate with community members to design and implement projects that provide multiple benefits. The City of Seattle strongly supports this project."**

—Alberto J. Rodríguez, Duwamish Valley Advisor, Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment

# IT'S TIME TO GIVE BACK TO SOUTH PARK

## Community and public partners are committed to the vision of an improved Duwamish Waterway Park:

- **Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition** works to ensure that the community has a voice in the cleanup of the river and is involved in the steering committee for this project.
- **Duwamish Rowing Club** is a youth and adult rowing club founded in 2011, with the idea that rowing should be affordable, accessible, and open to anyone who wants to participate.
- **Duwamish Valley Youth Corps**, a program of the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition, provides community-building and leadership development opportunities for area youth.
- **King County** is the primary landowner.
- **Friends of Duwamish Waterway Park** is the steering group for the project and includes representatives from local community organizations, volunteers, and community leaders. It leads community outreach and builds support for the project.
- **Seattle Parks and Recreation** owns part of the property. It operates and maintains the park, and it is managing this project for the city.
- **South Park Area Redevelopment Committee (SPARC)** includes residents, businesses, and community organizations working to make South Park a better place to live and work by promoting positive redevelopment efforts.
- **Seattle Parks Foundation** is leading project fundraising efforts and providing technical assistance for this project.



# JOIN THE CAMPAIGN FOR DUWAMISH WATERWAY PARK

## You can be part of the revitalization of the Duwamish River and the entire South Park community.

The effort to raise funds for this project is a community endeavor. We invite you to join the hundreds of individuals, community groups, foundations, and businesses that are committed to implementing this vision.

For more information about giving or volunteering to help make the revitalization of Duwamish Waterway Park a reality, please contact:

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