

FINAL REPORT: ROW PROJECT (2018-2020)

Review of Proposed Results and Anticipated Outcomes

The proposal stated four anticipated outcomes, described challenges that would be addressed, and stated project deliverables. Successes, failures, and unanticipated consequences are listed for each in the subsections below, as applicable. Language is copied and adapted from the “Leapfrog to a Shared Right of Way/Public Realms in the 22nd Century” Proposal for comparison between proposal and results.

Process for Change I

Anticipated outcome: After 12 months of engaged participation across three communities of change agents—civic and public agency leaders, academic scholars, and professionals from design, planning, and development—we understand more about the barriers to innovating in our use of the ROW, have strategies to break through some of those barriers and have moved to action.

Our team was successful in further understanding and developing methods to address barriers to innovating in the ROW. They are summarized as follows:

- Community leaders have been very receptive to collaborating on re-imagining their ROW. However, they have also remained relatively careful about pushing boundaries too far. They can be conservative in their use of the public realm as they fear failure and subsequently a lack of community support.

- This can be addressed by building capacity over time that builds trust through successful small scale projects (the Crown Hill festival night was an important success for this community)
- The university and private sector can provide limited but solid leadership and support in building community capacity. The challenge is in finding the mechanisms for working together that accommodate distinct needs (academic vs. community calendars/schedules; access to administrative structures)
 - Schedules can be addressed by working together over a longer period of time to allow projects to accommodate multiple calendars.
 - The need for funding administration can be addressed by partnering with community organizations that have built the structure for funding and leadership.

- Establishing and stewarding long term relationships between UW/ CBE design studios, private sector leaders, and communities (as modeled by Jeff Hou, Rachel Berney, Julie Johnson, and others in Landscape Architecture) would help grow the work more broadly across the region.
- The university was helpful in providing faculty leadership and participation, and in embracing student research and creativity. However, the university does not serve as an appropriate body for administering funding for projects. Liability was a significant hurdle to overcome.
 - Community organizations need to be in place for administering funding.
 - Liability for the projects needs to be re-considered by the city as it proves a hurdle for anyone from the private or academic sector from administering funding.
 - Consideration might be given by the city to create an entity for funding distribution for community projects, so that those communities without structured organizations would still have access to support.
- The private sector was helpful in providing leadership for the projects, offering expertise in the design of the public realm, and overseeing the administration of the project. The private sector is not an appropriate body for administering the funding for projects.
 - Private sector firms and individuals cannot take on liability for community projects. Nor do they have the administrative assistance to oversee fund disbursements
 - Private sector firms and individuals do have extensive expertise in accounting, budgeting, and project management and this expertise could be better leveraged in projects for communities if the right structures were put in place by the city/ region.
- The public sector leaders offered significant assistance in identifying tools that might be used as well as supporting the individual pilot projects.
 - The public sector holds the keys for most tools needed and used by communities. Seattle is particularly strong in its broad offering of tools and support for community action in the public realm.
 - The public sector, particularly the city of Seattle, has done remarkable outreach to communities and has built strong relationships with many communities through a variety of venues including the Office of Planning and Community Development and the Office of Sustainability and Environment.
 - The public sector may not have the capacity for the

workload and leadership of community projects at the scale that may well be needed. Increased capacity would allow more city employees to build relationships with communities and support broader community action.

- The structure of the public sector challenges collaborative efforts across not only city entities/offices but also with external partners as it is not clear and evident how to efficiently access appropriate individuals or offices.
- Finally an important lesson learned was defined by the challenge of the scale of experimentation and expectations regarding innovation. The private sector and community leaders wanted to approach experimentation on the ground in an actual community project. The public sector leaders were interested in exploring policy changes, revising standards, and how policies could be modified to encourage different even challenging practices. The university faculty were interested in the intersection of the community projects (many faculty partner with communities for projects) and policy modifications and impacts (applied research). In the future it would be optimal to explicitly address each of the scales of experimentation assuring that the right expertise is available at each level and that all levels are considered fully for investigation.
- To address this challenge, we encourage partnerships to designate significant time and focus on the basic framework of the project. Trust needs to be built over time and the language of the project clearly identified and shared. As we know from research, collaboration is not easy, and clear and defined goals are essential for successful partnerships.
- Further exploration in how different scales of approach might be better integrated together would benefit communities and the public. This might occur through increased coordination of pilot projects with explorations of related standards and policies. Follow up from pilot projects through design studios will be one way we continue to explore these approaches.

Process for Change II

Anticipated outcome: We have developed relationships across institutions where people are excited to collaborate on new challenges, understand how to productively engage with each other and committed to replicate this work.

- We clearly developed new relationships and learned lessons on how to more productively engage across sectors. New relationships were formed between City

leaders, academic faculty, and private sector leaders.

- However, we discovered that limited bandwidth was an obstacle to creating new partnerships, and an unintended consequence was a restructuring of meeting schedules to more intimate small group meetings between academic and City, private and City, or academic and private and city. This resulted in a more lean and effective strategy to complete pilot project work, and our group found these meetings to be the best means to productively engage with each other when limited bandwidth is a common issue from leadership within the City, private sector, and university.
- Members retained excitement for tackling new challenges in the future; however, the project was only able to focus on two pilots in a fixed period of time and as a result the team did not tackle all challenge areas nor potential projects that were identified in early planning stages. In the given timeline and context of these pilot projects, full team cohesion remains a work in progress.

