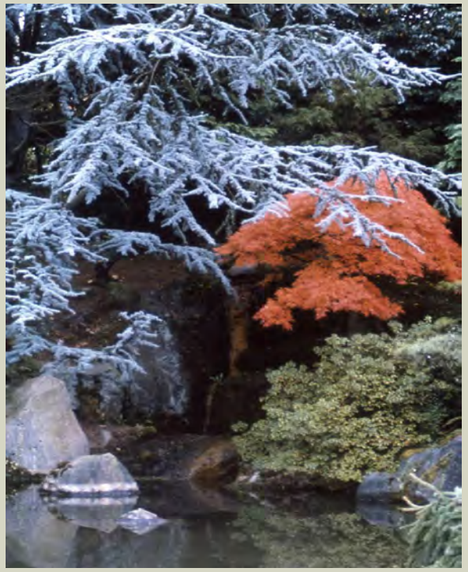

2019

Kubota Garden Master Plan Update

Seattle
Parks & Recreation

KUBOTA GARDEN
FOUNDATION

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Kubota Garden
2019 Master Plan Update

for

Seattle Department of Parks & Recreation
and the
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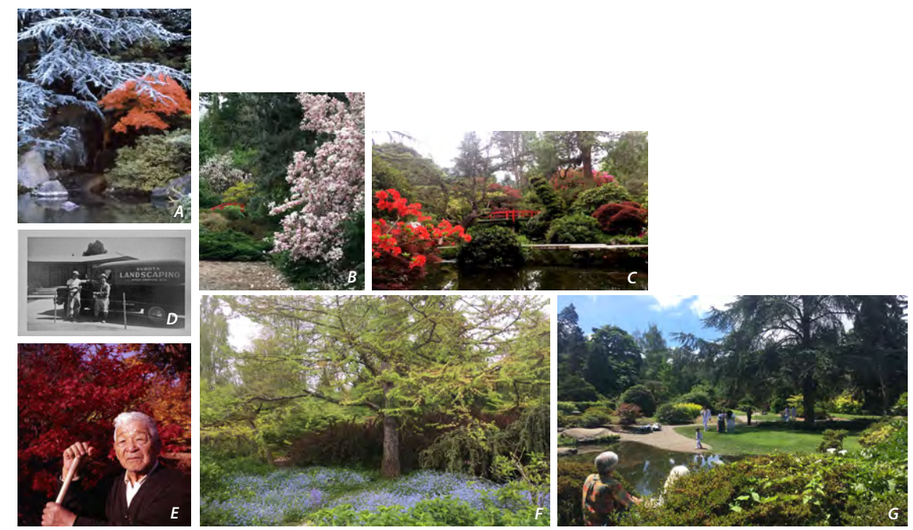

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F. *Jones & Jones (2018)* ***G.*** *Jones & Jones (2018)*

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Joy Okazaki, President

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Rainier Beach Action Coalition
Rainier Chamber of Commerce
Rainier Valley Historical Society
South Seattle Crime Prevention Council
Seattle Neighborhood Group
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Support for the Master Plan Update

KUBOTA GARDEN
FOUNDATION

The Kubota Garden exemplifies 60 years of vision, effort and dedication of the Kubota family and 30 years of commitment by the City of Seattle and Kubota Garden Foundation. One of Seattle's most beautiful and inspiring places, Kubota Garden provides a serene space for stress reduction. Visitors come to walk, commune with nature, meditate, do yoga, take photos, sit, picnic, botanize, or attend events. Because of Seattle's booming growth, places like this are in ever-increasing demand.

The Garden is a hidden gem in the diverse, urban neighborhood of Rainier Beach in southeast Seattle. More people are discovering Kubota Garden. Since 2014, visitorship has grown by 15% annually. In 2017 more than 77,000 people visited and in 2018 we reached 97,389 visitors to the Garden!

This Master Plan Update has been a collective effort of Seattle Parks, Kubota Garden Foundation, and subject matter experts from area gardens – Bloedel Reserve, Bellevue Botanical Garden, Portland Japanese Garden – educators from the University of Washington, many local community organizations, and people who know and love the garden. Its aim is to honor the legacy left by Fujitaro Kubota, accommodate growing visitorship, and sustain the garden for generations to come.

The Kubota Garden Foundation looks forward to a continued partnership with Seattle Parks and Recreation and the implementation of improvements identified in the 2018 Master Plan Update.

Joy Okazaki
President
Kubota Garden Foundation

Seattle
Parks & Recreation

July 30, 2019

I am excited and proud to present the Kubota Garden Master Plan Update. This plan revises the original garden plan that was created almost 30 years ago. The plan represents the culmination of lengthy research, reflection on the original vision of Fujitaro Kubota and most importantly, hours of engagement with community members. This project is truly a vision that reflects the beauty and greater potential of this unique open space.

Beginning in 2016, Seattle Parks and Recreation's Major Projects Challenge Fund (MPCF) has been funding projects and studies to assist communities and organizations to renovate, expand or upgrade parks or parks facilities. This initiative has empowered communities to initiate projects that enable more people to have access to our parks and to expand the life and usability of our facilities. As one of the inaugural MPCF projects, the Kubota Garden Master Plan has proven to be a worthwhile investment and exemplifies SPR's commitment to healthy people, healthy environments and strong communities.

I am inspired by Fujitaro's story and his drive to create a beautiful space that honored his Japanese roots despite a challenging climate, unfamiliar terrain and unimaginable adversity. I am thankful that Mr. Kubota not only appreciated the value of plant curation and aesthetics, but also creating spaces for quiet contemplation. Most of all, I am humbled by his intent to welcome people from all walks of life into this incredible garden.

I commend the Kubota Garden Foundation for initiating this plan update, SPR staff for their expertise and hard work on this project and for their continuous efforts to maintain the beauty of the garden, and the Seattle community for sharing your thoughts and suggestions to help mold the vision for the garden's future. Your efforts will ensure Kubota Garden will remain a treasured destination for future generations.

Sincerely,

Jesús Aguirre
Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation

I. Introduction

Need for a Master Plan Update

Kubota Garden is a beloved cultural and historic resource greeting citizens of the Seattle area and visitors from around the globe. Developed by Fujitaro Kubota and his family, the property served as their home, nursery, and display gardens for the Kubota Gardening Company between 1927 and 1987. Adjacent parcels were purchased as the opportunity arose and by the 1970's the property was 20 acres in size, allowing for the expansion of the gardens and nursery areas.

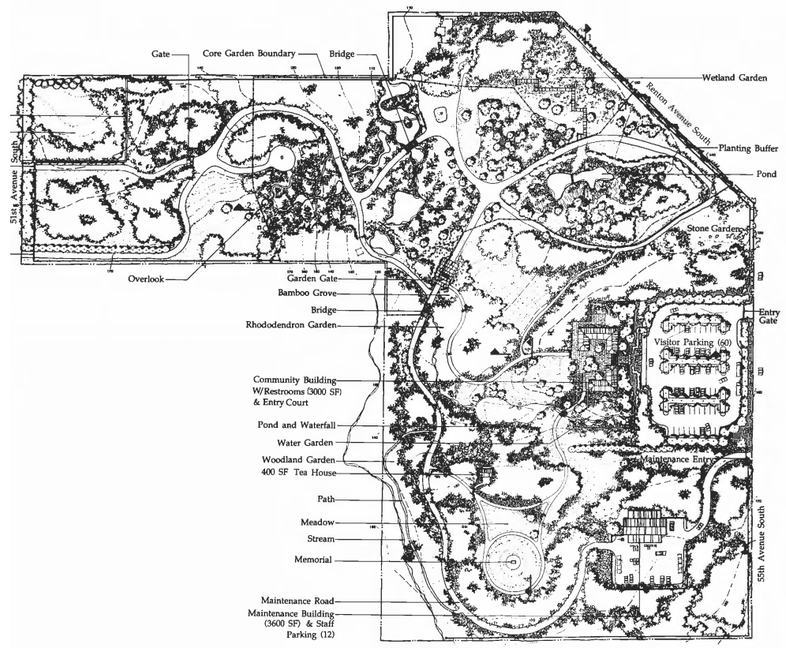
The Core Garden, a 4.5 acre portion containing the bulk of Mr. Kubota's designed gardens, was declared a Seattle Landmark in 1981 and eventually the entire 20 acre site was purchased by the City in 1987. Management of the gardens and nursery areas became the responsibility of Seattle Parks and Recreation assisted by the Kubota Garden Foundation.

Today, the garden spaces reflect the personal values of Fujitaro Kubota, who melded the landscape traditions of Japan with the character of the Pacific Northwest to create a truly unique design style. The remnant nursery spaces are unmatched in terms of their eccentric atmosphere. The natural areas that flank the Garden's north and west sides are home to a wide variety of wildlife and provide a vital unbroken vegetative backdrop from many of the Garden's viewpoints.

The landscape architecture firm of Murase Associates was hired in 1988 to develop a Master Plan for the Garden that would help guide its future for the next twenty years. Published in 1990, the Master Plan has admirably served its purpose. Seattle Parks, with support from the Kubota Garden Foundation, have implemented more than sixty projects between 1991 and 2019 to improve the safety, accessibility, and comfort of the Garden's visitors. Today, new challenges face the Garden. The Garden serves an ever-growing and diverse population of visitors. The plants continue to grow and mature. Stormwater issues are creating maintenance concerns to the Garden's ponds as well as to the ecological function of the Mapes Creek watershed. Visitation levels have increased 15% per year over the past four years, from 56,357 in 2014 to 97,389 in 2018. Parking is increasingly difficult to find. And the expectation of appropriate visitor services needs to be addressed as visitation increases.

Looking at the future of visitation, a modest 10% annual growth rate anticipates the Garden's attendance passing the 200,000 level around 2026. This is in line with the *2016 Seattle Recreation Demand Study* that predicts a 118% population increase for the Rainier Beach Residential Urban Village between 2010 and 2035. Without improvements, impacts to the visitor experience, garden maintenance, and events will be impeded. Thus, the master plan seeks to reinforce the importance of Mr. Kubota's original vision for the Garden.

Jones & Jones Architects & Landscape Architects, Mark Bourne of Windsmith Design, and Hoshide Wanzer Architects were hired in 2018 to update the 1990 Murase Master Plan. Workshops, public outreach sessions, community surveys, and presentations were held to understand the issues and explore various alternatives. The 2019 Master Plan Update provides a general timeline for implementation, staffing for informative purposes, as well as a set of guiding principles that can serve as a sounding board of collaboration for Seattle Parks (SPR) and the Kubota Garden Foundation (KGF).



Murase & Associates
Extended American Japanese Garden
1990 Master Plan

The 2018 Kubota Master Plan seeks to balance the goals as set out in the missions of both the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation with those of the Kubota Garden Foundation.

> *Seattle Parks and Recreation provides welcoming and safe opportunities to play, learn, contemplate and build community, and promotes responsible stewardship of the land. We promote healthy people, a healthy environment, and strong communities.*
>
> —
>
> *The Kubota Garden Foundation (founded in 1988) is a non-profit corporation that was established to support, enhance, and perpetuate the Kubota Garden within the spirit of Fujitaro Kubota and son Tom Kubota.*

In that both SPR and KGF seek to support the Garden, the onus on the planning team was to craft a specific mission statement for the Garden that captures both the spirit of Fujitaro Kubota and community stewardship. The following is the mission for Kubota Garden:

Kubota Garden Mission

To respect, curate, and grow Kubota Garden for the benefit of local and global communities.

The Mission Statement is broken down into its key components: RESPECT, CURATE, GROW—then analyzed and distilled to understand how to address the future challenges and opportunities for the Garden.

Respect | 尊敬 (sonkei)

Fujitaro Kubota emigrated from Japan seeking new opportunities in the United States. Through hard work and success, Fujitaro sought a new home for his landscaping business. In South Seattle he found a swampy five-acre parcel with a tumbling creek and was inspired by the potential. Over the next sixty years, the family, business, gardens and nursery continued to prosper, and the property eventually expanded to its current twenty acres.

The gardens laid out by Mr. Kubota were thoughtful and done over time; elements from the garden (rocks, plants, etc.) were available for sale and could be removed at any time and replaced with new materials. His eye for plants that served specific roles (background, feature, character) as well as for texture and color, are still apparent in the Garden and complement the remnant nursery areas interspersed between the designed gardens. The history of the gardens, nursery areas, and the Kubota Family remain evident today.

As such, the future evolution of Kubota Garden must honor and respect its history and Fujitaro Kubota's intent, as described by John J. Reddin in the Seattle Times (December 6, 1968, p22):

> *"... Kubota Senior's dream is to leave some enduring work, a memorial that will not only beautify the community, but will promote goodwill and give Americans a better appreciation of the culture of Japan."*

Respect for the Garden must also focus on thoughtful maintenance. Early photographs of the Japanese Garden, the Necklace of Ponds, and the Mountainside show a level of maintenance that reflected Fujitaro's standard for plant shaping and care. Some 80 years later, the trees and shrubs have grown far beyond what anyone would have imagined possible, obstructing desired viewpoints into, and of, the various gardens. A level of selective "enduring" maintenance that matches what Mr. Kubota had set out to achieve should be the goal.

Curate | 管理 (kanri)

Fujitaro, a self-taught designer, adapted garden styles from his native Japan in his Seattle design work. He took available Pacific Northwest materials, such as boulders and native plants as well as available non-native plants, and combined them with traditional Japanese garden elements for his clients' gardens. His own gardens were more Japanesque in character but were, first and foremost, a collection of landscaped spaces displaying his company's skill set. As his individual gardens grew and evolved, they became spaces to be shared, experienced and enjoyed with friends and the community.

Curation of the Garden should be paramount. Curation, by definition, involves assembling, managing, and presenting stories and collections. For example, the Garden lay fallow between 1942 and 1945 when the Kubota Family was held at Camp Minidoka as part of the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Upon the family's return, the Kubotas rebuilt and restored the Garden. There are myriad ways to curate the Kubota story, the plants collections, garden spaces, slopes, and waters of the Garden. Curation should be inclusive and inspirational.

Further, visitor education at Kubota Garden can encompass topics such as the Garden and Kubota Family history, Fujitaro's sensitivity to individual natural elements of the site, the Japanese immigrant experience, habitat and environmental education, and more. As such, curators of Kubota Garden include the gardening staff and volunteers, the Kubota Garden Foundation and Garden Committee members, Garden tour guides, and Garden planners and designers. The goal of curators at Kubota Garden should be to: create an inventory of all the items in the landscapes, know the history of the landscape, share this information, and make decisions about how to preserve the landscapes for future generations. Touching again on Mr. Kubota's message of goodwill and cultural appreciation, the Garden serves as a de-facto outdoor classroom, a place of contemplation, and gardens representative of change, resilience, and continuity.

Grow | 成長 (seichou)

Grow has several meanings here. First, the growth of plants - the Garden's vegetation and viewsheds will always be in a constant state of flux. The Kubota-intended viewpoints and viewsheds need to be identified and vegetation maintained where feasible. Secondly, as the garden continues to grow in popularity and attendance, identifying areas for new garden expansion and addressing the evolving needs of visitors will need to be carefully considered. Any new elements should focus on meeting visitor needs and expectations, ease of maintenance, accessibility, and respecting the garden's character.

Growth does not mean overlooking or removing the past. Restoration and preservation of the existing Core Garden to a 'Period of Significance' is essential to maintaining its original character, purpose, and educational capabilities in those areas. The Garden has been called a lightly-used "gem" in Southeast Seattle. It will continue to survive the challenges of time through a light-touch of maintenance and limited areas of expansion.

Jones & Jones (2018)

I. Introduction

For the Benefit of:

"Every garden is different, but the feeling you get is very important. You can forget your stress, relax, and just enjoy. Dad (Fujitaro) used to say that 'People work in the office all day, then come home and relax in their garden. Forget everything'."

- Tom Kubota, Summer 1992

Kubota Garden is an ideal place to reconnect, both spiritually and physically, with nature in a tranquil setting. It is a large passive garden with limited visitor services – it is not an active recreation park. The Garden has been and always should be a place that is relaxing, healing, peaceful, and contemplative. Visitor amenities should be provided in an unobtrusive yet respectful way appropriate to the Garden to help facilitate those peaceful connections.

The benefit of the Garden can be interpreted in a variety of ways: a place for introspection; a natural habitat for plants and animals; place for education and exploration; a place for memory building and stewardship; and a place that positively impacts the neighborhood's economic development and property values.

Creating opportunities to educate visitors about the designed gardens, the plants, Mapes Creek watershed, Kubota family history, immigration, open spaces, events, neighborhood, and habitats, strengthens the benefit that the Garden extends to the community which it serves. Further, educational messaging about the history of the Garden in the context of the Japanese immigration experience promotes goodwill among the local and global communities that experience the challenges and benefits of diversifying neighborhoods and cities.

