

Elliott Bay Connections

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Project Description

What is the Elliott Bay Connections project?

Elliott Bay Connections (EBC) is a new public–private partnership to connect, restore and revitalize public parks along the Elliott Bay waterfront from Pier 62 (the northern end of Waterfront Park) to the beach just south of Smith Cove. The project, expected to be complete by June 2026, is funded entirely by private philanthropic donations.

Elliott Bay Connections would:

- Create a new pedestrian and bicycle greenway connecting Waterfront Park at Pier 62 to the Olympic Sculpture Park at Pier 70.
- Restore and revitalize visitor amenities at Myrtle Edwards Park and Centennial Parks.
- Refresh landscapes at Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Park with new lawns, plantings, and tree canopy.
- Add new play areas for children and families.
- Restore public fishing at Pier 86 and improve direct public access to the water.

The new greenway would include:

- New protected multi-use path with trees and planting alongside
- Safe street crossings
- New lighting
- New signage and wayfinding

Additional improvements in Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Parks may include:

- Improved paths for walking and biking
- Beach coves with places to touch the water
- Refreshed landscape including lawns, planting areas, shoreline, and trees
- New park furnishings such as benches, picnic tables and bike racks
- New lighting
- New signage and wayfinding
- New concessions and restroom facilities in Centennial Park

What's the timeline?

Elliott Bay Connections is in the early stages of design, which will continue through spring 2024 and includes opportunities for public input. The target for groundbreaking is early 2025 with the new greenway and restored parks to open to the public in June, 2026 when Seattle hosts the World Cup.

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How is this project being funded?

The Elliott Bay Connections Project will be delivered at no cost to taxpayers:

Private funding will provide 100 percent of the funds needed to complete the EBC project. All funds are raised, and there is no financial obligation or cost to taxpayers. The parks and greenway remain public property owned and managed by the public sector. The estimated cost of construction is \$45M in private donations.

Private funding will provide support during the first ten years of operation and maintenance for the new greenway and the renovated and revitalized public waterfront parks. The EBC project team will work with public partners to ensure that the public spaces are designed to be sustainable and maintained to an agreed upon standard of care.

How can the community be involved in the project planning process and provide feedback on the project designs?

The community engagement process kicked off in autumn 2023 with the public invited to participate in an online survey and to attend a virtual public meeting with the design team. In March 2024, the public will be invited again to hear the results of the first round of input and give additional feedback on the conceptual design.

Construction will be phased to preserve continued public access to green space and pathways. Information will be posted online throughout the design and construction process.

Will there be more ways to give feedback?

Yes! We are eager to hear from the community through virtual and in-person events. Open houses will take place in March and July of 2024. During these open houses, the project team will report on the public's feedback, share design progress, and solicit further public input and feedback. The community will be notified prior to each event. If you're interested in attending an EBC event, please submit your contact information on our website (elliottbayconnections.infocommunity.org) or via email (EBCinfo@stephersonassociates.com).

Community-Directed Questions

Community Engagement

- **Where can I watch the recordings of the virtual presentation webinars?**
 - Each virtual presentation webinar recording will be posted to the project website (elliottbayconnections.infocommunity.org) approximately a week after the event.
- **Can you share what is being done to honor and recognize the indigenous history of this space?**

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- The Muckleshoot and Suquamish Tribes both have stated their support of Elliott Bay Connections. The EBC project team, which includes Colleen Echohawk of Headwater People, will work closely to ensure the inclusion of Native perspective, knowledge, practices, and language in the project design and implementation.

Access

- **What will you do to ensure the EBC project doesn't make traffic and congestion even worse or cut off access to the Elliott Bay Trail? Will the work be done in phases so there is rotating accessibility?**
 - Construction activity will be staged to minimize impacts to bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicular traffic flow. The greenway's direct footprint is outside of active travel and parking lanes on Alaskan Way.
- **Is there public transportation access to the park?**
 - Public transit provides multiple points of access to the central Elliott Bay waterfront. Many features of Waterfront Park, including new pedestrian bridges and the Overlook Walk, enhance connectivity between downtown neighborhoods and the waterfront. All the parks on the waterfront are optimized for pedestrians, scooters, and bicyclists. There are existing free and paid parking resources along the waterfront corridor. No parking will be lost or displaced due to the EBC project. Myrtle Edwards and Centennial parks are currently accessible by multiple modes of transport, including public transit, bicycle, and automobile. With the improved connectivity of the waterfront parks, visitors will be able to use different forms of access to get to the central waterfront and enjoy more than 3 ½ miles of connected green.