Reimagining the ROW

Anticipated outcome: Looking through the lens of the larger water cycle, adjacent land uses, and future climate resiliency needs, we engaged with complex interests and regulations to push the boundaries of what is possible in the 27% of our urban landscape that is the ROW.

- In the pilot projects, we emphasized sharing with community leaders the possibilities of their right of way. This did not result in new uses or radical changes in perception, however, it did expand the options considered by communities.
- Through implementation of the pilot projects, community leaders did begin to imagine broader changes and different approaches, thus building trust and capacity for future changes.
- While the pilot projects drew on the existing tools offered by the City and SPU, alternatives were explored and considered. Specifically, attention was directed towards easier access to the tools and future potential for modifying the tools (Festival street as a designed prototype for a neighborhood for example).

Scaling

Anticipated outcome: Working with historically under-invested and under-represented communities and urban villages, we figured out how to apply and scale new concepts/tools/frameworks that can improve how the ROW serves the broader needs of the community and have evaluated projects supporting replication

- We had serious discussions on what it meant to serve

under-invested and under-represented communities and decided to pursue two distinct communities each of which represented a different type of “under-investment”. This proved to be beneficial as lessons were learned and specifically issues of community capacity were emphasized as a shared challenge.

- Our finding here was focused on the challenges for communities to access the tools available to them through the city. Capacity for project leadership and implementation was a primary challenge as were the efforts and expertise required for applying for grants, permits, and other necessary elements of projects in the right of way.
- While we did not develop new tools, we have shared our reflections with the city liaisons and efforts are being made to address them (difficulties of accessing funding, burden of applying for multiple permits, etc)

Catalyze Strategies Authorized by Legislation

Challenge addressed: Piloted strategies for broader use of the right of way authorized by legislation, but that have not been implemented at scale because of lack of awareness or other technical or social barriers.

- Neighborhood matching grant (process in which we worked with City through funding avenues that existed but not well known in the neighborhoods that we worked with)
- Permitting process was used extensively and recommendations made for streamlining application and implementation phases

Water and the Right of Way

Challenge addressed: Reimagined the traditional single purpose use of portions of the ROW related to water management.

Two MLA candidates completed related thesis projects that undertook to explore current and potential future applications of approaches to the Right of Way. Abstracts are as follows:

Connecting the Drops: managing the effects of climate change on water in Seattle

by Rachel Wells, MLA Candidate
Committee Chair: Julie Johnson, Department of Landscape Architecture

As climate change affects our water supplies, we must plan for a range of scenarios and delve into the dichotomous condition of a rainy city amid limited potable water supplies. This thesis explores how to reduce potable water demand,

reduce wastewater discharge, and maintain healthy water bodies through water reuse, decentralized/semi-centralized infrastructures, systems-oriented water management, and educational initiatives. The tools explored here are a resource for climate-adapted water management and applied to the Georgetown neighborhood as an illustrative, case-specific example across single parcel, multi-parcel, right of way, and neighborhood scales.

This thesis explores potentials of water reuse as an adaptation to decreasing available water supply in the following three parts. The first research portion considers available information on climate change, Seattle’s water system, and a case study from Melbourne, Australia that provides insight for American systems. The second design part focuses on applying these techniques in Seattle’s Georgetown neighborhood across scales: small, single lots; right-of-way; and neighborhood. The final part discusses other avenues that could further develop this work in the future as well as reflections on the thesis process and resulting potentials for water management.

Floodable Urban Landscapes for a Resilient City: Potential for the City of Seattle

by Julia Brasch, MLA Candidate
Committee Chair: Ken Yocom, Department of Landscape Architecture

As a professional project for Seattle Public Utilities, this thesis explores the potential of the urban landscape to act as an integral component of the water infrastructure system as a climate adaptation strategy that simultaneously creates dynamic, multifunctional public open spaces. As an investigation in support of SPU’s Integrated System Plan, this thesis explores the following questions:

- What can examples of floodable spaces beyond the context of Seattle teach us about how effectively they deliver functional drainage performance along with usable open space?
- How could Seattle benefit from this concept?
- What are priority locations for floodable spaces in the City of Seattle?
- How might a concept for floodable spaces in the Aurora-Licton urban village demonstrate how recreational space can work in tandem with drainage function for climate resilience, ecological health, and quality of life improvements?

While the unprecedented scale and scope of the challenges climate change presents can be overwhelming to the point of paralysis, our species’ survival on this planet requires rapid adaptation to shifting baselines. A part of that

adaptation must be a more integrated approach to urban water management. I see a great irony in the fact that water systems in the United States, as elsewhere, have largely been made invisible in the built environment, yet water is our most precious life resource. However, it is also a source of great potential destruction in both quality and quantity. Through the design and planning of our built environments, we can choose what type of relationship we have with this most powerful and life-sustaining resource: one of risk, fear, and periodic destruction, or one of great synergy and benefit. By making more room for water in our human settlements, re-designing them in a way that reflects its essential (and beneficial) role in the lives of both human and non-human beings, we have the opportunity to reconstruct our relationship with our water resources to one that is healthier and mutually beneficial for all.