Local and Global Communities

Situated in an increasingly diverse area of the Seattle Metropolitan Region – including Rainier Beach, parts of unincorporated King County, Renton, and Tukwila – Kubota Garden experiences visitation from a wide range of cultural groups. Over 75% of the population in Rainier Beach are people of color, far exceeding the state average, and making it one of the most diverse areas in Seattle and in the state[1]. According to the last census, 31% of Rainier Beach residents identified as black, 30% identified as Asian, 23% identified as white (non-Hispanic), 11% identified as Hispanic, and 3% identified as mixed. Further, the average median income in Rainier Beach is about $57,100, well below the state average. More than 25% of area households live below the poverty level. Parts of unincorporated King County, Renton and Tukwila, which lie within a 1/2 mile of the garden, are also very diverse, with 68% people of color, and a median income of about $55,100 that is similarly below the state average[1]. Meeting the needs of the broadly ranging socio-economic strata of the surrounding area should guide the development and planning of Kubota Garden.

[1] "The Demographic Statistical Atlas of the United States." King County Overview, 2018, statisticalatlas.com/county/Washington/King-County/Overview.

Jones & Jones (2018)

"I think that while we are here, we do what we can. Then the next generation comes along and does what they can. There is more to do and, if we strive for it, we will get it done."

Tom Kubota
Summer 1992

"I feel the garden is ready to go to the next level and start considering what is most appealing visually as opposed to keeping people on a narrow path."

Allan Kubota
2018

Through surveys carried out at two Open Houses at the Garden in June 2018, we determined that while 15% of the visitors those days were from the immediate neighborhood and 38% were from the Seattle area, these locals were well acquainted with Kubota Garden and were frequent visitors, with some coming to the Garden more than twenty times a year. Thus, the primary audience for Kubota Garden is the local community. According to a study by the Conservation Study Institute, program sustainability can be bolstered by building meaningful, intentional relationships [with community groups], using inclusive interpretation and histories, and making thematic interpretive connections across sites and time. To effectively reach the desired audience and encourage their representation at Kubota Garden, one should consider planning for these elements[2]. Continuing to promote the Garden as a welcoming and peaceful place allows the message that "culture is welcome here" to thrive. Doing so honors Fujitaro's intent to promote appreciation of the culture of Japan and also extends appreciation of cultures from across the globe by providing a venue for cultural exchange.

Kubota Garden, as a public amenity, stimulates the development of a common language that reaches beyond cultural barriers and fosters stewardship and appreciation for beautiful open spaces. Maintaining public access to the Garden, especially by the local community, is paramount to fostering cultural appreciation. The beauty and tranquility of the Garden draws diverse groups to celebrate and enjoy themselves. This multi-cultural use and promoting accessibility throughout the Garden is imperative to honoring Fujitaro's original intent.

[2] McCown et al. (2012). Engaging New and Diverse Audiences in the National Parks: An Exploratory Study of Current Knowledge and Learning Needs. *The George Wright Forum*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 272-284.

Jones & Jones (2018)

II. Planning Process

Kyōryoku - Collective Effort

The planning process for the Kubota Garden Master Plan Update involved a wide range of focus groups and public involvement activities that led to the recommendations found within this report. The process was an effort of balancing the needs and desires of the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, the Kubota Garden Foundation, and the Rainier Beach neighborhood, with special efforts made to recruit public participation in the planning process.

Kyōryoku, or collective effort, was the theme that drove the planning process. Relying on collective knowledge, wisdom, passion, vision, goals, experience, and expertise has been the guiding force in developing a master plan update that is responsive to plants, wildlife and legacy.

Goals of the planning process were to identify the challenges that the garden faces, the desires of the visitors and stewards of the garden, the garden's needs in order to continue to serve its visitors, and the guiding vision that will allow the garden to flourish for the next 20 to 30 years.

The planning meetings for the Kubota Garden Master Plan Update included:

- October 25, 2017 – Master Plan Update Kickoff Meeting
- January 24, 2018 – Design Team Kickoff Meeting
- May 7-9, 2018 – Kubota Garden Master Plan Update Workshop
- June 17, 2018 – Open House
- June 23, 2018 – Open House
- July 16, 2018 – Planning Team Internal Review
- July 18, 2018 – Planning Team, Project Steering Committee (PSC) Preview
- July 25, 2018 – Kubota PSC Meeting
- July 31, 2018 – Kubota Garden Committee Meeting
- August 14, 2018 – Planning Team PSC Preview
- August 29, 2018 – Kubota PSC Meeting
- September 11, 2018 – Parks ProView
- September 22, 2018 – Kubota Foundation Annual Meeting
- October 2, 2018 – Planning Team Internal Review
- October 8, 2018 – Kubota Garden Foundation Board Meeting
- October 13, 2018 – Kubota Garden Public Meeting
- October 23, 2018 – Kubota Garden Committee Meeting
- November 1, 2018 – Planning Team PSC Preview
- November 8, 2018 – Kubota PSC Meeting
- January 21-25, 2019 – Project Steering Committee
- January 22, 2019 – Parks ProView

Seeking Input

Workshops

Held over three days, approximately 30 participants attended each of the nine sessions held. Participants included members of the consultant team, representatives from the client team, and invited guests from a range of garden- and community-related fields. The objective of these workshops was to highlight all potential issues, questions, concerns, garden improvements, and long-range goals. As such, workshop sessions were broken down by the following topics:

- Circulation and Accessibility
- Events, Programs, and Scheduling
- Security
- The Site
- Sustainability, Vegetation, and Wildlife
- The Garden
- The Garden, Partners & Stakeholders
- Visitor Center: Building Program
- Visitor Center: Services, Admission, and Entrance Control

Discovery Workshops
Jones & Jones

Discovery Workshops
Jones & Jones

Key takeaways from the Workshops included:

- Improve accessibility
- Improve Garden relationship to neighboring communities
- Provide wayfinding
- Provide amenities that improve visitor experience both for visitors and events; restrooms and parking are the key limiting factors in serving existing levels of visitation as well as expanding visitation and events
- Security primarily needed in response to break-ins in the parking area and illegal dumping along 55th Avenue South
- Natural areas are an important counterpoint to the formal Garden areas, in terms of ecological value and aesthetic backdrop
- Garden preservation should balance needs of visitor safety, historic plant materials, and designed spaces
- Core Garden area should be maintained to original design intent; new developments should be complementary
- Situated in the most ethnically and economically diverse zip code in Seattle, the Garden should be preserved as a place for community gathering; partnerships and stakeholders should be identified in order to sustain the Garden

Open Houses

Two open houses were held at the Garden on Sunday June 17, 2018 and Saturday June 23, 2018 to capture visitor input. Information about the Master Plan Update was shared and 408 visitors were given a brief survey as it related to their frequency of Garden visits, the comfort in navigating the Garden, and any other comments they wished to share. A majority of the comments related to wayfinding, restrooms, and refreshments. These findings are discussed in greater detail in Section Seven: Garden Needs.

Project Steering Committee Meetings

The purpose of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) was to utilize a panel of experts that would be involved in reviewing the planning and decision-making efforts of the Master Plan Updates. The PSC was composed of community and botanic garden-related entities that met four times throughout the planning period to provide perspective, feedback, and expertise. Major milestones in the planning and design process were vetted by the PSC prior to their review by Seattle Parks ProView and the subsequent development of plans.

Public Meeting & Survey

One public meeting was held in mid-October 2018 to provide an opportunity for public engagement in reviewing an early draft of the master plan update. This meeting was attended by approximately 40 people who were able to participate in a presentation of the current planning decisions and direction, as well as given an opportunity to connect with the consultant and client teams following the presentation to provide feedback.

Following the public meeting, the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation distributed an online survey that was live for six weeks, allowing a greater breadth of the community to share their input on the Master Plan Update process. These findings are discussed in the visitation section of the Site Analysis, and can be found in the appendix of this report.

Opportunities and Issues

Results of the dynamic planning process coalesced to form an in-depth understanding of the needs and potential of Kubota Garden. These results are further discussed in Section Five: Garden Needs, and in Section Six: Preferred Concept.

Public Meeting
Jones & Jones

Open House at the Garden
Kubota Garden Foundation

III. History of Kubota Garden

"I had not been trained as a gardener. After finishing grammar school, I went to the night class of a supplementary training school where I learned only a little introductory botany. But American gardeners didn't even know about the three ingredients of fertilizers and about which plants grow in sun and which don't. I returned to Japan three times to study gardening which wasn't easy. In Kyoto, I visited professional gardeners and asked many questions, but they wouldn't give me the most important part of their know-how. It was like the art of the tea ceremony and traditional dance in Japan which are taught in the rigid old family system. I knew a man in South Park - Ryotaro Nishikawa from Okayama Prefecture. His father loved gardens and so he learned about trees and plants from his father. He was particularly good at cultivating pine trees and came to help me whenever he had time. I would say he was my only gardening teacher, and no one else. Dozens of times I got stuck and was in trouble. Then I went to the woods and prayed to the gods for help." [3]

The Kubota Family

Fujitaro Kubota was born in 1880, in the village of Kubokawa in Kochi Prefecture on Shikoku Island. The eldest son of his family, Fujitaro would have been expected to inherit the position of family-head with the duty to carry on the family business. He had attended an agricultural school and was married with two daughters when he immigrated to the United States. Although his wife was able to follow him to Seattle, their daughters chose to remain in Japan with his parents.

Fujitaro emigrated from Japan in 1907, working in Hawaii, San Francisco, and then Washington State. In 1909 he was employed at a saw mill in Selleck, Washington and in 1911 sent for his wife to join him. They moved to Seattle in 1914 and Fujitaro became the proprietor of the Taft Hotel. He was soon managing three properties in Seattle over the next several years, including an apartment complex on Alder Street that the Kubota family would eventually own. Fujitaro's rental business declined substantially during the 1920-1921 economic recession. It was during this time that he worked for friends in the gardening business. This work was apparently both engaging and successful, as Fujitaro established the Kubota Gardening Company in 1923 and rented a lot near his apartment complex on Alder Street to serve as a base of operations. Fujitaro promoted himself in the Seattle Times classified ads section as a Japanese-garden specialist, but it is also apparent from photographs that he worked in a variety of garden design styles.

As Fujitaro began his business, we know that he had worked with other Japanese-Americans in Seattle. But the details of his practical training remain obscure. From his own statement, Fujitaro was unsuccessful in his attempts to receive training in Japan, and pursued opportunities to learn from fellow Seattlite Ryotaro Nishikawa, who he described as his only real teacher. Fujitaro did not benefit from the type of long-term direct study as an apprentice that was, and still is, the predominant mode of training as a garden designer in Japan. Thus it is most accurate to describe Fujitaro as "self-taught." Yet, he had an exceptional commitment to mastering the art, and in many cases he seemed to benefit from an intuitive sense for the details of Japanese construction. The original footings for the Heart Bridge are an excellent example of this: seen in early photographs, the bridge rests on squared-off abutments made from stacked stone, while the footings at mid-stream are larger in dimension than the posts they support. For someone familiar with Japanese construction, these details are ubiquitous, familiar without consideration as standard construction details. Growing up in Kubokawa it is likely that Fujitaro would have had exposure to these types of construction practices. The combination of such general experience with his diligent study of garden details were key to his success as a garden designer. The connections between the gardens built by Fujitaro, and the typology of gardens laid out in contemporaneous Japanese garden manuals, is explored in the appendix.

Fujitaro Kubota, inspired by the gurgling potential of the creek running through the property, purchased five acres of cleared swampy land in the south Seattle neighborhood of Rainier Beach in 1927. He quickly relocated the Kubota Gardening Company from its small lot on Alder Street. The earliest photograph of the property (below) shows a house and a small structure; there are patches of standing water, and there is a small area of newly planted nursery stock.

Panoramic photo of the 5-acre parcel looking southwest from the corner of Renton Avenue and 55th Avenue South; Fujitaro Kubota and son Tom in the foreground,
Source: KGF Photo #1517, ca. 1927

[3]Interview with Fujitaro Kubota, *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America*, by Kazuo Itô. Seattle: Executive Committee for Publication of Issei, Japanese Community Service, 1973, page 885.

The Kubota Gardening Company 1927-1942

During the late 1920's, the Kubota Gardening Company employed multiple maintenance and installation crews. Kubota was hired in 1929 to install the landscaping for the Rainier Club. Fujitaro regularly advertised his business in the classified section of the Seattle Times. Photographs in the Kubota Garden Foundation archive include staged photoshoots showing his residential garden work with Kubota "lawn signs" to promote the business.

The clients of the Kubota Gardening Company share a residential garden style built upon a set of features: a pond with rocky banks, crossed by a bridge, set against a backdrop of a hill set with boulders. This same type of garden, named the "hill-and-pond style", was widely known from Japanese gardens manual and public gardens at World's Fairs, like the garden in the Japanese pavilion at the 1873 Vienna Universal Exposition.

The landscaping market remained strong from the onset of the stock market crash of 1929 through the mid-1930's. The majority of photographs of the Garden from the early 1930's reveal Fujitaro's conversion of the unnamed creek (now Mapes Creek) to create the property's first Japanese Garden - a series of pools today called the "Necklace of Ponds." The Heart Bridge is visible and shows that the footing at each end of the bridge was carefully constructed in the style common in Japan, with the stream bank reinforced by a stacked stone wall at each bridge footing.

The impact of the Great Depression slowed garden work substantially and the Kubota family faced considerable financial hardship. The family moved from Alder Street into the house on the property in 1940. The Company's idle crews were employed working on the property's gardens and nursery areas, but eventually Fujitaro cut back on staffing. In 1936, with his sons Tak and Tom, work began on the new Japanese Garden - an existing spring-fed pond was dredged and expanded, and the dredging spoils were used to build the hillside that serves as a backdrop; boulders were added, and the bridges and stepping stones were also placed.

Business recovered in the late 1930's and Fujitaro bought three adjacent parcels of land. Further development of the Garden was interrupted in February 1942 by the forced relocation of Japanese-Americans to internment camps. The Kubota family was interned at Minidoka, with the exception of sons Tom and Tak. Tom was drafted into the Army in January 1942. Tak served as a civilian instructor in the Army Intelligence Language School initially in Minnesota, then near Monterey, California. Fujitaro took on the role of head gardener at Minidoka. He oversaw the building of gardens outside of his barracks and took responsibility for a garden built at the camp headquarters. At the end of the war, Tom was allowed to visit his family, brought news of their garden in Seattle and encouraged the family to return home and re-start the landscaping business. The family had left the property in the care of a trusted tenant with instructions not to touch the vegetation. Thus the family returned to a site verging on a return to wilderness, with carefully pruned trees overgrown and lawns turned to weed.

Post World War II

The internment permanently changed the Kubota Gardening Company. Post-war, Fujitaro and Tom rebuilt the business and focused solely on installation using a single crew of between 8 to 10 workers. The family also began the long process of restoring the Garden to its former appearance. Tom Kubota described his father going at the weeds in the roads with a sickle, then tackling the gardens section by section, working to get weeds and overgrown plants to a state that was "good enough", and then moving on. (Tom Kubota video 1, 1:40~1:50)

By the early 1950's the property was once again a proper nursery and base for business operations. The Kubota family negotiated access to railroad rights-of-way in Snoqualmie Pass and would periodically rent a crane to select stones and boulders for use in clients' gardens. The road system within the nursery began to take its final shape during this period. By the end of the 1950's the Kubota Gardening Company had a roster of prominent clients, including the Japanese Garden at the Bloedel estate (now the Bloedel Reserve), and Seattle University.

The donation of a teahouse from the Tokyo Municipal government and Seattle's upcoming Century 21 World's Fair in 1962 sparked discussion of building a new Japanese Garden somewhere in the Washington Park Arboretum. It was designed by Juki Iida, a garden designer from Tokyo who came to Seattle to supervise construction between 1959 and 1960. While preparing for the installation, Iida and Fujitaro met to discuss the project, but differences in personality led Iida to hire William (Bill) Yorozu and Dick Yamasaki, two gardeners who had started their careers working for Fujitaro.

Heart Bridge Footing Construction Detail
Source: KGF Photo #571, dated 1960

Heart Bridge Footing Construction Detail
Source: KGF Photo #538, dated 1975

III. History of Kubota Garden

The Arboretum's new Japanese garden spurred Fujitaro to begin construction on his largest and most personal garden - a garden that showcased his decades of design acumen. Fujitaro directed his son Tom and their landscape crew as they built the Mountainside and revised the Necklace of Ponds throughout 1961. Archival images from before, during, and after installation show that the hillside had been used for nursery stock, but was otherwise an unremarkable slope. The addition of over 400 tons of rock and the installation of a water-recirculation pump created a series of cliffs and waterfalls within a large, dynamic vista. Photographs from this period show the open vistas and an expansive scene framed by tall Douglas fir trees, with a viewing "platform" situated at the lowest of the ponds along Mapes Creek.

By the end of 1964 the road system revisions were complete, concrete curbs added, and the Tanyosho Junction parking area and turn-around installed. Clients could now drive through the nursery grounds, selecting plants for their project - in effect Seattle's only "drive-through" stroll garden.

Two additional parcels were purchased in 1969 and the property reached its current size of 20 acres. Fujitaro continued to refine the Garden into the early 1970's. Tom and grandson Allan, and their landscape crew built the Moon Bridge and the "Lily Pads" within the Necklace of Ponds around 1970 with input from Fujitaro. Some of the trees and shrubs in the Necklace's upper ponds were thinned to create and improve views into that area. This work was done to entice visitors into that area of the Garden.

