

## **HIGH POINT MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW**

The following is a synthesis of the minutes for five reviews of the High Point master plan conducted by the Seattle Design Commission between 15 November 2001 and 18 September 2003. For a critique of the High Point master plan, see

Pearce, Neal (2006, 24 September). High Point: Seattle's green community. The Seattle Times, Editorial/Opinion. [Available online at:  
[http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/opinion/2003271360\\_peirce24.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/opinion/2003271360_peirce24.html)].

### **Project Description**

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High Point, in West Seattle on 35th Avenue Southwest, is the third Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) redevelopment project. The goals of the project were to:

- Assure the well-being of High Point residents with new opportunities for quality housing and self-sufficiency
- Reintegrate the High Point community into greater West Seattle
- Develop a mixed-income community enhanced by an array of public amenities
- Build quality housing, safe streets, and an environmentally sustainable infrastructure

This 120-acre planned community replaces an existing low-income housing project that had 716 dwelling units. The redevelopment will contain 1,600 new dwelling units, including 400 market-rate condominiums. Because the number of low-income units will be decreased, an additional 250 low-income units will be developed off-site in conjunction with this project. In addition to housing units, the redevelopment will contain management facilities, a senior center, additional community facilities, a neighborhood clinic, and the expansion of an existing community center.

The entire site is terraced. The northern edge of the site is very steep, affording excellent views to the city. The southeast portion of the site is bounded by a steep greenbelt, which creates a natural edge for the site. A community park and elementary school are located to the southwest of the site; single-family residential areas are located to the north and the west.

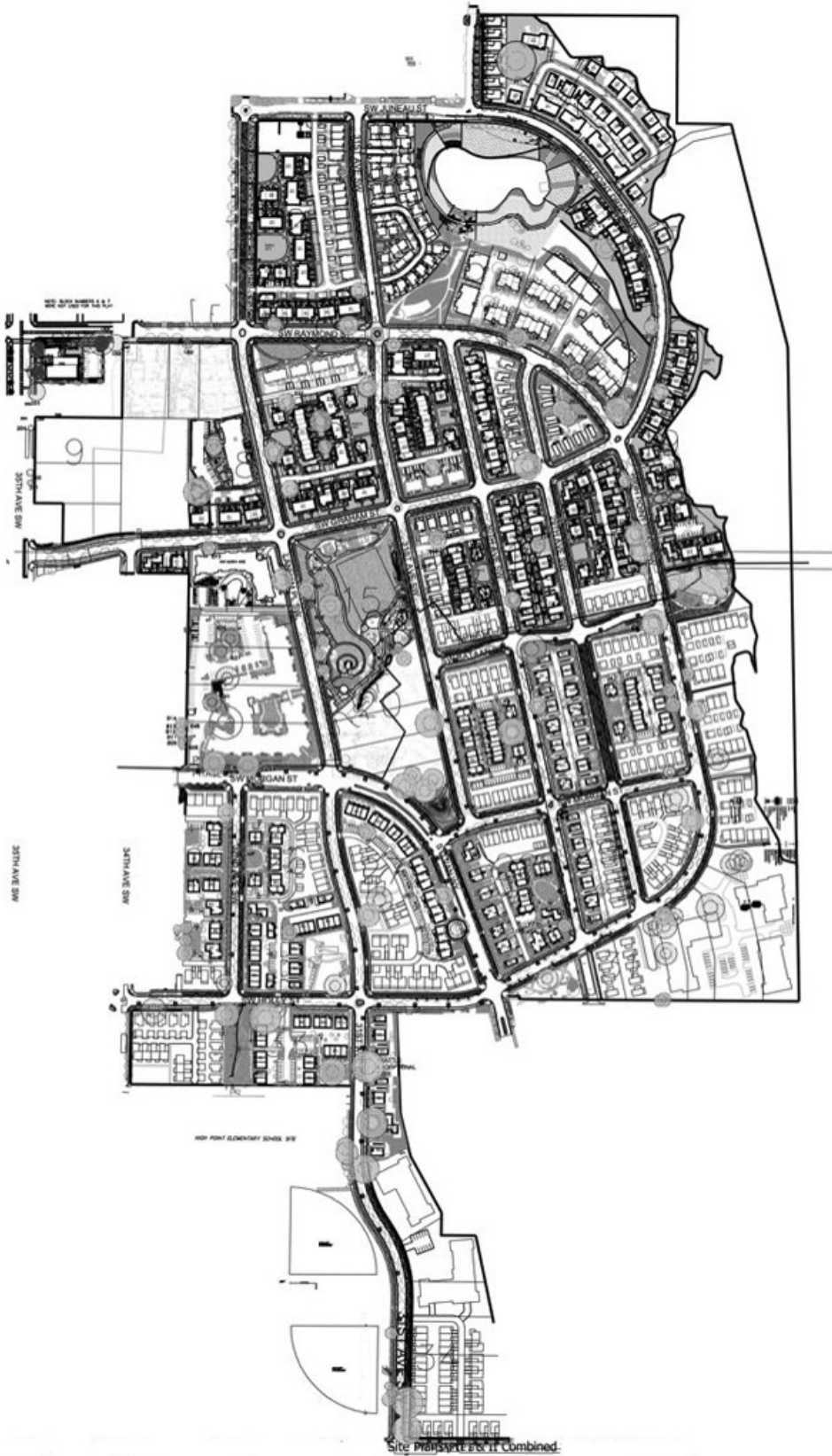
The north part of the site was developed first, with the south part of the site remaining occupied during construction of phase one.