Article or Presentation

Project deliverable: Increased awareness of the opportunities we have uncovered by article, presentation, or both.

- Outreach for the community events engaged multiple stakeholders as well as interested parties. For the CrownHill Festival night opening, community members were joined by UW faculty and students and interested community members from neighboring communities.
- Lessons learned and a related blog will be published by Urban@UW on our blog page.
- Lessons learned were shared with MLA thesis students informing their thesis research. This work is now published as MLA thesis at UW.

Other Lessons Learned

Describe lessons learned. The Foundation is interested in lessons drawn from successes and failures alike. What strategies worked that might be replicated elsewhere? What approaches fell short of expectations, and why?

Successes

- *Identified and obtained additional funding for pilot project work.* Collaboration with City leaders allowed direct contact to key persons for identification of available funding sources. Private leaders within the project worked with community members to apply for funding and worked with the City through the application process. Having the right people at the table allowed for funding opportunities to be matched with project needs. These connections were made during core team meetings, which were made possible from the grant. This reinforces the Bullitt Foundation's catalytic

funding strategy, where grants support projects and lead to additional support for a greater financial impact than the original donation. This also demonstrates that creating space (via funding or other authority) for untypical cross-sector meeting can accelerate desired outcomes (i.e. pilot project success) through existing mechanisms (i.e. neighborhood matching fund) that may have otherwise been unknown to communities and projects that require assistance.

Challenges

- Building evidence for change requires trust and confidence as well as data and argument. It is essential to counter resistance and adequately address the challenges ahead.
- The potential to overpromise/underdeliver was a constraint that limited the diversity impact of this project. Timelines required for impactful, lasting change in racially underrepresented communities will require longer time frames or a strong pre-existing connection within project leadership.
- Underserved communities were identified and selected for this project, advancing equity within the Greater Seattle Region; however, on the basis of racial diversity, this team learned that greater pre-existing community connections will likely be required to embark on community-partnership projects, where high trust is a requirement for impactful and lasting change.

Describe (if applicable) how this project addressed issues of Diversity, Equity, or Inclusion.

- Diversity within Communities Represented. Diversity, equity, and inclusion were important to project leadership throughout implementation; however, the opportunity to work with communities with maximum underrepresentation relative to the City of Seattle's ethnic demographics was not capitalized. Nevertheless we worked directly with communities who had experienced significant under-investments in the past.

Unanticipated Consequences

See above on partnering across public, private, academic, and community leaders.

Most Significant Accomplishment

Describe the most significant accomplishment your organization has achieved in the past year related to the issue area of your grant. We are not looking for a list of

activities, but rather a concise and thoughtful description of how your organization achieved its mission or made the world measurably better. This paragraph should be no more than 4-5 sentences and is the most important part of the final report.

In the past year the most significant accomplishment has been the learning we did as a team in change leadership. Although not as successful in catalyzing leapfrog ideas as we initially hoped, we collectively generated increased capacity and enthusiasm for finding ways to change the way we imagine the public realm. Working across multiple sectors we were able to bring the resources together to facilitate two communities in re-thinking their public realm and the role they might play in making incremental changes. While we would like to imagine we might make grand leaps, learning to make change incrementally is also critical. Nevertheless, we would continue to argue that to face the challenges ahead, we will need to make grand leaps. This project we hope is the groundwork for grander, broader, and more radical changes in our future.

Overall Health of the Organization(s)

In winter 2020 UW in Seattle was notified that their application to the Carnegie Foundation's 2020 elective Community-Engaged Campus classification had been approved. This effort, also undertaken successfully by UW Bothell and UW Tacoma, has embraced both the wide-ranging community-engaged work happening across campus and the critical opportunity of a systematic assessment of policies, practices and partnerships to examine and address areas of strength and opportunities for improvement, in support of the UW's vision to "be the world's greatest public university, as measured by impact."

The assessment for the Carnegie Community-Engaged Campus classification made plain the UW in Seattle is a community-engaged institution through its commitments to student success, faculty productivity, and institutional investment in and accountability to societal challenges. It foregrounded the campus' dedication to equity through engagement, and highlighted areas of growth for the campus, including tracking and assessment as well as faculty and student development pathways.

City of Seattle

The City of Seattle and SPU remain committed to engaging communities in improving the resilience and sustainability of the city and its urban landscape. Through multiple venues including the Office of Planning and Community Development, the Office of Sustainability and the Environment, and Seattle Public Utilities, the region is making significant strides in addressing the challenges of the 21st century with diversity and equity as a lens, climate

change as a grand challenge, and future human and environmental health and well being as a catalytic vision.

Leapfrog to a Shared Right of Way Partnership

This partnership was formed for this project and while it is unlikely to continue as a defined entity, the work and lessons learned will inform the work of each of the participants.