Kubota Garden Select Project List 1927-1973

1930	Log Entry Gate and roadway (Gate gone by 1946)
1930	Japanese Garden (now the Necklace of Ponds)
1930s	Lawn area with Planting Island (Planting Island gone by 1956)
1930s	Rockery Wall Showcase (gone by late 1950's)
1930s	Lily Pond (now the pool in the Stroll Garden)
1930s	Rose Garden (gone by 1946)
1937	Japanese Garden
1950s	Spring Pond
1962	Mountainside
1964	Road system completed
1972	Moon Bridge and Concrete 'Lily Pads'

Lily Pond with the Rockery Wall Showcase and Entry Gate in background
Source: KGF Photo #1983, dated 1935

Transition from Private Garden to Public Park

Fujitaro Kubota passed away on February 6, 1973. The family kept the landscaping business going, yet a sewer assessment in the mid-1970's posed a significant financial challenge. The Seattle Times reported on March 23, 1975 that initial conversations of selling the property to Seattle Parks began in 1973. The family was also in talks with developers from 1975 into the early 1980's. With word of a potential development of the Garden, the Rainer Beach community made preservation of Kubota Garden its primary Bicentennial project in 1975. Neighborhood activism and negotiations with a potential developer led to the five acre Core Garden portion of the property becoming a Seattle historic landmark in 1981. Neighbors continued to fight development and pressed the City to purchase the property. The Kubota Gardening Company moved off the property in 1987 when the City of Seattle finalized the purchase of the 20-acre property for park use.

Seattle Parks commissioned Murase Associates in 1987 to create the Kubota Garden Planning Study, completed in March 1990 and adopted by the Seattle City Council. This study gave Seattle Parks and the Kubota Garden Foundation the guidelines for recommended improvements to the Garden. Between 1990 and 2019, Seattle Parks and the Kubota Garden Foundation implemented more than sixty projects designed to turn the once private property into a public garden, expand the visitor experience, and improve maintenance of the Garden.

"My hope is the garden is kept as a garden, not a park. There is a difference between the two. A garden has mystery…In a garden, you go from turn to turn and from view to view and then a little space becomes a large space for you."

Tom Kubota
Summer 1992

The Garden's transition from private ownership to public park required site alterations in terms of public use and safety, maintenance, and securing the property. The garden staff's first task was to limit vehicle traffic into the garden and to provide a logical, pleasing, and accessible way to stroll through the garden spaces. Old nursery stock areas were identified, miscellaneous trees and shrubs were transplanted, and new turf areas were developed. New garden areas such as the Tom Kubota Stroll Garden, the Entry Gate and Ornamental Wall, Ishigaki Stone Wall and Terrace Overlook structure were created to form a cohesive garden experience for visitors.

A decision in 2002 to create a formal entrance for the Garden also served as the catalyst to implement other major Parks improvements with a focus on the visitor entry experience. This experience began at the corner of 55th Ave S & Renton Ave S, through the parking lot, to and through the entry gates, past the Spring Pond, and ending at the entrance to the Core Gardens. Parks, with Foundation support, also built a new maintenance facility for garden staff that included crew quarters, nursery, material bunkers, and a garage for large equipment.

Senior Gardener Don Brooks made several major contributions to underdeveloped and underutilized areas of the garden including the Terrace, Stone Garden, and Maple Woods. In those areas he followed the Kubota's general design aesthetic by incorporating similar plantings with the supplement of dramatic fall color. These areas use a denser planting style to keep the large number of visitors on the paths and to minimize maintenance and irrigation.

Seattle Parks and Recreation - Kubota Garden Selected Project List 1990-2019

1990	Kubota Garden Master Plan
1991	Heart Bridge replacement
1992	Perimeter fencing on 51st Ave S*
1992	Perimeter fencing on 55th Ave S*
1994	Kubota Terrace
1995	Irrigation system
1996	New Parking Lot
1997	Moon Bridge restoration
1997	Information Kiosk**
1999	Pumphouse replacement
2001	Tom Kubota Stroll Garden** (designed by Tom Kubota and Allan Kubota)
2002	Material Bunkers
2002	House Demolition*
2004	New shed
2004	Tsutakawa Entry Gate** and Perimeter Wall* (between 2014-2019)
2004	Accessible Paths
2004	Infrastructure improvements
2004	Symposium Garden at entry
2004	Stone Sign/Garden Marker at 55th Ave S. & Renton Ave. S
2005	Re-build Kiosk
2005	Maintenance Facility & Nursery
2006	New railing at Heart Bridge
2007	Bell structure
2009	Woodland Trail
2009	Perimeter Wall - south section
2011	Mapes Creek culvert restoration
2011	Pond restoration
2012	Stone Garden (designed by Don Brooks)
2012	Perimeter Wall - south extension
2012	Perimeter Wall - north extension
2015	Terrace Overlook*
2016	Maple Woods (designed by Don Brooks)
2018	Perimeter Wall - north extension
2019	Renton Avenue Perimeter Wall Garden (designed by Allan Kubota)

"I came to the Kubota Garden with a lifetime passion for the natural world and mountain travel in particular. Plants, stone, water, and Japanese gardens were of great interest to me. I discovered a magnificent garden hidden under a thicket of overgrown plantings with minimal identifiable approaches to view them."

Don Brooks

Kubota Garden Senior Gardener from 1987-2019

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) and Kubota Garden Foundation (KGF) have built an essential partnership focused on improving the Garden. Seattle Parks took the lead on many projects, upgrades & improvements, and took on major maintenance and infrastructure challenges listed to the left. Parks also worked together with KGF for to complete several projects (*), and KGF funded and led some projects with garden staff support(**).

Kubota Garden reflects the dynamic balance of two forces: preservation and continuity of the Kubota style on one hand with making the Garden safe and enjoyable for visitors. This balance has been achieved through the transfer of practice and philosophy from generation to generation. This can be seen in the 32-year relationship between Seattle Parks, the Kubota Garden Foundation, and the collaborative works jointly completed by retired Parks' Senior Gardener Don Brooks and both Tom and Allan Kubota, along with the active Kubota family participation with the Foundation. Such a collaboration is critical to the ongoing success of the Garden.

IV. Site Analysis

The purpose of a site analysis is to establish a baseline of existing conditions within and outside of Kubota Garden that identify areas of importance, areas in need of improvement, and areas to protect and/or restore. This will assist in the establishment of goals to improve the visitor experience and maintain the historic character of the garden.

Neighborhood Context

Situated in the Rainier Beach neighborhood in Southeast Seattle, Kubota Garden is surrounded by single-family residential and designated open space areas. The Garden is near the border of zip codes 98118 and 98178, and data from within these two boundaries was used to describe the neighborhood character and quality.

Demographics

Over 75% of the population in Rainier Beach are people of color, far exceeding the state average, and making it one of the most diverse areas in Seattle and in the state. According to the 2010 census, 31% of Rainier Beach residents identified as black, 30% identified as Asian, 23% identified as white (non-Hispanic), 11% identified as Hispanic, and 3% identified as mixed. (Statistical Atlas, 2018)

The average median income in Rainier Beach is about $57,100, well below the state average. More than one quarter of area households live below the poverty level. High poverty and incomes below $35,000 are associated with shorter life expectancy and sedentariness. (Statistical Atlas, 2018)

Although Kubota Garden is within Seattle's city limits, the Garden also serves parts of unincorporated King County and Tukwila, which lie within a 1/2 mile of the garden. This area is similarly diverse, with 68% people of color, and a median income of about $55,100, again below the state average. (Statistical Atlas, 2018)

Land Use and Zoning

Land parcels adjacent to Kubota Garden are comprised of privately-owned single family homes and publicly-owned natural areas. Other land uses in the neighborhood include two churches, Emerson Elementary School, Rainier Beach Community Club, Hutchinson Community Center, Chinook Beach Park, Beer Sheva Park, and Lakeridge Park.

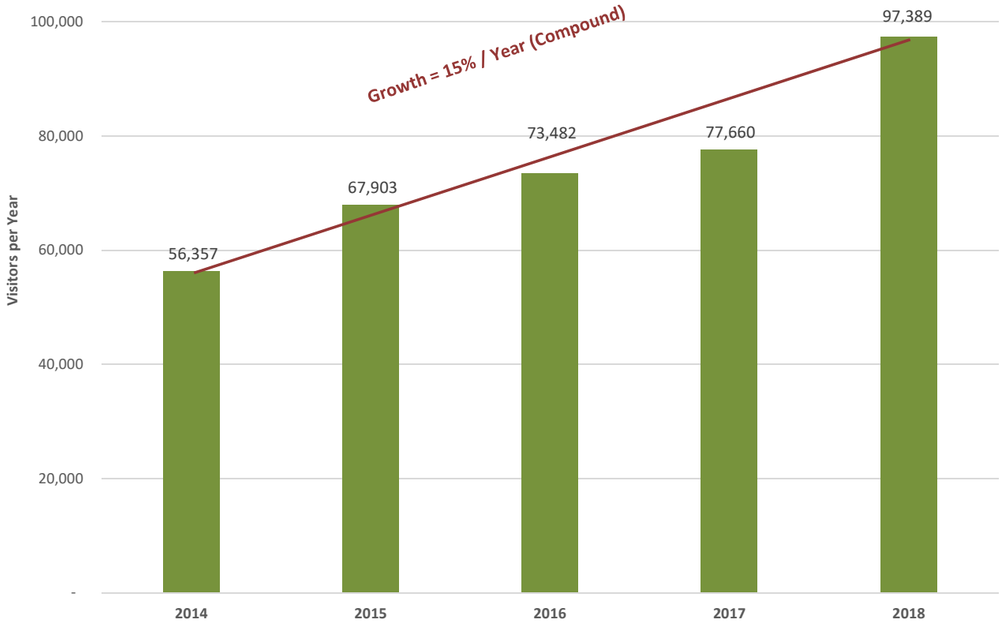
Zoning adjacent to Kubota Garden is predominately residential: Single Family Residential 5000, Single Family Residential 7200, and Multifamily Residential Low-rise 2. Other zoning within 1/2 mile of the Garden includes Neighborhood Commercial (1, 2, and 3), and General Industrial 2.

Visitation

Attendance

Garden visitation reached 97,389 at the end of 2018, reflecting annual visitation growth of roughly 15% since 2014. Attendance is measured via a Bluetooth counter installed at Tsutakawa Entry Gate in 2014 and counts visitors as they enter the Garden. Approximately 83% of visits occur between March 1st and October 31st. Peak days of visitation occur at the Spring Plant Sale and during the mid-October peak fall color season. Visitation is typically heavier during dry weather. A parking and traffic study indicates that peak demand in parking reached 127 vehicles at 2:00 pm on Sunday October 21, 2018.

Jones & Jones (2018)



Source: Kubota Garden Visitor & Parking Study Profiles

Visitor Input: Kubota Garden Foundation Surveys

The Kubota Garden Foundation has conducted quarterly visitor surveys on one weekend per quarter between the Fall of 2015 to Fall of 2018 (23 days total) to gauge where Garden visitors are coming from, how they heard about the Garden, means of arrival, and cultural identity. Nearly 56% of visitors live within the Greater Seattle area, with an additional 18.37% coming from the Eastside and North King County. Out-of-state and non-US tourists make up an impressive 18.97% of the Garden's annual visitation.

The age range of visitors to the Garden is skewed towards younger visitors, which would be expected in a highly diverse neighborhood. The surveys did not specifically target 0-17 year olds so this age group is likely underrepresented, and may also reflect that available programming at the Garden does not appeal to this age bracket.

0-17	2.1%
18-30	22.8%
31-40	25.9%
41-50	17.6%
over 60	16.4%
Didn't say	1.8%

Other survey highlights answered the following prompts:

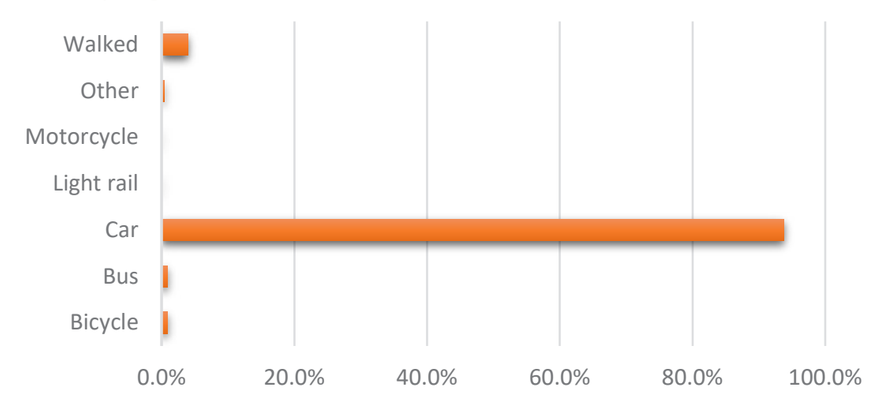
How did you hear about Kubota Garden?

	Totals
None	110
Friend/Family	1478
KGF Website	14
Live in neighborhood	106
Media story	102
Meet Up	2
Online Research	411
Other	242
Signage	163
Social Media	340
Work of Mouth	1008
	3976

Where are you from?

Region	ZIP Code	Total	% of Total
SE Seattle	98118/98178	496	14.89%
Renton	98055/98056/98059	102	3.06%
Eastside/North King Co.	980XX	612	18.37%
Greater Seattle	981XX	1,260	37.82%
In-State	98XXX	230	6.90%
Out-of-State	Out-of-State	559	16.78%
Non-US	Non-US	73	2.19%
	Totals	3,332	100.00%

How did you get here?



Given the crowded nature of the Garden's parking lot most days, it should come as no surprise that nearly 95% of visitors arrive by car.

What is your racial or ethnic background?

	2015	2016			2017				2018					
	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall	Totals	Percent
American Indian/Alaska Native	-	5	4	6	2	4	6	1	2	1	4	5	**40**	**1.1%**
Asian	47	80	70	86	31	59	57	54	34	33	30	106	**687**	**18.4%**
Black/African American	2	26	13	9	6	14	12	5	9	6	12	15	**129**	**3.4%**
Hispanic/LatinX (non-Black/African American	7	25	17	20	10	34	30	7	7	23	11	18	**209**	**5.6%**
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	4	17	3	11	1	7	2	3	4	1	3	7	**63**	**1.7%**
White	101	260	171	256	144	250	170	194	107	123	113	292	**2,181**	**58.3%**
None selected	95	101	71	24	16	32	15	15	9	15	8	30	**431**	**11.5%**
Total													**3,740**	**100%**

Source: Kubota Garden Foundation Quarterly Survey Results 2015-2018
Fall 2015 - Fall 2018

Visitor Input: Open House Surveys

In late spring/early summer of 2018, two open houses were held at the Garden to gather visitor input. The findings resulted in diverse feedback regarding areas of improvement that the Garden should focus on in the coming years. A total of 108 visitor groups responded, representing a total of 408 visitors. The aggregated responses from visitor groups are as follows:

- 29.6% indicated a desire for improved internal wayfinding signage
- 26.8% indicated a desire for better restrooms
- 20.4% indicated a desire for refreshments
- 17.6% indicated a desire for improved garden quality
- 12.0% indicated a desire for improved seating options
- 11.1% indicated a desire for interpretive plant signage
- 8.3% indicated a desire for additional water fountains
- 6.5% indicated a desire for additional garbage cans
- 3.7% indicated a desire for improved parking
- 3.7% indicated a desire for improved external wayfinding signage
- 2.8% indicated a desire for additional garden events
- 2.8% indicated support for charging an admission fee
- 1.8% indicated a desire for a visitor center and/or gift shop
- 1.8% indicated a desire for improved connections to Chief Sealth Trail and/or 51st Avenue

Visitor Input: Seattle Parks Department Online Survey

Following the Public Meeting on October 13, 2018, an online survey was circulated by Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation to generate broad community input on the Master Plan Update Process. After six weeks, 138 responses to the survey were collected. Of the total number of respondents, 64.5% indicated that the Garden history is very important to them and 91.3% indicated that their primary use of the Garden is for quiet enjoyment and reflection.

Feedback ranking the importance of proposed Garden amenities found that:

- 79.7% indicated a desire for improved restrooms
- 54.3% indicated a desire for improved signage and wayfinding
- 43.5% indicated a desire for improved seating
- 29.7% indicated a desire for a visitor center
- 22.5% indicated a desire for more drinking fountains
- 15.9% indicated a desire for improved picnic areas
- 5.8% indicated a desire for snacks or refreshments
- "Other" important amenities garnered support from 14.5% of respondents; these items ranged from accessibility to signage to security. Results of the survey can be found in the Appendix.

Specific proposed changes within the Master Plan Update that garnered support from 53 to 68% of respondents included: trail and pathway improvements, Garden history interpretive signs, improved water quality via implementation of a creek water feature, and implementation of a small nursery to provide plant material for the Garden.