Maintenance/Safety/Programs

- **How will the parks be maintained upon completion of the project?**
 - DSA will be working with the Port and the City of Seattle on long term stewardship and standards of care for the new greenway and the restored and revitalized parks. The donors will provide support for the first ten years of stewardship following the re-opening date of June 2026.
 - As part of the design process, the EBC project team will be estimating the costs needed for ongoing stewardship of these renovated spaces, paying attention to ongoing sustainability and standards of care.

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- **How will public safety be maintained in these parks?**
 - Ensuring that the parks are welcoming and safe to all will be an important consideration in the design and development of park improvements and the greenway. Specific public safety measures and staffing will be developed in dialogue between DSA, the City, and the Port in planning for the reopening of these improved spaces in 2026. DSA brings experience from its role in active stewardship of multiple downtown parks and public spaces. The EBC team will work in collaboration as well with other organizations, including Friends of Waterfront Seattle, the Seattle Center, and the Seattle Art Museum (which owns and operates the Olympic Sculpture Park) in planning for public safety and operations.
- **What programming is planned for Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Parks?**
 - The EBC project adds needed amenities to Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Parks, including improved lawns and plantings, seating, play areas, restrooms, signage, and paths. It also restores public fishing access. The City and Port of Seattle, respectively, will continue to own and manage these parks and will be responsible for activity permits, programming, and partnerships when the park improvement project is complete.

Amenities

- **How will the project address the fishing pier at Pier 86?**
 - The restoration of public fishing is one of the goals of this project, with the acknowledgment that Pier 86 has been a previously beloved fishing location. The EBC project team will be working closely with public partners including the Port of Seattle and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife to explore options for restore public fishing access.
- **Is there a possibility of having a dog park as a part of the project scope?**
 - Due to the shoreline code restrictions, dog parks are not permitted in these parks. However, users will be able to continue to walk their dogs on a leash along the trails.
- **People are often seen using the pull bar. How do exercise areas fit in the bigger picture?**
 - The EBC project will improve amenities in the park including opportunities for both children and families to play and exercise.

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- **Will the project be providing attention to the elevators that go from Alaskan Way to Western Avenue? Will this project be in charge of the maintenance, cleaning, and security of those elevators?**
 - These elevators are not included in the project.
- **Is there potential for a second restroom midway in the park?**
 - The EBC project will improve amenities in the park and will be examining the availability and accessibility of restrooms.
- **I love the plan to upgrade the beaches north of the pocket beach. Will there be stairs, so the beaches are accessible?**
 - Accessibility improvements to the parks are an important overall goal, including ways to improve access to the beach coves.
- **Will there be additional spaces that are covered for the rainy season?**
 - One of the EBC project goals is replacement of the existing concession and restroom structures in Centennial Park.

User Experience

- **What is the design team's plan to maintain separation between bikes and pedestrians?**
 - One of the goals for EBC is to improve circulation, connectivity, and pedestrian and cyclist safety throughout Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Parks as well as the new greenway using available space most effectively.
- **Will there be runner-friendly surfaces? It seems that Seattle looks after its cyclists better than its runners in terms of path width and softer surfaces. I appreciate the emphasis on walkers, children playing, etc. That's great. However, many runners use the paths also.**
 - The design team will be exploring options for trail surfaces that are user-friendly for a variety of users, including bikes, wheelchairs, strollers, pedestrians, and runners.
- **Are we taking the chance to make the transportation (bike) trail less windy?**
 - The design team is exploring all opportunities to improve the user experience of the parks and waterfront.