### **Design of the Master Plan**

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Housing is typically two- to three-stories high consisting of diverse architectural styles. Higher density buildings have been pushed to the edge to maintain views. The project required rezoning from L1 to L4, with L2 at the western edge of the development. For sale and rental housing are mixed throughout the site.

This drawing indicates the location of SHA affordable housing, tax credit housing, and public housing (rendered darker) and the market rate housing (rendered lighter).



Site Plan (Site Plan, etc. Combined)

Social services include a job training facility, library, health and dental clinic, and community facilities. These services are all located in the northwest corner of the site so as to link High Point to the surrounding community. Alternatively, the heart of the redevelopment is located at the intersection of 31st Avenue Southwest and Sylvan Way.

The street grid was redesigned to connect the site with its surrounding West Seattle context. The grid is angled in response to the existing topography but reconnects with corresponding streets beyond the redevelopment site. High Point Drive Southwest will be a major street that forms an eastern edge to the community.

Open spaces are designed to create layers of public space of different scales and different degrees of intimacy. The master plan specifies a hierarchy of parks, with the larger ones being the Community Park and Stormwater Park, and the smaller ones being the three neighborhood parks and a series of pocket parks. Many of the smaller parks will not be built right away but are included in the master plan as placeholders.

The 2.8-acre Community Park is strategically located at the entry point to the neighborhood, with a large senior housing project and neighborhood center immediately adjacent. It forms the visual and activity heart of the community, providing a front door and a sense of place. The Community Park will accommodate activities ranging from special events and large gatherings to everyday use by residents, including active play of all different ages of children. The park may also have pea-patches, trails, benches, a small soccer field, and play areas. The neighborhood center will have an indoor basketball court and an outdoor half-court.

In contrast, the Stormwater Park with its retention pond and adjacent park is located at the northeast edge of the site and connects outward to a local park. This park offers a natural, quiet space, with a celebration of water, entry nodes, and linkages to the rest of the site. The play area will have primarily natural play features like a texture garden with boulders and moss, and a sunny lawn area for games and picnics. The space will also have a half-court basketball court and a children's play area. The pond is fenced but has a continuous zone of vegetation for water quality and to separate the water from the park. The area has a 20-foot grade change from the overlook to the pond.

Small pocket parks will be located on each block throughout the site for young children and other nearby residents. Alleys will provide mid-block access to parking within the block. The entrance to these alleys will be framed with carriage houses and smaller apartment buildings.

All of the parks are linked by an open space system of the streets and alleys. Major views to the north and south will be emphasized at all street ends and in the parks. This open space system will be connected by trails, with some flatter trails provided for seniors.

A streetscape hierarchy plan designates streets to the east as green, with ones to the west becoming more urban. Interior residential streets are 25 feet wide with parking on both sides, which is a deviation from standard but critical to the multiple goals of the project. Selected residential streets are 28 feet wide, and perimeter streets are 32 feet wide.

SPU is funding an artist to integrate art throughout the site. The themes deal with water and addressing the neighborhood as the high point of Seattle and as a gathering area. Eco-revelatory art will be integrated into infrastructure such as manhole covers and slotted curbs. Because the project is federally funded, no city funds are available for art.

## **Sustainable Design Features**

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Because sustainability is a primary goal of the project, the project team aggressively participated in the Build Green program. SHA viewed the site as "a clean slate" that presented an opportunity to rethink the configuration and placement of utilities in the area.