Visitor Services

That the Garden offers minimal visitor services can be seen in the Open House and Online Survey results to the left. There is a gravel parking area for 35 vehicles and an adjacent concrete-paved entry plaza with an informational kiosk area that offers self-guided tour maps, dog waste bags, garden bulletin board, and a trash can. Just inside the Garden are a pair of port-o-let toilets and a drinking fountain serving both people and pets. There are scattered places to sit in the Garden that are not identified on the map and are at times difficult to recognize as seating. The Garden offers no interpretive elements besides the information shown on the self-guided tour map handout.

Mapes Creek and Natural Areas

Mapes Creek

Mapes Creek is an urban tributary fed by groundwater springs and surface runoff that flows north 1.25 miles from its headwaters, through the Garden and discharges into Lake Washington at Beer Sheva Park. Mapes Creek's natural flow was diverted by Fujitaro Kubota in the late 1920's when he created the "Necklace of Ponds," a series of five small pools that form one of the Garden's key historic elements. Water passes through Kubota Garden back into its natural channel at the Garden's north property line. The creek flows north for about 150 feet before being culverted below Renton Avenue South. It daylights again through Sturtevant Ravine prior to being piped between the north end of the Ravine and Beer Sheva Park. A recent stream restoration project has improved its ultimate outlet to Lake Washington. In an effort to protect the integrity of the Mapes Creek watershed, whose catchment constitutes approximately 92.2 acres, the City of Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation has purchased 22 undeveloped parcels between 1991-2014.

Kubota Garden Natural Areas

These natural areas provide a green backdrop to many of the Garden's viewpoints, provide an important habitat corridor, and serve as a visual indicator of the Garden's presence to the nearby neighborhoods. As such, the Natural Areas act as an attractive feature to the neighborhood that contribute to property values in the area. Un-designed areas within the Garden serve as a continuation of the habitat and backdrop, and require management of invasive species and access to promote a healthy northwest forest ecosystem.

Restoration of the degraded and unbalanced ecosystem of these natural areas has been led by the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP). Their efforts, which include approximately 25 events per year, have focused on the removal of invasive plant species (i.e. 772 ivy plants as of early 2018) and replanting with habitat supporting plants (13,192 plants as of early 2018). Trails within the Natural Areas are limited to what is needed for restoration and maintenance efforts (i.e. "stewardship trails"). GSP has made efforts in the past to restrict recreational use of the stewardship trails without much success. Stewardship and maintenance activities in the Natural Areas aids in discouraging certain behaviors such as illegal garbage dumping. Unstructured access within the natural areas can impact the water quality of Mapes Creek due to increased sedimentation caused by erosion.

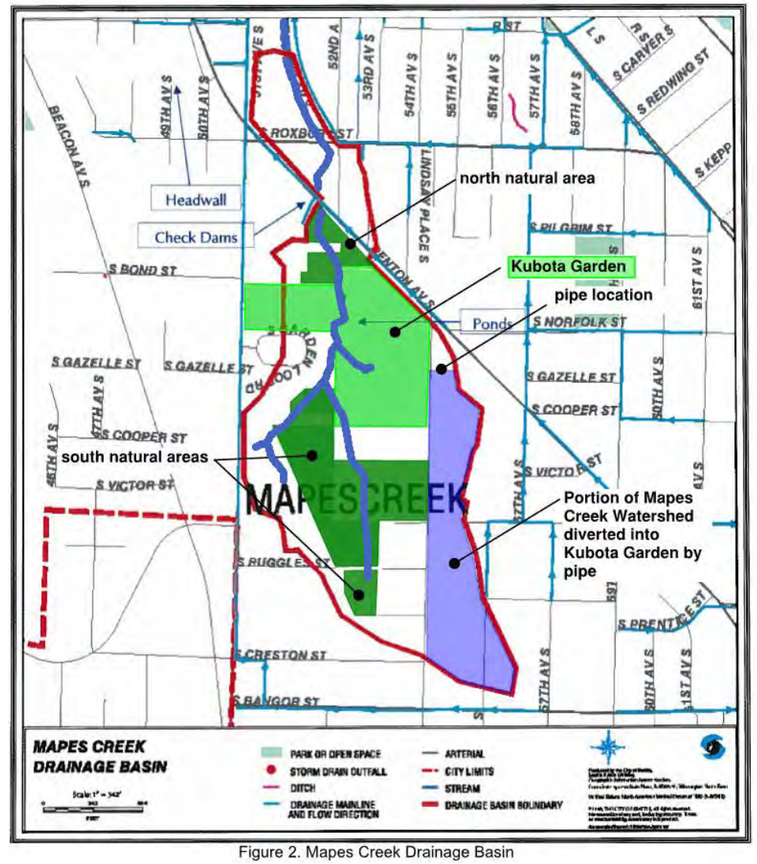
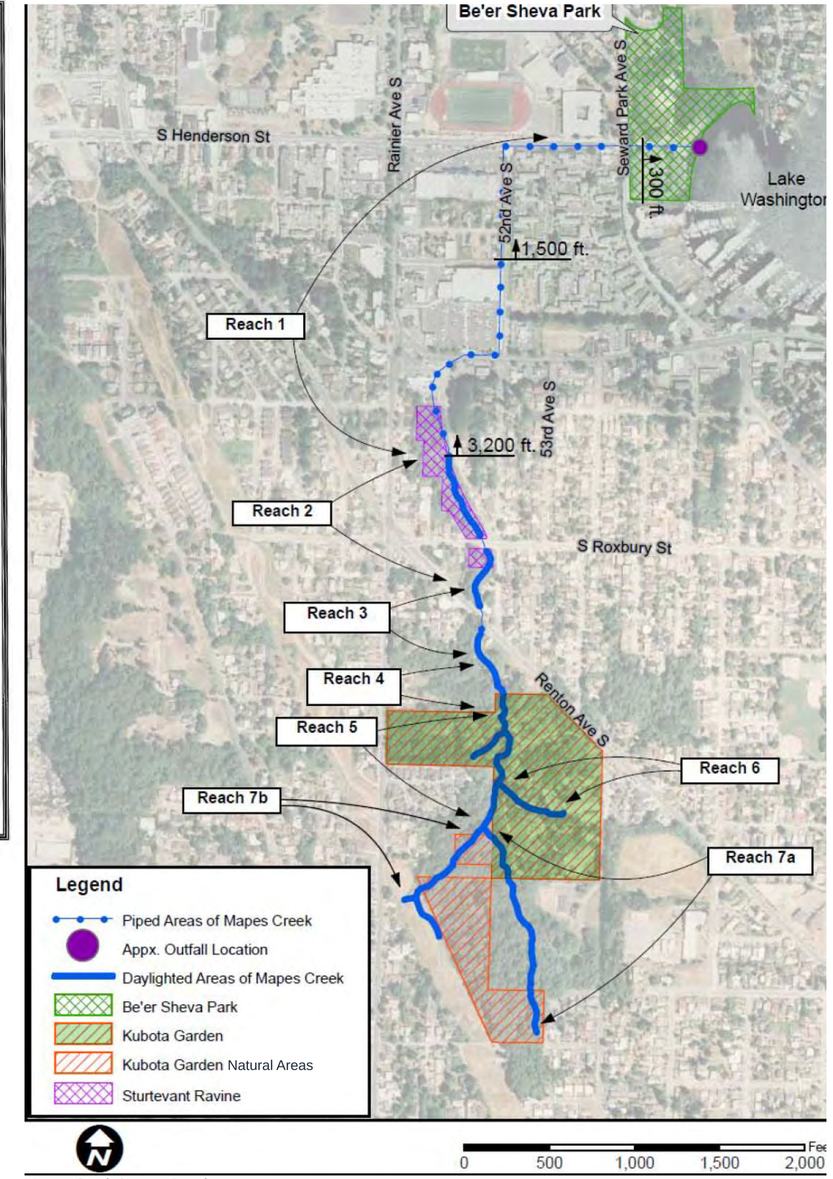


Figure 2. Mapes Creek Drainage Basin



Mapes Creek Stream Reaches
DRAFT Integrated Detailed Project Report & Environmental Assessment, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mapes Creek Restoration Project Section 1135
April 2011

allaboutbirds.org

nas er.us gs.gov

Wikimedia Commons

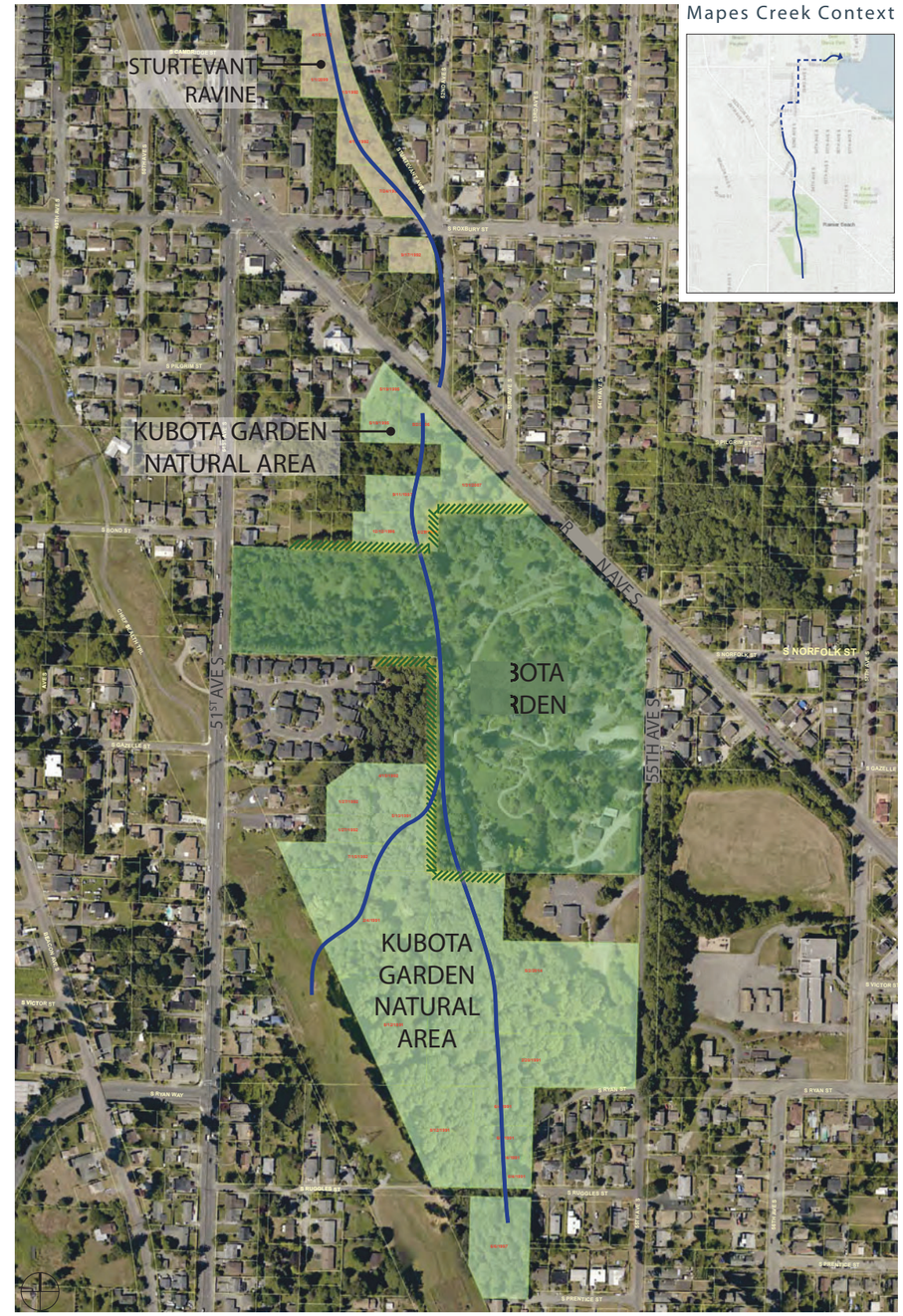
Wikimedia Commons

Habitat

Kubota Garden and adjacent Kubota Garden Natural Areas provide crucial habitat to many plants, animals, birds and insects. For example, a Garden Excursion in May 2018, organized by the Kubota Garden Foundation and the National Wildlife Federation, made observations of the following species:

- Bewicks wren
- House wren
- Robin
- Song sparrow
- White-throated sparrow
- Cooper's Hawk [nest]
- Eagle, juvenile
- Crow
- Bumblebees
- Water striders
- Western tiger swallow-tail butterfly
- Koi
- Red-eared slider turtle
- Domestic dogs and cats
- Dragonflies

This same excursion resulted in the following recommended additions to improve habitat quality: insect plants, nest boxes, and brush piles. While the primary goal of restoration in the Natural Areas is to nurture a healthy northwest forest ecosystem, efforts made within the Garden should consider habitat-contributing plant selection and design whenever possible.



Water Quality

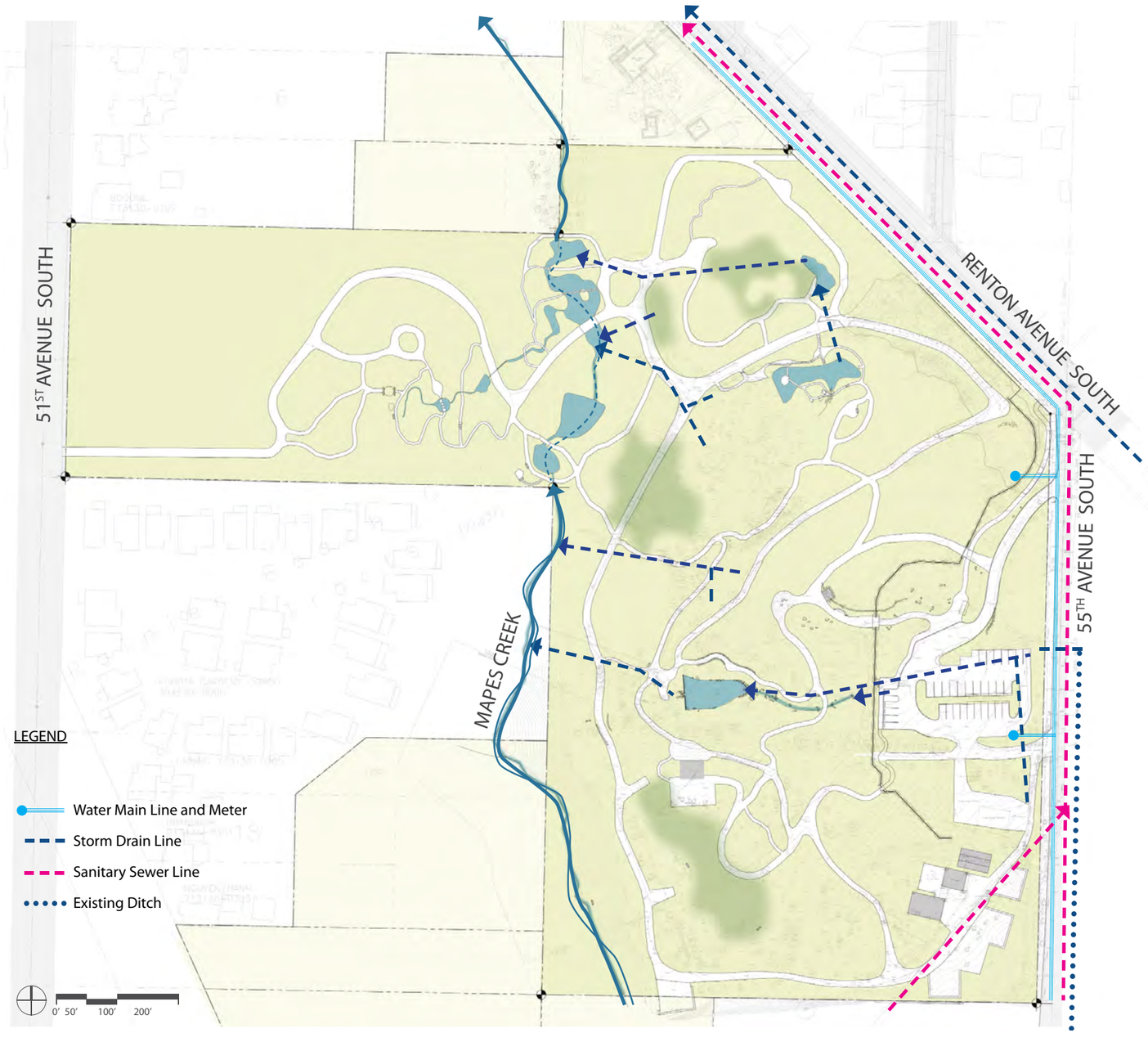
Kubota Garden and the Natural Areas face water quality challenges as a result of stormwater patterns and the property's relationship with Mapes Creek. The primary issues relate to siltation and sedimentation of the ponds and Mapes Creek channel, as well as seasonal stormwater flooding in areas of the Garden.