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- **Is noise mitigation from trains part of your planning at this time?**
 - The design team will be exploring options to reduce the noise impact of the BNSF railroads on the project as one of many ways we are looking to improve the experience of park visitors.
- **How will additional lighting be addressed in the project?**
 - Proposed improvements under consideration include appropriate lighting of the pedestrian and bike paths in the parks and greenway to enhance a sense of welcome and safety year-round. The EBC project will follow city guidelines on environmental analysis.
- **Can we try to create a more unified image than today's conditions? The various waterfront parks all have different signage and different paving.**
 - One of the primary goals for EBC is to create a connected, continuous experience along the Elliott Bay waterfront. When EBC is complete, connected parks totaling 50 acres will stretch for 3.5 miles. The EBC team will work in collaboration with the City and Port of Seattle to ensure that there is adequate, consistent and continuous wayfinding and interpretive signage on the greenway and in Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Parks that makes it easier for visitors to navigate and understand all the waterfront parks. The EBC design team will also be looking at appropriate surface materials that optimize for consistency, safety and accessibility.

Plantings/Environment

- **What is the design team's approach to improving native plantings and pollinator habitats? Including elements for local birds and bees.**
 - The EBC design team will be assessing all planting areas in the parks. Shoreline zones will be 100% native per the City's shoreline code. New plantings should include many native species to support aquatic, pollinator, and other habitat needs and provide an authentic sense of place. Plantings will be selected to provide a range of benefits throughout all seasons.
- **Will healthy trees be removed? How will the design team approach the protection of existing trees and the planting of new trees?**
 - One of the primary goals for EBC is to increase tree canopy and shade in the existing parks and along the proposed greenway. As part of the design process, the EBC design team will also be assessing the health of existing trees and their longevity in the parks' maritime conditions. The publicly released design will specifically reference the tree census and canopy.

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- **How will the EBC design team plan to ecologically enhance the shoreline to the north, along Myrtle Edwards and Centennial parks, given that very little of Elliott Bay's remaining shoreline has this possibility?**
 - The EBC team is working closely with the Port of Seattle and the City of Seattle to analyze sea level rise and shoreline conditions in both Myrtle Edwards and Centennial Parks. Both shorelines are largely rip-rap and could benefit from native plantings and gentler slopes. The extent of shoreline improvements in the EBC project will be guided by the results of these studies as well as the project budget. One of the explicit goals is the improvement of the two beach coves in Myrtle Edwards by providing salmon-friendly shorelines that include more naturally sloped beaches, native trees and plants, and anchored driftwood.

Art

- **Can you address the Michael Heizer and other existing public art in Myrtle Edwards? What other public art will be in the parks?**
 - The EBC project will support the restoration of existing public art works as needed in collaboration with the artists and appropriate experts.
- **What are the proposed projections on the Pier 86 grain terminal?**
 - The EBC project will explore the possibility of doing light projections on the exterior facade of the grain terminal, following a community-initiated pilot project in 2018. A feasibility study will be undertaken in consultation with the Port of Seattle, community groups from surrounding neighborhoods, and the Louis Dreyfus Company, which operates the grain terminal. The study will need to verify that the projections do not negatively impact surrounding communities, grain terminal operations, or the environment. The study and design will focus on facades that are not visible to neighboring residents. If the projections are feasible, the projections can offer opportunities for iconic artistic expressions along the waterfront.

Alaskan Way Greenway

- **How is EBC coordinating with SDOT's Alaskan Way Safety Project?**
 - The EBC team is working closely with the SDOT project team to ensure alignment and coordination between the two projects.
 - The Alaskan Way Safety Project includes lane reductions, intersection safety improvements, and repairs of the western sidewalk.

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- **What is the draw for pedestrians to use the East side of Alaska as opposed to the West with the water views?**
 - The new greenway will offer pedestrians, cyclists and other users the opportunity to travel safely through green from Waterfront Park to Olympic Sculpture Park and beyond. The new greenway compliments the improvements the City of Seattle is making to enhance bicycle travel on the western side of Alaskan Way.
- **It looks like you are working on the east side of the street after Ocean Pavilion. Are you including crosswalks or management of street crossings in this project to protect pedestrians?**
 - The EBC team is working with the BNSF Railway and the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to coordinate the crossings and intersections so that they are as safe as possible.
- **How is the design team looking to address the crossing at Broad Street?**
 - The potential crossing at Broad Street/Alaskan Way is a unique condition that is a priority to address. The EBC design team will be working closely with SDOT and BSNF to explore options that optimize safe crossing for pedestrians, cyclists and others at this crossing.
- **With the greenway being on the east side, offering fewer opportunities to view the Sound, is there a possibility of elevated "highline-like" stretches or viewpoints?**
 - Elevated stretches and viewpoints are not being considered as part of the EBC project.