

Friday, March 2, 2012, 2:00 pm

Dan Johnson & Lisa Chen from Seattle Parks

Steve & Peggy Garber from Japanese Garden Society

Met at the garden for a walk around with a view toward possible capital projects.

Dan’s 2012-2015 Project List outlined served as a guide.



Front Gate Security

The concern is that when the gates are closed and locked, people could easily use the structure of both the main and the side gates like a ladder to climb into the garden through the open ceiling above.

Two possible options, both would require a consultation with the original artist:

- 1) Increase the height of the gates to close the gap.
- 2) Turn the rungs vertical, so they do not present as a ladder.

Projected cost estimate: \$7-8K.

Lamp Posts

The current lamps in The garden are not of Japanese style and do not provide adequate

path lighting. There are currently about 20 fixtures of varying height throughout the garden. With the February thinning of the garden plant material, some of the lamp posts become more prominently out of place. There is one in particular in the meadow near the Moon Viewing Platform.



There was some discussion of using the current poles, but reducing the height and enclosing the pole with wood or metal in a more Japanese Style. The desire would be to light the path softly without lighting the entire area. A Japanese Garden design consultant should be brought in for the project.

Projected cost estimate: \$3-5K.



Pond sediment removal, bank erosion, filter and aeration systems improvements

After 2 recent water pipe breakage problems, one up the hill behind the garden to the west and a smaller one in the garden itself, much mud and silt has washed into the pond, in addition to the normal accumulation over time. We even saw oil residue in the stream bed. Pond maintenance is periodical work that was last done in 2003. It is time to do it again.

Steve and Lisa discussed the pros and cons of natural versus and concrete pond bottoms with regard to aesthetics and maintenance concerns.

Steve described the pond edging that he and Peggy had seen in the Japanese Garden at UBC in Vancouver. Essentially, a concrete shelf had been constructed around the pond perimeter a foot or two below the water surface. It was relatively unobtrusive but effective in limiting bank erosion.



Filter and aeration systems have been researched by NRU, Shops, David B and Ron Rodgers. The concern is that the current pump house is not capable of providing adequate circulation for the pond. City water is sometimes added to improve the pond condition and at those times, the koi gather where the fresh water is being added. Dan would like to have a senior plumber come look at the mechanical systems, which is currently more suited to swimming pools than to ponds. Dan suggests bringing in a natural pond consultant and that possibly some hydraulic modeling could be undertaken. Lisa reported that Portland people has helped us out during our latest water crisis.

Projected cost estimates a 2 year project -
for Sediment Removal: \$75-100K,
for filter and aeration systems: \$200-300K,
for Pond embankment reformation: \$200-250K.

Roji Roof Repair



The Machiai Roof in the Roji garden is deteriorating from moss and moisture and parts of the back of the structure. Lisa said that drainage has been improved around the Roji garden, but the structure suffers from accumulated damage. A Kyoto classical Tea house architect has recommended replacing the shingle roof with copper. Lisa has worked with a Japanese Garden carpenter to assess the structure's condition and repair cost.

Projected estimate cost: \$15K.

TeaHouse

Gardener Sue DeNure let us into the Tea House so we could inspect it's condition. We found it in good shape but Dan was concerned about winter moisture inside the structure. He recommended a second heater and fan to keep the structure warmer and dry during the winter and thus prevent the growth of mold.

We also discussed the rock perimeter around the Tea House and Dan suggested it should be removed and cleaned periodically.

No cost for this maintenance has been established.

Meadow

The Meadow has always been too damp due to springs and drainage from the hill behind the garden. One way to deal with this problem is to change the plantings in that area to those that would better tolerate the moisture. Steve noted that UW had done trials of varieties of cherries for Azalea Way and that we might consult with them.

There is no cost estimate for this project.

Repair/Replace Broken Sandstone Steps in Harbor Area

Several of the paving sandstones in the Harbor area are cracked or have sunk creating an uneven surface and potential safety issues.

Projected estimate cost: \$75K.

North End Pavilion

A Pavilion at the north end of the garden is the last remaining unfinished element of the original Master Plan. This would be a major project, needing a consultant and significant fundraising. Dan suggested it might be a signature project for the end of the current Parks Levy. We would need to do a serious study of potential uses, placement of and access to such a structure. There is very little area for a pavilion of any size within the confines of the present garden fence.



Projected estimate cost: \$30-50K for design and \$100K plus for construction of a modest sized pavilion.

Noise in the Garden

Road noise from Lake Washington Blvd has been a growing detraction from the tranquility of the garden as traffic has increased over the years. Steve and Bonnie Mitchell met earlier today with an acoustical engineer Michael Yantis to discuss possible soundproofing improvements to the existing fence. Mr. Yantis said that the current fence offered pretty much all the sound reduction such a structure could be expected to give. His suggestion was 1) reduce the speed of the vehicles on the Blvd, 2) install traffic calming risers across the Blvd to slow vehicles and/or 3) replace the road surface with a quieter substance. (Unfortunately, Mr. Yantis had no suggestions for reducing the noise from overhead aircraft.)

Dan mentioned that if the recent water pipe problem comes from a break under the road, as is suspected, then we could undertake installing risers the same time the road is closed for the pipe repair.

There is no cost estimate for this project.

Signage, Street Presence and Parking

Steve has long believed aware that signage for the Japanese Garden is inadequate. It is far too easy for



people to pass by without knowing what is inside the fence. Steve would like to see, not only a larger and more prominent sign, but also Japanese Garden appropriate plantings such as a bamboo grove and a row of ginkgo trees along the road beside the parking and outside the fence.

Dan is also aware that the amount of parking is inadequate and suggested opening up a portion of the picnic area for additional parking. Steve wondered if additional parking might be created along the service road between the garden and the hillside to west.

Closing Discussion

After walking about the garden on this cold March day, we sat for a while in the Tateuchi Community Room to warm up and summarize our observations. Dan thought that the big projects came down to 3 Ps: Pond, Pavilion and Parking. He said that he would like to come to the March Japanese Garden Advisory Council meeting just to learn about the garden and to get to know the people who work so hard for it. Steve speculated that the JGAC meeting would probably focus on the project list and timelines. It is always nice to make small progress and show action. Steve asked if Dan would speak about the state of the city budget and the amount of deferred maintenance. Dan said that the Japanese Garden is a crown jewel in the parks system and that they were not planning any reductions in its maintenance. Steve noted that the JG Advisory Council and the JG Society could be helpful with fundraising in various ways, including for seasonal gardeners.

Notes & Photos by Peggy Garber



Lisa Chen, Steve Garber & Dan Johnson
March 2, 2012 at the Japanese Garden