Stormwater runoff from 55th Avenue South along the eastern edge of the Garden, as well as runoff from the main parking area, is currently piped from the street to an outlet on the west side of the main parking area. The outlet directs runoff through a bioswale that travels to the Spring Pond. Without an intermediary settlement and/or filtration mechanism, heavy silt loads from this source make their way into the Spring Pond and decreasing water clarity. This water is then piped to Mapes Creek, whose own upstream sediment load is added to the water from the Spring Pond - ultimately impacting downstream water quality of the Necklace of Ponds. Sedimentation in the Garden's ponds is an ongoing maintenance issue, requiring occasional dredging and/or pumping to remove sediment build up.

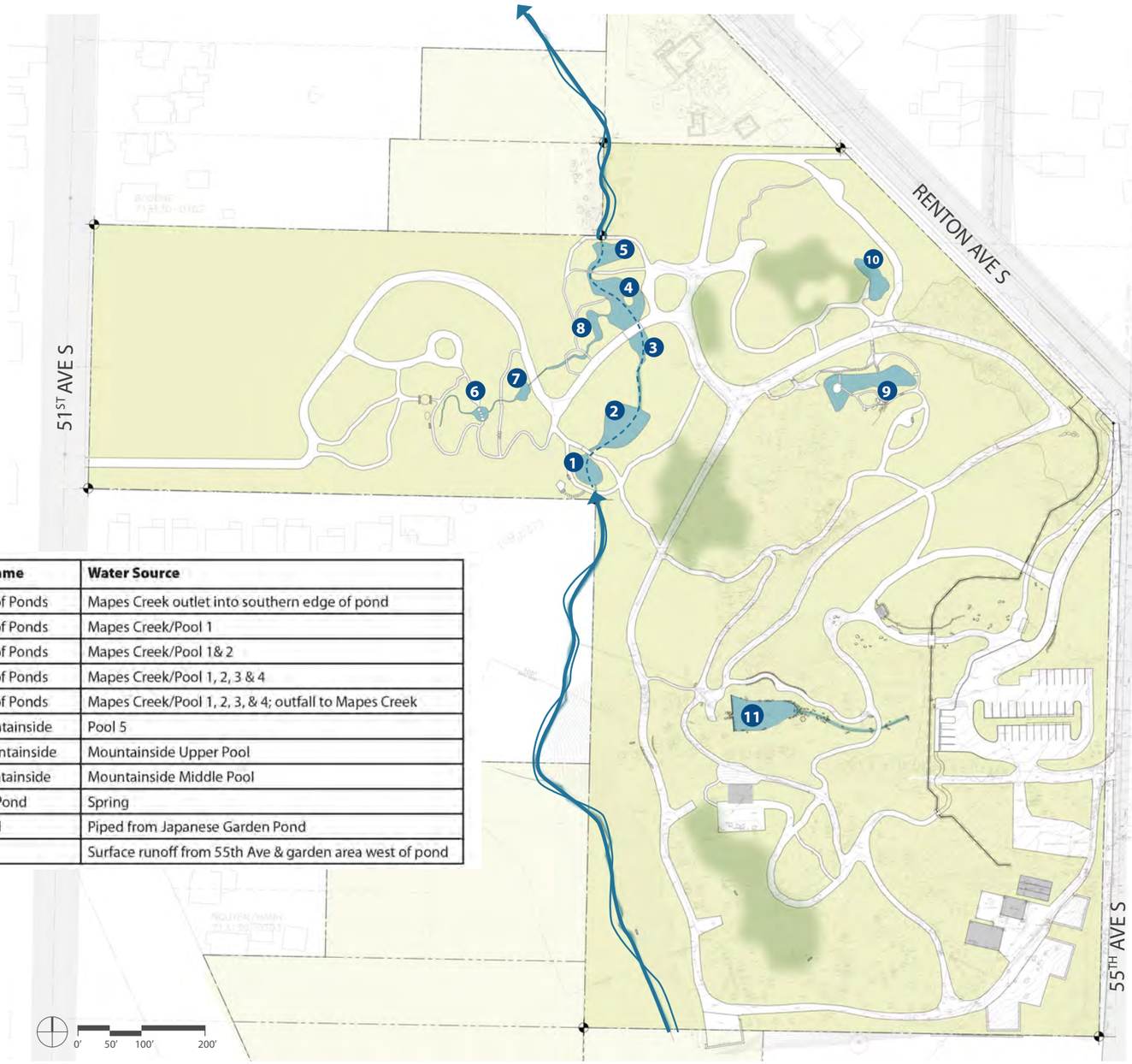
The spring-fed pond in the Japanese Garden is not currently fitted with a pump to circulate water, and therefore suffers from occasional nutrient overgrowth. Pond overflow is directed to the pond in the Stroll Garden.

Seasonal flooding occurs in the Lower Garden, particularly in the Fera Fera Forest to the north of the Tom Kubota Stroll Garden. Efforts have been made to direct stormwater into drainage ditches and culverts that ultimately let out into Mapes Creek near the northern boundary of the Garden.

MAP: Existing Stormwater & Sewer Systems Plan



MAP: Existing Water Features Plan



	Water Feature Name	Water Source
1	Pool 1 - Necklace of Ponds	Mapes Creek outlet into southern edge of pond
2	Pool 2 - Necklace of Ponds	Mapes Creek/Pool 1
3	Pool 3 - Necklace of Ponds	Mapes Creek/Pool 1& 2
4	Pool 4 - Necklace of Ponds	Mapes Creek/Pool 1, 2, 3 & 4
5	Pool 5 - Necklace of Ponds	Mapes Creek/Pool 1, 2, 3, & 4; outfall to Mapes Creek
6	Upper Pool - Mountainside	Pool 5
7	Middle Pool - Mountainside	Mountainside Upper Pool
8	Lower Pool - Mountainside	Mountainside Middle Pool
9	Japanese Garden Pond	Spring
10	Stroll Garden Pond	Piped from Japanese Garden Pond
11	Spring Pond	Surface runoff from 55th Ave & garden area west of pond

Moon Bridge - Jones & Jones (2018)

Vegetation Zones

Kubota Garden can be divided into vegetation zones that speak to the existing or historic character.

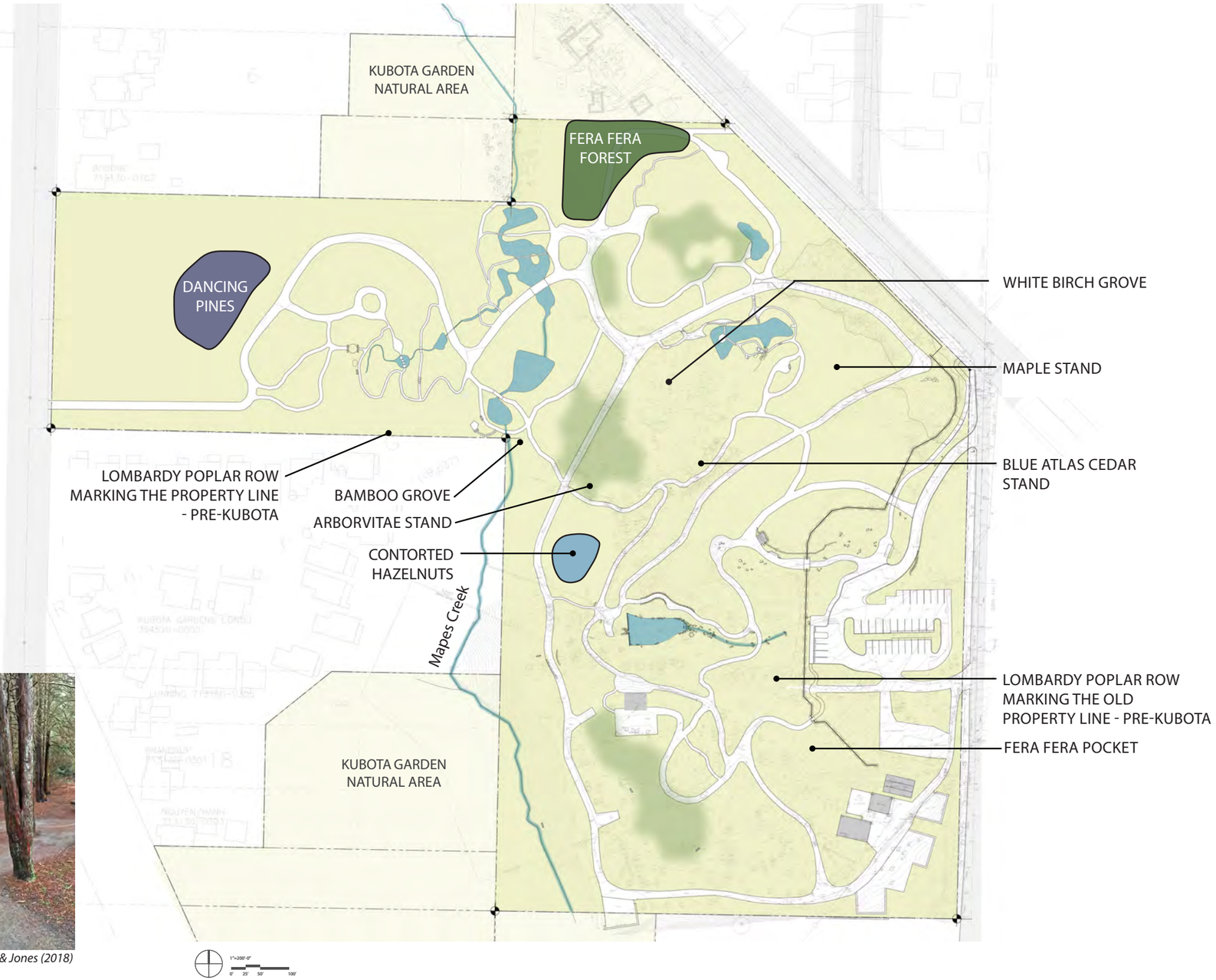
Natural Areas | Discussed in greater detail above, the natural areas exist wherever designed gardens or remnant nursery areas have not yet been developed and/or in the areas that were purchased by Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation to be maintained as open space. These are important characteristics of the property as they provide a vegetated backdrop for designed garden spaces, particularly from specific viewpoints.

Remnant Nursery | When the Garden functioned as a showroom and holding area for the Kubota Landscaping Company, plots of nursery stock were planted throughout the property. Over time, unused nursery plantings have matured and act as reminders of the history of the Garden and the stories that can be shared about the Kubota family. Some of these areas have been cleared of understory to better reveal the nursery-character, and can be seen in the existing Fera Fera Forest or the Dancing Pines areas.

Designed Gardens | Specific areas of the Garden have been designed and implemented over the years both by Fujitaro Kubota, son Tom Kubota, grandson Allan Kubota, and by Parks Gardeners. These areas are different from the other vegetation zones in that their development is intended for the visitor experience and requires a greater degree of maintenance. (Mountainside, Maple Woods, Stone Garden, Japanese Garden, Tom Kubota Stroll Garden, Necklace of Ponds, Terrace, Spring Pond, etc.)

Remnant Nursery Areas, left to right: Dancing Pines, Cortorted Hazelnut, Fera Fera Forest - Jones & Jones (2018)

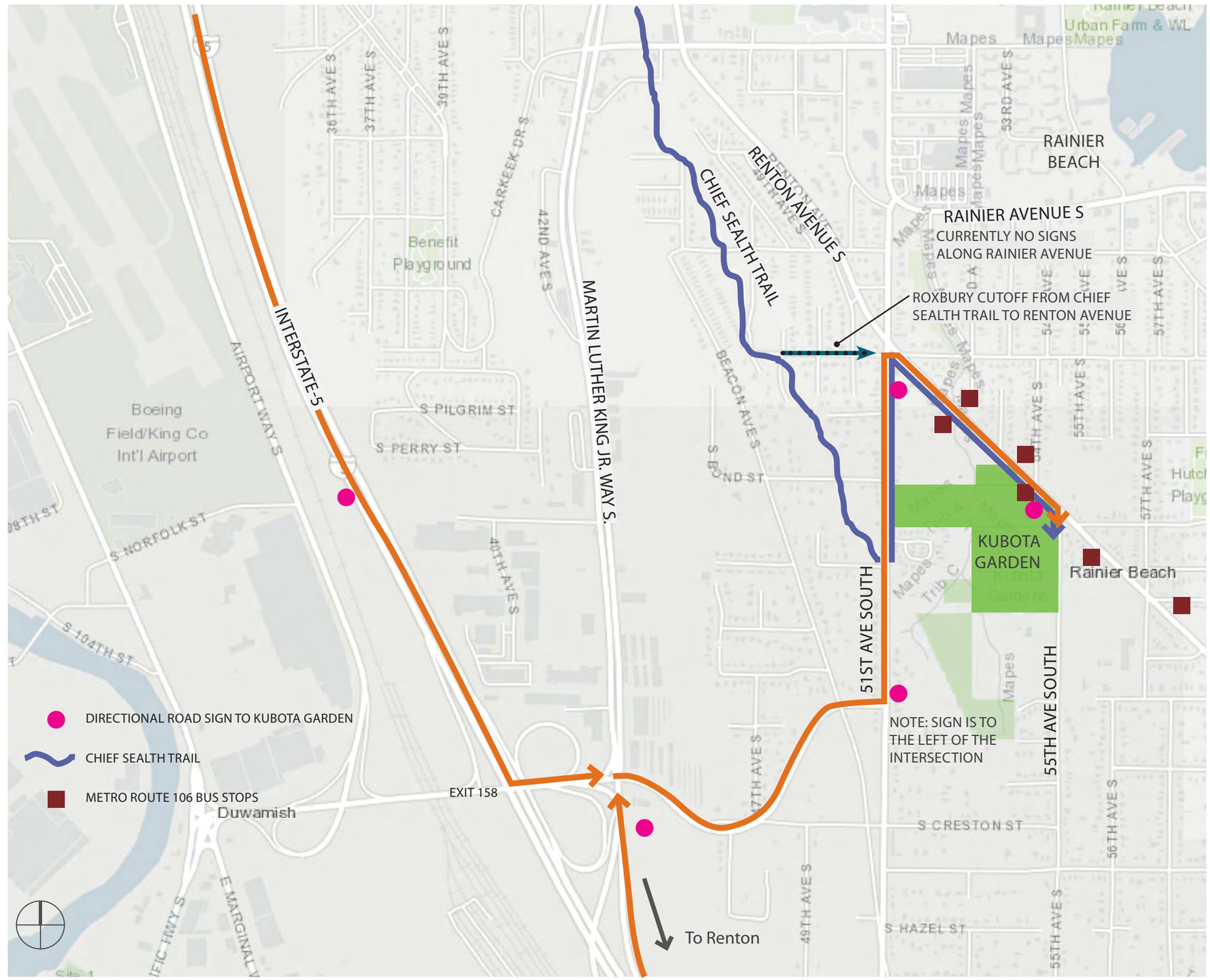
MAP: Historic Garden Elements and Remnant Nursery Spaces



IV. Site Analysis

Getting to the Garden

KUBOTA GARDEN



Garden Arrival

By Private Vehicle

A variety of multi-modal resources in the area allow visitors to arrive to the Garden using various means. The primary way that visitors arrive is via personal vehicle. Attraction signage has been installed on I-5 north- and southbound indicating drivers to take Exit 158. Once off the freeway, drivers find their way to the Garden with the three brown directional signs for Kubota Garden at the intersections of:

- 51st Avenue South and South Ryan Way
- 51st Avenue South and Renton Avenue South/South Roxbury Street, and
- Renton Avenue South and 55th Avenue South; a large boulder inscribed with the words Kubota Garden is also located at the corner of this intersection

For drivers arriving southbound on Renton Avenue South, there is no directional signage until reaching the intersection of Renton Avenue South and 55th Avenue South. For drivers arriving southbound on Rainier Avenue South/51st Avenue South, there is a directional sign located at the intersection of 51st Avenue South and Renton Avenue South/South Roxbury Street. The driveway to the Garden from 55th Avenue South is marked with the Seattle Parks standard "rainbow sign".

Cars entering the garden use the driveway which leads to a concrete curbed drop-off area and paved plaza. The gravel parking area, divided by attractive planters, is limited to about 35 spaces and can reach a maximum of 44 during peak events. The capacity of the parking lot is exceeded during peak events, causing private vehicles to park along 55th Avenue South and Renton Avenue South. The existing parking lot can accommodate days with approximately 400 Garden visitors; there were 46 days in 2018 when that threshold was exceeded (Kubota Garden Existing Visitor and Parking Characteristics, Heffron Transportation, November 2018). Another issue is oversized vehicles. There is no designated parking for large vehicles (buses and limos) in the parking lot. These larger vehicles use the dropoff area for parking, thus forcing other vehicles to squeeze past in the driveway and at times block the driveway entirely to other vehicular users. Taxis and rideshare vehicles also park at the dropoff while waiting for their customers.

By Public Transportation

Kubota Garden is within one mile of the Rainier Beach Link Light Rail Station. A designated bicycle route connects the Station to the Garden via Renton Avenue South. Additionally, Metro Transit Route 106 serves the Garden from both downtown Seattle and downtown Renton with a bus stop near the northern edge of the Garden on the southwest side of Renton Avenue South.