Accordingly, this redevelopment is city's first urban natural drainage system, which comprises a central part of the project's sustainable plan. It includes: having narrow streets 25-feet wide with parking on either side; having a natural drainage system throughout the site; and using porous pavement in sidewalks and in one to three of the streets, depending on underlying soils.

This system offers shallow swales (designed to look like traditional planting strips), vegetated swales (deeper than the shallow swales and integrated into interior parks), and conveyance swales (used in steeper areas). Furthermore, all sidewalks, all alleys, and some streets have porous pavement. Sylvan Way SW and 31st Ave SW will be developed as SEA streets that feed into the stormwater pond.

Deconstructing, rather than demolishing, housing units comprises another sustainable plan for the project. A pilot deconstruction project for 20 homes will explore the feasibility of this plan. Given the high percentage of families in this population dealing with respiratory issues, the design team also used "healthy homes" guidelines and sought additional funds with a goal of having 50 healthy homes in the project.

Saving a number of trees on site comprises another component of the sustainable plan. Trees that are to be preserved have fences around them with dollar values of how much the contractors will need to pay if the trees are damaged. The master plan also calls for setting aside some trees that need to be removed and using them as benches and art around the pond.

Finally, some invisible sustainable methods include enhancing the soil; installing low-pollen, native, and drought-tolerant plants; and eliminating pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

## **Design and Review Process**

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SHA will develop only half the site, or 600 units of rental housing; other non-profits will build 116 units; private developers will build another 80 affordable for-sale homes, with the remainder of the units being built at market-rate. SHA is developing the total infrastructure and all of the parks with the costs incorporated into the price of the lots that are sold to non-profits and private developers.

Mithun Architects completed the master plan and the architectural design of the 600 rental units only. The master plan identifies different prototypes for the market rate units that appropriately address the market. Design guidelines for private builders are site specific, block by block. SHA planned to have focus groups with prospective buyers to aid in creating the guidelines.

## **Relocation of Existing Residents**

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Public housing units decreased from 716 to 350, but the redevelopment is guided by federal rules and will result in no

net loss of rental housing available to residents earning 30 percent of median income or less. SHA tracks all of the existing residents and their housing locations, and an independent study by the UW Evans School will track residents for four years.

Residents had a choice about whether or not they wanted to stay within the High Point development. They could also apply for a Section 8 voucher to move to another rental location, but retain the same rent. SHA relocated people in two phases. The tenants voted on which people would move first and who would stay during the first phase. All of the families who wanted to stay were accommodated, but not enough room was available for all those in the single units.

## **Community Participation**

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SHA hopes to complete this project efficiently, recognizing lessons learned from previous developments. SHA will work with the community early and often to notify residents of the nature of the development and recognize the main concerns early in the process. SHA also hopes to identify a new name for this redevelopment project.

SHA met with residents on an ongoing basis to discuss different issues, for example what they wanted in the pocket parks and housing units. In showing residents images of different building options, the project team found that people preferred a mix of market-rate and rental housing; carriage houses with alley entrances and narrow views into the alleys; public housing that looks like the market-rate housing; and two-story buildings. They also expressed a desire to save the major trees.

The project team also worked with the community to identify ways the project can be integrated into the surrounding context since currently, the physical design clearly identifies the project as low-income. The community additionally identified traffic, neighborhood amenities, and the character of open space and public facilities as additional important considerations.

The Pomegranate Center, which has experience involving communities in building projects, will assist in getting community participation to create some site elements. For example, Pomegranate held a workshop with residents to design the fence around the market garden, and they will involve residents in helping to design and build the Community Park. This strategy of community involvement will help create a sense of community ownership of the public space.

## **Commissioner Concerns Related to Social Issues**

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How existing tenants will be relocated

Having developers manipulate the overall density so that the site does not end up as uniform as the drawings imply

Designing the parking lot next to the Community Park so it can be used for activities other than parking, for example as a plaza space

Designing the pocket parks so each one is unique and funky

Designing the alleys as gathering places for the older kids and teenagers

Lack of active spaces for older kids, such as basketball courts and hard surfaces

Lack of pedestrian safety along Sylvan Way where many senior citizens and children will be crossing and walking

Lack of pedestrian activity near the very large senior center building

Insufficient access to public transportation

## BIOGRAPHIES OF TOUR GUIDES

### **HOUSING TOUR Led by SHA Representative Brian Douglas Sullivan**

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Until recently, Brian Douglas Sullivan was a senior associate at Mithun Architects, Designers, and Planners in Seattle. While there he was the lead designer and planner for the redevelopment of two HOPE VI redevelopments—High Point in Seattle, and New Columbia in Portland. He has also worked with King County and other local housing authorities in creating redevelopment plans and strategies for their larger housing communities. He has just joined the Seattle Housing Authority where he will continue his involvement with High Point and the SHA's other HOPE VI communities.

### **Mindy Thompson Fullilove, MD**

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Mindy Thompson Fullilove is a research psychiatrist at New York State Psychiatric Institute and a professor of clinical psychiatry and public health at Columbia University. She was educated at Bryn Mawr College (AB, 1971) and Columbia University (MS, 1971; MD 1978). She is a board certified psychiatrist, having received her training at New York Hospital-Westchester Division (1978-1981) and Montefiore Hospital (1981-1982). She has conducted research on AIDS and other epidemics of poor communities, with a special interest in the relationship between the collapse of communities and decline in health. From her research, she has published *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It*, and *The House of Joshua: Meditations on Family and Place*. She has also published numerous articles, book chapters, and monographs. She has received many awards, including inclusion on “Best Doctors” lists and two honorary doctorates (Chatham College, 1999, and Bank Street College of Education, 2002). Her work in AIDS is featured in Jacob Levenson’s *The Secret Epidemic: The Story of AIDS in Black America*. Her current work focuses on the connection between urban function and mental health.

### **Sharon E. Sutton, PhD, FAIA**

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Sharon E. Sutton is a professor of architecture and urban design, adjunct professor of social work, and director of CEEDS (Center for Environment, Education, and Design Studies) at the University of Washington. She has been an architecture educator since 1975, having held positions at Pratt Institute, Columbia University, the University of Cincinnati, and the University of Michigan where she became the first African American woman in the United States to be promoted to full professor of architecture. Formerly a Kellogg National Fellow as well as a Danforth Fellow, she has degrees in music, architecture, psychology, and philosophy, all earned in New York City. She is a fellow in the American Institute of Architects, a distinguished professor of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, and an inductee in the Michigan Women’s Hall of Fame.

### **Karen Bancroft, MSW**

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Karen Bancroft is currently a fourth-year PhD student in social welfare at the University of Washington. She worked for the Veterans Administration as a case manager for homeless veterans with substance abuse and mental health issues. She is interested in the effects that neo-liberalism has had in maintaining and increasing homelessness.

### **PUBLIC SPACE TOUR Led by Community Resident Marcus Stubblefield**

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Marcus Stubblefield is a program manager at SafeFutures Youth Center, a program that provides positive support to Southeast Asian youth and families. He grew up in High Point in the 1970s in a housing unit located near the Community Center. He attended the High Point Elementary School, Denny Middle School, and Chief Stealth High School. His mother, who still works in High Point as a community nurse, had moved to the project shortly after it was built. Because of his deep roots in the community, he has known the families of the youth he serves and is able to tailor the SafeFutures program to meet their needs.

### **Susan P. Kemp, PhD**

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Susan P. Kemp is an associate professor at the University of Washington's School of Social Work. Born in New Zealand, she was educated at the University of Auckland and Columbia University, New York, where she completed her Ph.D. She has extensive experience in the design, delivery, and evaluation of community-centered services for vulnerable children, youth, and families. Her research and scholarly interests focus on public child welfare, community-based services to low-income families and communities, environmental interventions, and social work history and theory. She is co-author of *Person-Environment Practice: The Social Ecology of Interpersonal Helping* (Aldine de Gruyter, 1997), and is currently at work on a book on the history of environmental intervention in direct social work practice (forthcoming with Columbia University Press). A 2003 recipient of the University of Washington Distinguished Teaching Award, she teaches courses in introductory social work practice, advanced practice with children, youth and families, social work practice theory, and, at the doctoral level, theory/research integration.

### **Lynne C. Manzo, PhD**

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Lynne Manzo is an assistant professor of landscape architecture in the University of Washington's College of Architecture & Urban Planning. She received her doctoral degree in environmental psychology from the City University of New York. She specializes in the study of place meaning and the politics of place. Her work appears in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, the *Journal of Planning Literature*, *Journal of Architecture and Planning Research*, and *Housing Policy Debate*.

## Kiara L. Nagel, MCP

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Kiara L. Nagel is a community planner in Boston, Massachusetts having recently completed a Masters in City Planning from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her background is in youth development and city planning. Currently, she works with Root Shock Institute, Design Studio 4 Social Intervention, and other visionaries who share her delight in people and places and passion for collaborative processes that contribute to equitable, just communities.