By Foot or Bicycle

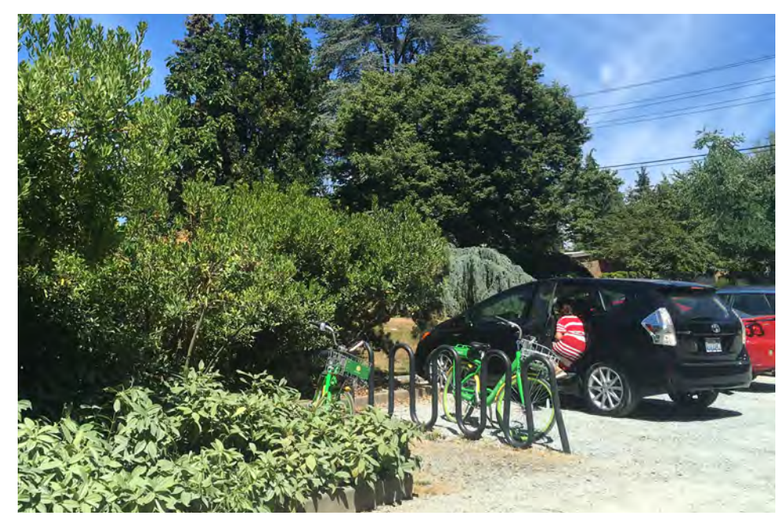
As previously mentioned, Rainier Beach Link Light Rail makes connections to the surrounding neighborhood via improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and a dedicated bike lane on Renton Avenue. The Chief Sealth Trail is a local Off-Street connector that currently terminates near the western edge of Kubota Garden on 51st Avenue South. This end-point provides information about access to Kubota Garden. Additionally, the 2014 Adopted Bicycle Master Plan identifies the potential for multiple Protected Bicycle Lanes and Off-Street Citywide Networks that would safely connect bicyclists from downtown Seattle to the Garden.

At the corner of Renton Avenue South and 55th Avenue South, the sidewalk begins to meander toward the Garden, set back from the roadway with a planted buffer.

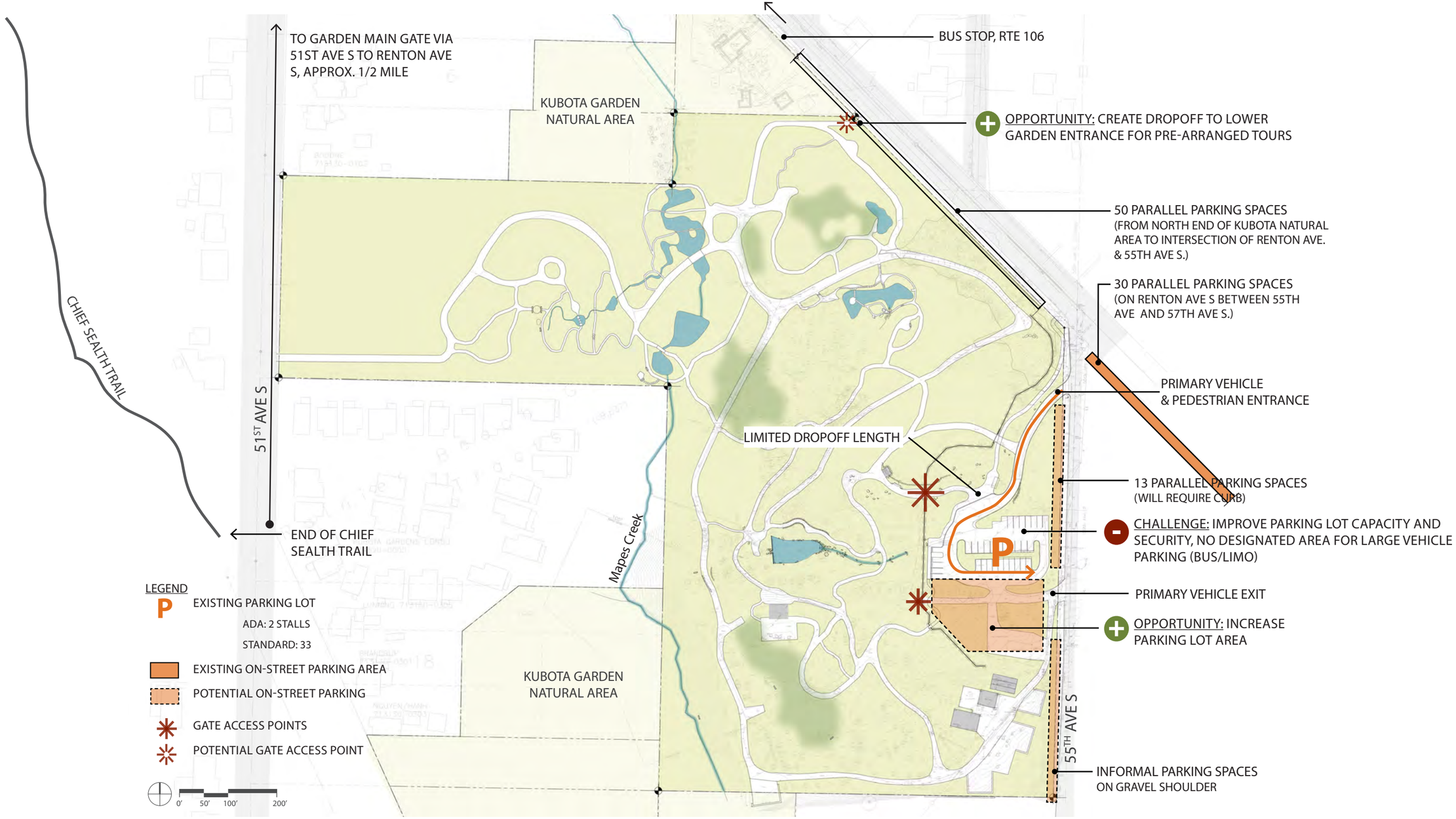
The existing bicycle racks in the Garden are tucked behind dense shrubs in the vehicle parking area. Hidden from view from casual Garden visitors, bikes using these racks are vulnerable to theft or vandalism due to their hidden location.

Jones & Jones (2018)

Signage at Renton Ave. S. & 55th Ave. S - Jones & Jones (2018)


Existing Bicycle Parking - Jones & Jones (2018)

MAP: Parking at the Garden



The Garden

Accessibility

Kubota Garden has approximately two miles of trails; 0.6 miles of which are considered accessible. Given the hilly character of the Garden, there are multiple points where an accessible route becomes inaccessible without warning, essentially creating an accessibility dead-end. The self-guided tour map shows the location of accessible paths, but it does not adequately reflect the path's challenges or shortcomings. In addition, 48 accessibility deficient items were identified by the May 2018 "Meeting the Challenge" study by Seattle Parks that covers the walkways, parking areas, restrooms, and crew quarters. These items will need to be addressed as future garden improvements are implemented.

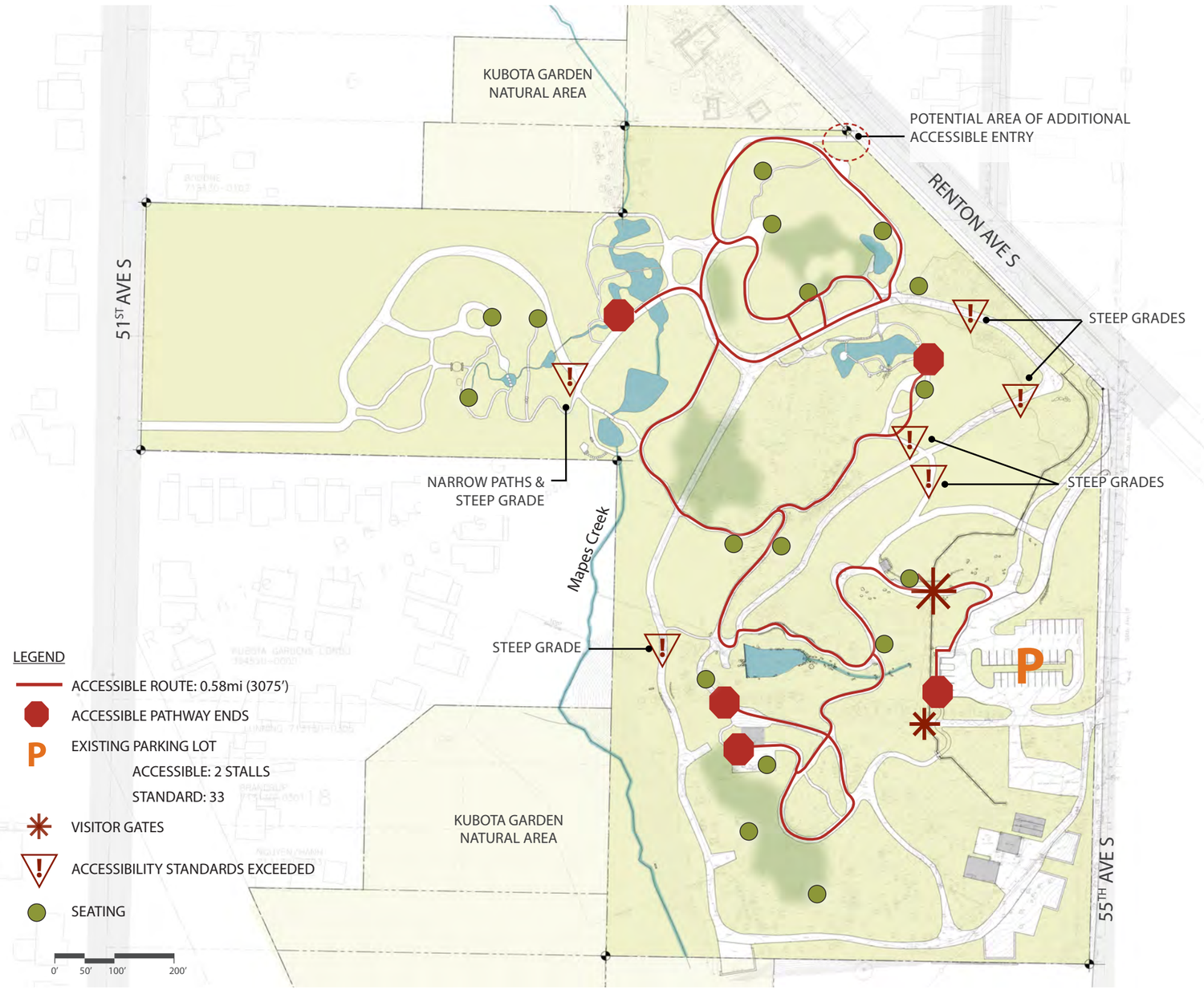
Garden Circulation

Upon arrival to the garden, visitors are welcomed to the entry plaza featuring renowned artist Gerard Tsutakawa's entry gate (2004) as well as the Stone Garden created as part of the Fourth International Symposium of Japanese Gardens (2004). The informational kiosk, which provides maps, Garden rules, and other useful information, is tucked into the shrubbery at the east end of the entry plaza. It is often missed by visitors as the primary approach typically goes directly to the gate at the west end of the plaza. As such, many first-time visitors find the Garden experience very confusing due to the lack of wayfinding and/or an overview of the Garden.

Wayfinding within the Garden is one of the most pressing issues based on visitor feedback. The variety of trails and their navigability contributes to both the feeling of exploration as well as the feeling of being lost. While some visitors enjoy the latter, there is a definite need for wayfinding at key decision-making points that would aid in the enjoyment of the Garden experience. Many visitor responses have circulated around the issue of, "how do I get out [of the Garden]?"

A majority of the pedestrian routes within the Garden are shared with maintenance vehicles and equipment. There has not been a significant conflict in visitors and maintenance staff sharing routes, but there is a need for service "pull-out" areas so that service vehicles can get off the path for visitors without damaging the Garden's plant material.

MAP: Garden Accessibility Plan



Viewsheds

"There is a system, a set of rules if you like, around which a Japanese Gardener works. He plans a garden to be seen from all sides as though it were a bit of statuary instead of a flat canvas. The illusion of space is uppermost in his mind, thus plants and trees are dwarfed. Paths winding in and out approach a vista or a lake from many angles, giving sense of countless vistas and innumerable lakes."

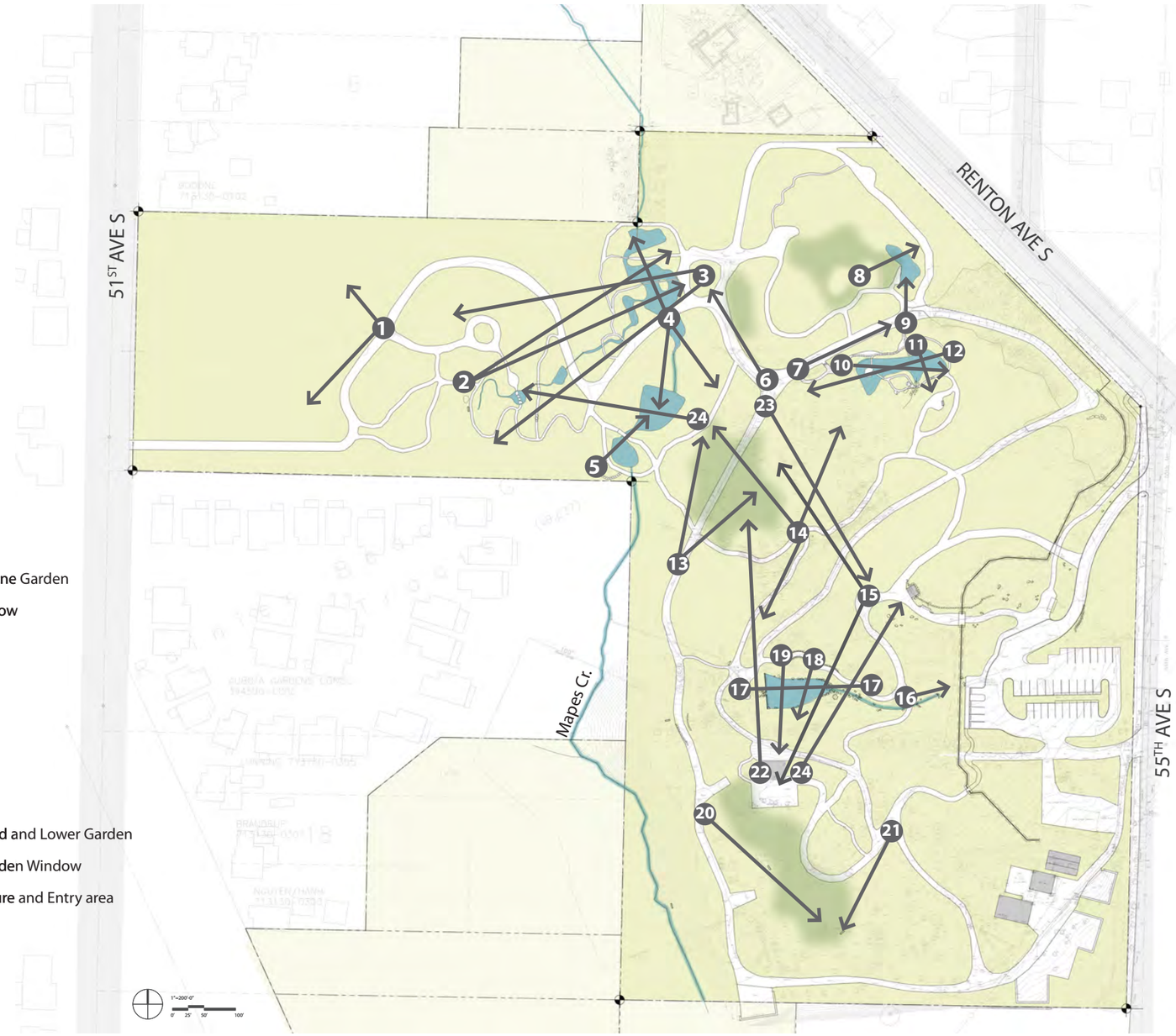
- A Japanese Garden in America, Eloise Roorbach, Craftsman Magazine, v.27 no.6, March 1915, p622.

Kubota Garden is filled with viewpoints, both intimate and grand, throughout the property. Some are designed, some are to be discovered. In developing a sustainable plant maintenance plan that reflects the character of the gardens, knowing where Mr. Kubota and his family placed intended viewpoints is critical. The viewpoints of Kubota-designed gardens, the Mountainside, Necklace of Ponds, Japanese Garden are shown on the following diagrams.

Other major viewpoints that need to be identified include the Terrace Overlook and the Entry Overlook. Secondary viewpoints from within and looking outwards include the Stone Garden, the Maple Woods, and the Spring Pond.

1. Views to Forested Area
2. Long View from Top to Bottom of Mountainside
3. Long View from Bottom to Top of Mountainside
4. Select Views of Necklace of Ponds
5. View Necklace of Ponds from Overlook
6. Long View to Tanyosho Junction
7. Long View toward Japanese Garden
8. View across Stroll Garden Lawn & Pond
9. View from Japanese Garden to Stroll Garden Pond
10. Broad View of Japanese Garden
11. View across Japanese Garden Pond toward Maple Woods
12. Long View across Japanese Garden Pond
13. Broad Views across Central Garden
14. Broad Views over Central Garden from Stone Garden
15. Broad Views of Garden from Garden Window
16. View Up Slope of Bioswale
17. Long View across Spring Pond
18. View across Spring Pond toward Terrace
19. View across Spring Pond toward Terrace
20. Long View across Kubota Terrace Lawn
21. Long View across Kubota Terrace Lawn
22. View from Terrace Overlook to Spring Pond and Lower Garden
23. View looking across lawn towards the Garden Window
24. View from Terrace Overlook to Bell Structure and Entry area
25. View from Lily Pad to the Mountainside

MAP: Important Garden Views



Security and Safety Issues

The primary security concern at Kubota Garden is frequent break-ins in the parking area. The lack of clear lines-of-sight from both 55th Avenue South and the Entry Plaza, as well as minimal natural surveillance within the parking area, and the ease of vandals to drive through contribute to this ongoing issue. The parking area does not currently have lighting or security cameras. There are two "High Prowl Area" signs posted that caution visitors not to leave valuables in their cars, but their visibility is limited due to placement and plant growth.

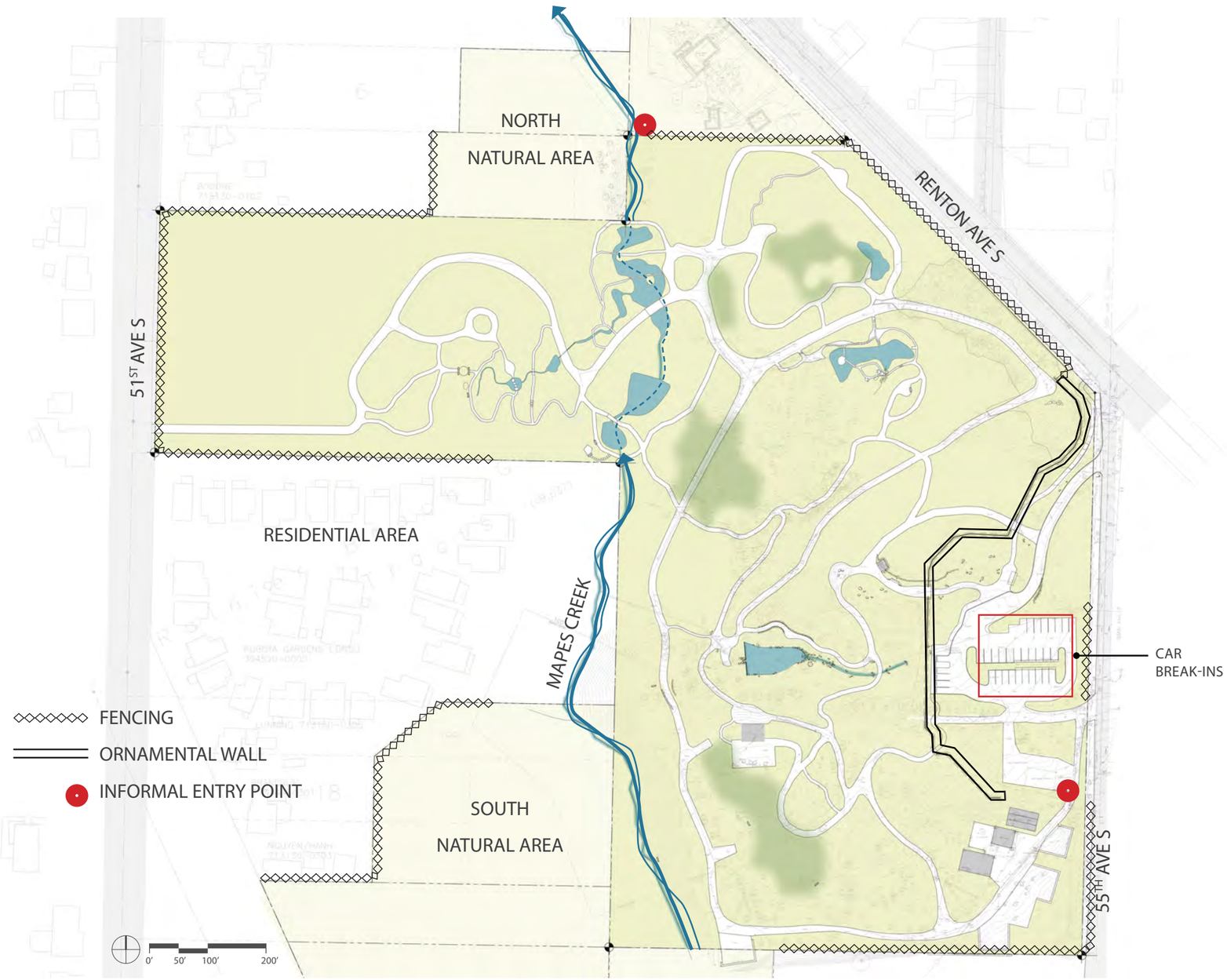
Infrequent vandalism occurs within all areas of the Garden: broken branches on trees and shrubs, stolen plants, graffiti, and litter. Signage about garden etiquette has been posted in response to children climbing the Terrace Overlook stone walls.

Lighting

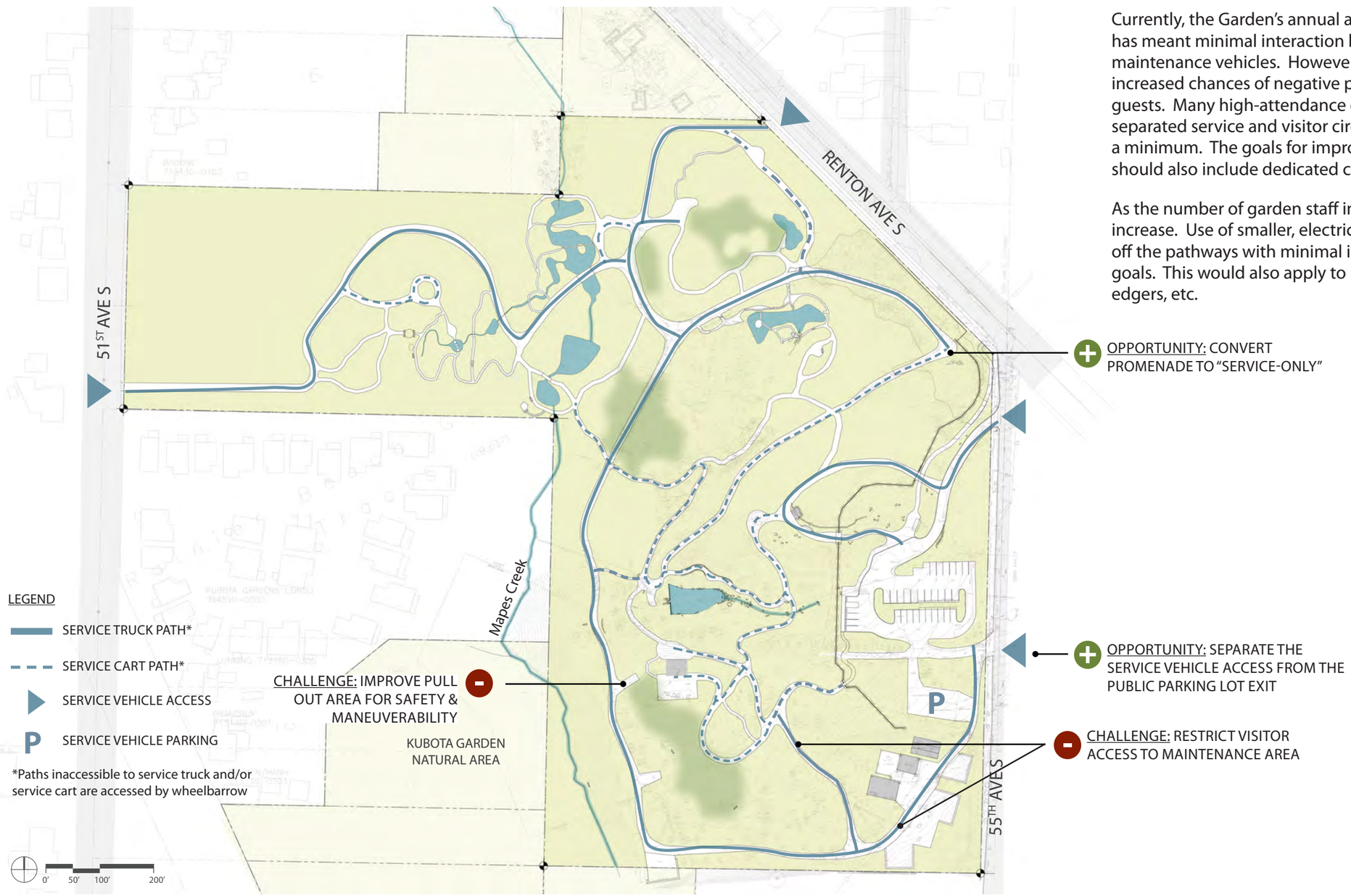
Site lighting at the Garden is currently limited to street lights that shine onto the gravel parking lot as well as some security lighting at the maintenance area. There is no lighting at the port-o-lets or the main entry gate. Any evening use of the Garden should include a lighting plan that meets the Dark Skies Initiative as well as minimizes glare impact to neighboring properties.

Vandalism Caution Sign in Planting - Jones & Jones (2018)

MAP: Existing Perimeter Security



MAP: Service Access



Kubota Garden

Currently, the Garden's annual attendance level of about 98,000 has meant minimal interaction between visitors and Seattle Parks' maintenance vehicles. However increased attendance will also mean increased chances of negative physical contact between vehicles and guests. Many high-attendance gardens, parks, and attractions have separated service and visitor circulation to keep potential contacts to a minimum. The goals for improved visitor enjoyment of the Garden should also include dedicated circulation routes for service vehicles.

As the number of garden staff increases, the number of vehicles will also increase. Use of smaller, electric-powered vehicles will allow for parking off the pathways with minimal impact as well as meeting sustainability goals. This would also apply to using battery-powered blowers, turf edgers, etc.

Landmark Garden

In 1981, while the property was owned by the Kubota Family, the City, the Rainier Beach Neighrborhood and a property developer agreed to set aside a roughly five acre 'Core Area' that received a City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board approved landmark designation. This designation included the Japanese Garden, the southern portion of the Tom Kubota Stroll Garden, the Necklace of Ponds, the Mountainside, and Tanyosho Junction. Also within the designation area were portions of remnant nursery stock. However, one of the Garden's more prominent remnant nursery areas, the Fera Fera Forest, was not included. Between the 1981 designation and the City's 1987 purchase of the Kubota Garden property, a five acre parcel to the south of the Mountainside was sold and that property was developed into housing. Thus, the limits of the landmark boundary are no longer connected to the Kubota Garden property and are assumed to be invalid in that area.

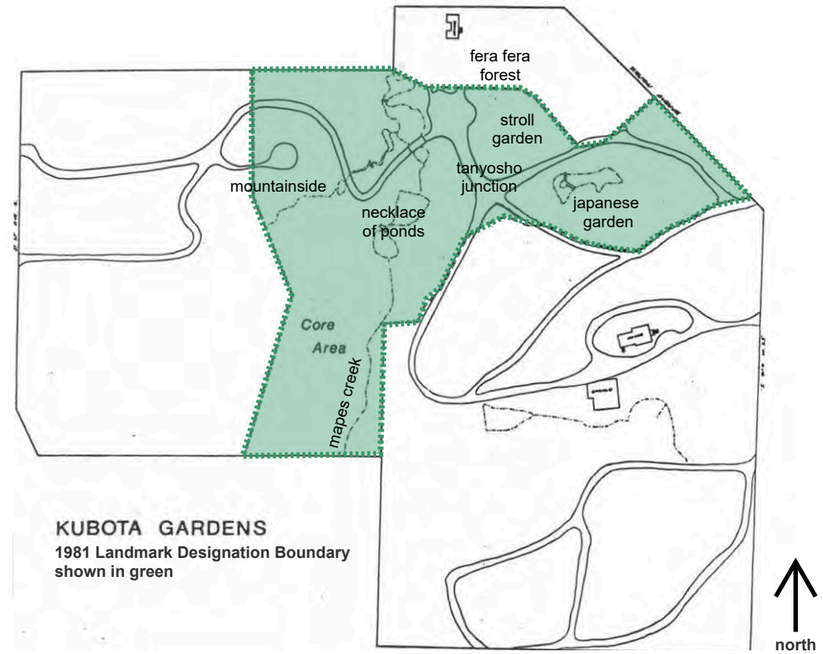
Through the master plan process, we've developed a more thorough understanding of the Garden's history. The master plan recommends three revisions:

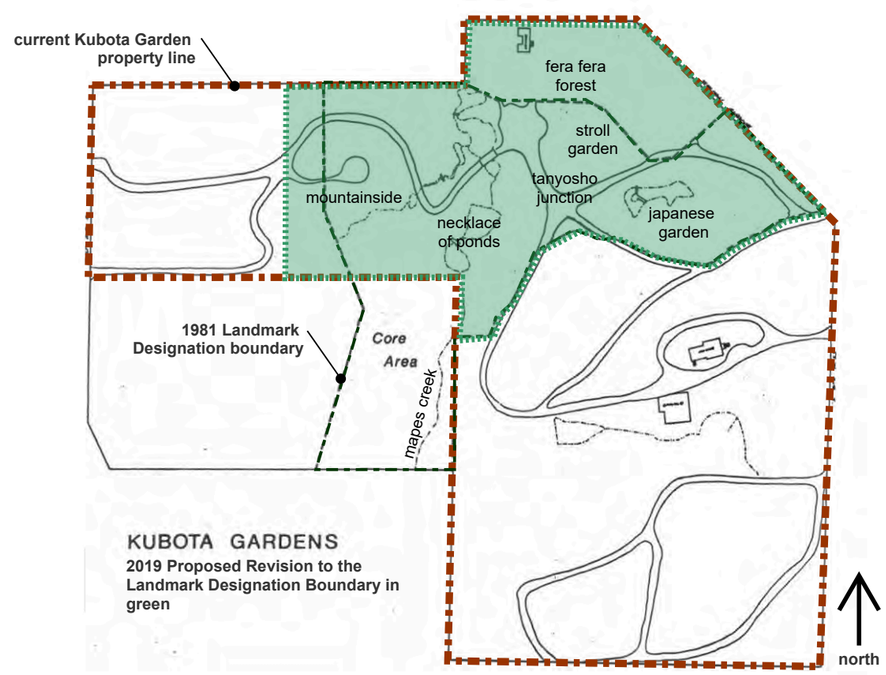
Remove the landmark boundary that is now on private property. There are no built elements within this area associated with Fujitaro Kubota or the Kubota Family.

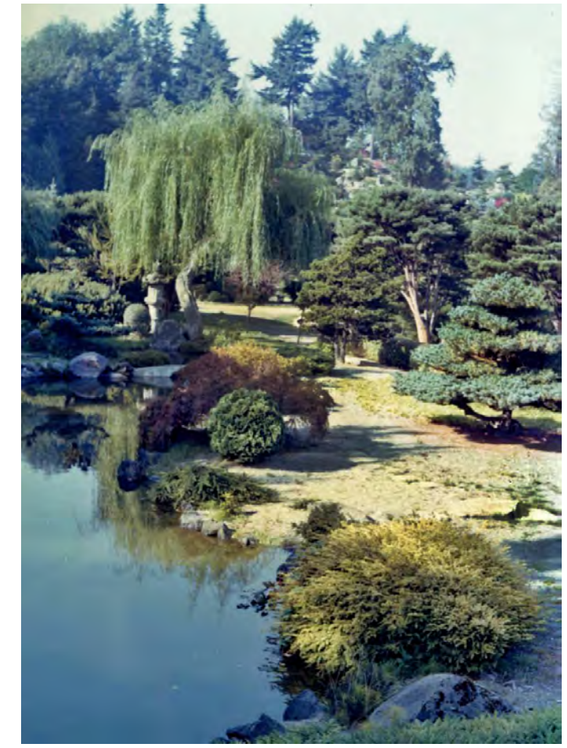
The landmark boundary in the north can be extended to the Garden's northern property line. This change will capture the rest of the Tom Kubota Stroll Garden, the Fera Fera Forest and the Stroll Garden.

The landmark boundary on the west side would be extended further west to capture the Mountainside's background forest and upper stream garden of the Mountainside.

These three boundary changes would place all of Fujitaro Kubota's and the Kubota Family-designed gardens within the boundary. Thus, it is the recommendation of the master plan to develop and present a report and a revision to the 1981 Landmark application in order to clarify the boundary.







From west end of Japanese Garden looking west
Source: KGF Photo 507, dated 1975

Base Map Source:
Kubota Garden Report on Designation 1980
Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board

Historic Designed Garden Spaces & Elements

Many elements throughout the Garden have a story, from specific plants to garden features. The plan of Historic Garden Elements identifies the features that were implemented in the Garden prior tc 1990.

- Spring Pond: fed by several springs as well as stormwater runoff from the east, it was historically used to water six acres of nursery to the south (ca late-1940's)
- Japanese Garden Pond & Lantern (ca 1936)
- Heart Bridge (ca 1930)
- Moon Bridge: Symbolized the difficulty of living a good life, "hard to walk up and hard to walk down" (ca 1970)
- Memorial Stone: a brief history of the Garden inscribed on the back in Japanese (1962)
- Mountainside Lookout Shelter (ca 1962, roof rebuilt 1998)
- Necklace of Ponds "Lily Pads" (ca 1970)
- Tanyosho Junction (ca 1962)
- Koi (age unknown)
- Carved Boulders
- Fossil Stone
- Prayer Stone
- Yosa Koi Stone

MAP: Historic Designed Garden Spaces & Elements

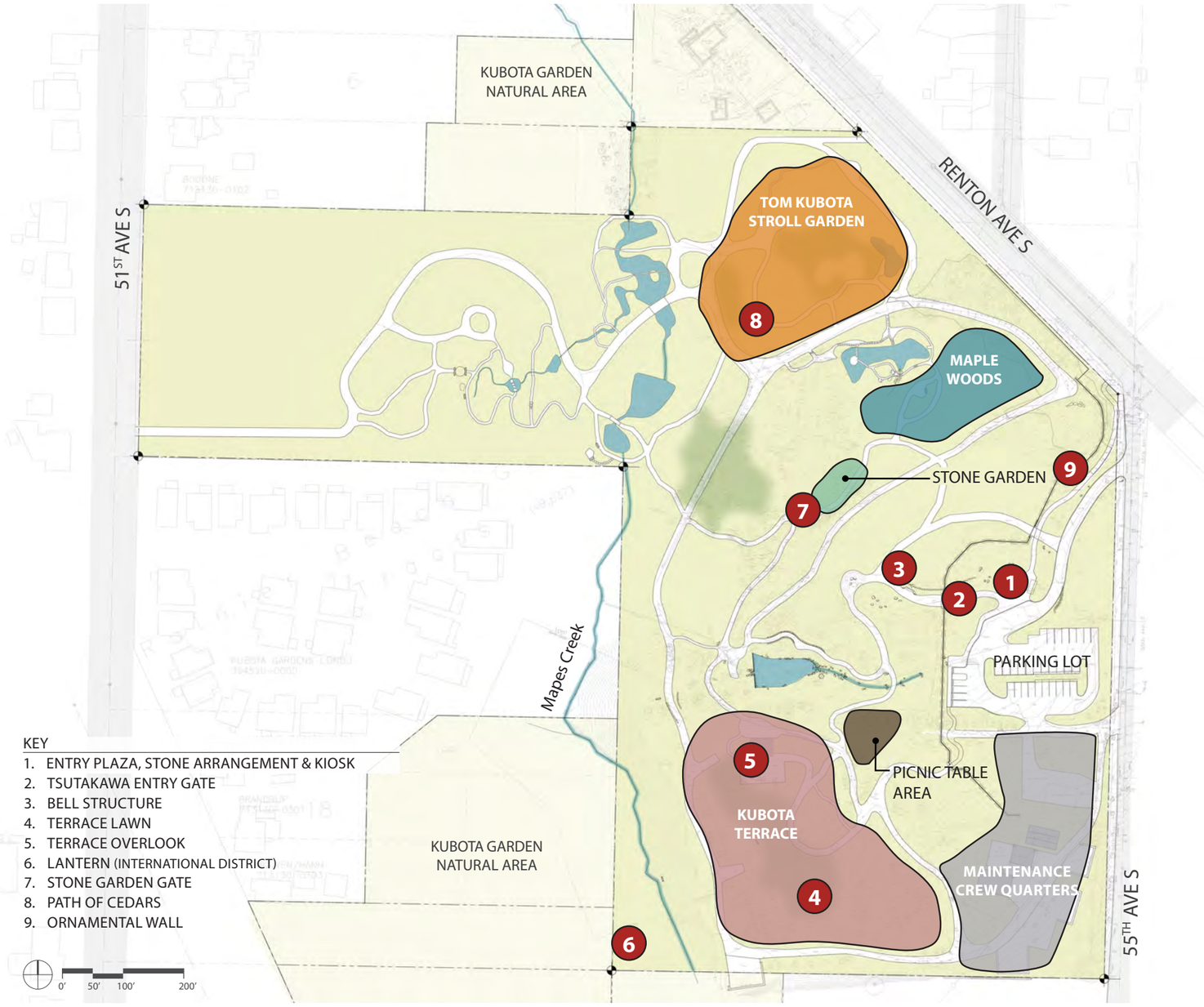
New Designed Garden Spaces & Elements

Seattle Parks took over management of Kubota Garden in 1987 with support from the Kubota Garden Foundation. The transition from a private property to a public one required a number of improvements in order to increase visitor accessibility, safety, and comfort. These improvements, kickstarted by the 2004 Pro Parks Levy, also added new garden spaces to take advantage of the full 20 acres available to visitors as well as maintain the Garden's profile within the community.

- Garden Overlook (1995)
- Tom Kubota Stroll Garden (2001)*
- Pro Parks Levy improvements (2004)
- Ornamental Wall (2004-2018)*
- Tsutakawa Entry Gate (2004)*
- Symposium Garden (2004)
- Bell Structure at Entry (2007)
- Entry Overlook (2007)
- Stone Garden (2012) stones salvaged from a Kubota Garden Company installation on Renton Avenue South.
- Terrace Overlook (2015)* the dry-laid stone retaining wall of the overlook was crafted by Jyunji and Suminori Awata, 14th- & 15th-generation Japanese stone masons during a workshop organized by the Kubota Garden Foundation and attended by two dozen local masons as well as Seattle Parks staff
- Maple Woods (2016)

*projects led by the Kubota Garden Foundation in partnership with Seattle Parks. The Foundation provided support to Seattle Parks for the other projects on the above list

MAP: Major Designed Garden Spaces & Elements Installed since 1990



Events & Programming

Kubota Garden hosts a wide variety of events for all types of daytime users. Based on feedback gathered from the initial workshops held in May 2018, the primary goal is to provide an enjoyable visitor experience. Any scheduled events at the Garden should be managed as a secondary priority. Challenges associated with Event Programming at the Garden include:

- Lack of permanent restrooms that are serviced daily
- Balancing the needs of parking for events with the need for average visitor parking
- Balancing the provision of tranquil open space for average visitors with the desire for rentable event space
- Addressing the need for a specific events manager to ensure that event restrictions are met
- No after-dusk events unless limited lighting in the garden is provided
- Balancing maintenance resources among rented event areas and remaining garden areas; limitation of rentable Garden area to ensure appropriate maintenance can be achieved
- Mitigating the effects of events on the surrounding neighborhood
- Accommodating third-party delivery access for events

Future growth of existing events and the potential for future programming at the Garden should address the needs for access, lighting, and equipment.

Kubota Garden Foundation Events

The Kubota Garden Foundation hosts three annual events at the Garden.

Plant Sales | A Spring and a Fall plant sale have been held each year since 1991, drawing approximately 250-300 shoppers per 4-hour event and calling upon efforts of 45-50 volunteers. The volunteer effort begins two weeks prior to the event and focuses on plant procurement, nursery clean up and setup, plant pricing, and display. The plant sale is set up within the fenced nursery area at the Crew Quarters, with cashiers set up in one of the garage bays and plant will-call area in the staff parking area. The sales require vehicle access and turnaround for plant pick-up. The plant sales are an important revenue generator for the Foundation that enables them to be a strong partner with Seattle Parks in the management of Kubota Garden

Annual Meeting | The Annual Meeting draws approximately 150-200 attendees every Fall, held around the end of September. The meeting features live performances, a Garden update from the lead gardener and others, and lunch. The event is held at the Terrace Overlook, which provides a covered area for performers and a level area for tables, chairs, and booths. Vehicle access to the venue is critical for the delivery of equipment and materials to be used at the meeting. As attendance to this event grows, there will be a need to expand into a larger area.

Other KGF Events | The Kubota Garden Foundation offers a variety of events held throughout the year that occur throughout the Garden. These include:

- Monthly Free Public Tours
- Free Group Tours
- Nursery Work Parties, various times of the year
- Sword Fern & Liriope Cutting Party, Spring
- Soapstone Carving Workshops for Youth
- Wandering & Wondering Butoh Performance, Summer
- Volunteer Appreciation Reception
- Fall Color Tours, Weekends in late October
- Japanese Iris Exhibit
- Maple Festival

Suggested Events and/or Programming | Feedback from the initial workshops in May 2018 generated multiple event suggestions, including:

- Summer concert series
- Auction of specific garden areas for special use events
- Rentable event-related items owned by KGF (i.e. chairs, tables, etc)
- Outdoor movies
- Art in the Garden
- Classes
- Promote Garden to local community
- Historic Garden Tour
- Institutional Membership Program

KGF Plant Sales
Photos: Joy Okazaki

Annual Meeting at the Kubota Terrace, 2018
Jones & Jones

Event Space Rental

Kubota Garden hosts approximately 24 daytime weddings per year. Each wedding ceremony is limited to 150 people, although capacity has not been enforced in the past. Ceremonies are restricted to the Terrace Overlook, which aids in minimizing the disruption that formal events cause to the casual Garden visitor. However, processions through the Garden are permitted.

The Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation manages Outdoor Ceremony event rental use at Kubota Garden. Fees are required to use the Garden as a ceremony area, and must be paid to the Parks Department. At the time of this report, the fee is listed as $200/hour with a three hour minimum, plus $25/hour for a Parks Attendant. All fees go to the City of Seattle General Fund. An increase in venue fees is unlikely until additional visitor services and accommodations are implemented at the Garden (i.e. permanent restrooms).

Photography

Kubota Garden is a popular site for casual and professional photography. Many families and other groups gather at the Garden for its exquisite beauty as a backdrop for their various cultural celebrations. Use of the Garden in this way is a reminder of the cultural diversity in this neighborhood, and provides an opportunity for cultural exchange among visitors to the Garden.

Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation regulates Professional, Commercial, and large Group photography and issues permits either through the Event Scheduling Office or the Seattle Office of Film and Music. However, there is currently no enforcement of photography permits and it is likely that the majority of professional photographers at the Garden do not have permits.

Maintenance Area

The maintenance area houses offices and equipment for the Park Department's garden staff. There are currently 3.0 full-time employees who are supplemented with up to 400 hours from the Seattle Park's Landscape Crew. The office square footage is sufficient space for up to eight full-time garden staff and ten seasonal crew.

The maintenance yard is adequately sized for materials (bulk storage and equipment). A nursery area and holding yard are currently acceptable for current levels of maintenance. Staff parking works for current staffing levels but will be undersized as staff are added. The current garden map shows the service road from the terrace overlook to the maintenance area as a path – which results in visitors exiting the garden via the maintenance driveway. Without the maintenance area being secured, this phenomenon will continue to be an issue. Securing the maintenance area is important to both improve the visitor experience, as well as protect the resources held in this area.

Events & Photography at the Garden
Jones & Jones (2018)

V. Garden Needs

Kubota Garden and the 20 acres of surrounding Natural Areas are an important open space for the immediate community and the larger region. Visitation reached 97,389 visitors at the end of 2018. Since visitation has been growing annually by 15% per year since 2014, the needs of the Garden must be identified and addressed in order to continue to serve the community and maintain its original integrity. Visitor services and garden quality are the areas that require the most attention to meet the needs of users and garden vitality. This section distinguishes the various needs of the Garden based on the following areas:

- Carrying Capacity
- Circulation
- Security
- Visitor Center
- Visitor Amenities
- Programming
- Collections
- Sustainability

Since 1987, Kubota Garden has grown into an icon that reflects Japanese culture and experience in the United States. It is a shared place for contemplation, celebration and education. As attendance grows, the mission of the Garden must respond to the needs of its local community as its primary audience, with an understanding that as the breadth of programming and opportunities at the Garden grows, so will the extent of its impact. Meeting the needs identified in this section should position the Garden to expand its impact and improve its service to the local community.

Carrying Capacity

As visitation increases, the wear and tear on the Garden increases and the sense of solitude and peacefulness is impacted. How many people can fit on the pathways and how many events can the Garden accommodate on any given day and/or throughout the year without impacting the Garden's aesthetic quality and thus diminish the visitors appreciation for the Garden? The answer to this question relies on finding the balance point between the impact of increased visitation with the curative application of increased garden staffing. Defining an aesthetic standard and optimal number of visitors within the Garden is important in terms managing visitor numbers in order to maintain the unique visitor experience Kubota Garden offers.

Circulation

Outside the Garden

Improved connectivity to the Garden from the immediate and regional community is needed to promote usage of the Garden. These connections can be made through improved directional signage on surface streets leading to the Garden as well as improved visibility of the Garden from Renton Avenue South and 51st Avenue South.

Metro Bus Route 106 runs along Renton Avenue and has three stops within 1000 feet of the intersection of Renton Avenue and 55th Avenue. Relocating one of the southbound stops to the curb adjacent to the Signature stone would provide riders with dropoff close to the Garden. This stop would also prevent cars from parking on Renton Avenue and blocking visual access to the Signature stone.

Currently, plans are being developed to improve the planted edge of the Garden at its northeast corner to expand the Garden aesthetic earlier in the arrival sequence thus alerting passers-by of the Garden's presence. This effort, with the newly completed Ornamental Wall will serve to improve the multi-modal arrival experience to the Garden.

Pedestrian and vehicular improvements to the west side of 55th Avenue South are needed to address potential safety issues. There is no curb or sidewalk south of the entry driveway. Cars park on the avenue's shoulder forcing pedestrians to walk in the road. A new curb and sidewalk would provide a safe place to walk as well as defining on-street parking.

Inside the Garden

The current parking lot offers 35 stalls (32 standard and 2 accessible). This limited capacity causes vehicle spillover to neighboring streets, including 55th Avenue South and Renton Avenue. Because the shoulder of 55th Avenue South is not paved and does not have a curb, this heavy use impact affects the water quality of stormwater that flows from this area to the Spring Pond and onward to Mapes Creek. Thus, there is a need for an expanded parking area for the Garden.

In addition to the limited capacity of the current parking area, there are ongoing issues with vandalism to vehicles parked here. Design efforts should be made to increase visibility of the parking area and decrease the ease of vandals accessing parked cars. The redesigned parking and arrival area should also implement safe pedestrian routes from parked cars to the entry plaza, lighting, security cameras, and bicycle parking.

The most commonly reported issue in the Garden is the subject of wayfinding. Visitors have reported it being a challenge both to find their way around the Garden, as well as to find their way out of the Garden when they are ready to leave. A new wayfinding plan should be two-fold:

- Make adjustments to paths to establish pathway hierarchy (i.e. via path width and/or surfacing), and
- Develop directional/wayfinding signage at key decision-making intersections within the garden

In addition to the adjustments above, an overall improvement to the Garden arrival experience should consider ways to prepare visitors with the tools to successfully find their way within the Garden; a new visitor orientation shelter that is visible and appealing should provide wayfinding maps.

Conversely, many visitors cherish Kubota Garden for its multitude of opportunities to "get lost" in the Garden. Carefully introducing small wayfinding mechanisms on the primary Garden paths, such as exit signs, should not detract from the smaller, exploration trails that allow visitors to customize their experience in the Garden.

Security

Security in the Garden pertains to visitors, vehicles, Garden resources (including maintenance equipment and plant material), and Garden integrity.

Visitors

Kubota Garden is only open to the public during daylight hours; however, because the gates to the Garden do not close when the Garden closes, there is no control over visitors entering and exiting the Garden outside of open hours. Further, there is not a mechanism in the place that indicates to visitors across the expanse of the Garden that it is close to closing time. These two factors contribute to the risk of visitors being deep within the Garden at closing time, possibly without means to find their way back to the exit. While rare, visitors caught in the Garden after dark typically are without means to find their way out. This risk may be addressed in a variety of ways:

- Improve visibility of Garden closing time posted early on in the Garden experience
- Improve visibility of and access to wayfinding mechanisms (i.e. maps and signage)
- Provide information about the distance and estimated length of time to exit the Garden from the Lower Gardens (so that visitors may plan to depart prior to dark)
- Implement an aural cue that can be heard across the Garden, indicating visitors to begin their exit
- Provide discrete lighting along the main path that leads visitors out of the Garden to the exit

Vehicles

Security of parked vehicles in main parking lot has been an ongoing issue. There is a need to improve the lines-of-sight from 55th Avenue South, increase visibility of the parking area from the main gate and 55th Avenue, provide tall transparent fencing along 55th Avenue, and serpentine the drive lanes through the parking area to prevent quick drive-throughs by thieves. Additional improvements should include lighting of the parking area and use of security cameras.

Security of Garden Resources

Security of garden resources includes maintenance equipment, maintenance areas, and plant material throughout the Garden. The maintenance area should be securely fenced and off-limits from visitors to protect Garden support resources as well as the safety of visitors. Various mechanisms are in place to protect the integrity of plant material and collections at the Garden including wire mesh fencing to keep pedestrians out of vulnerable planting areas, lengths of fencing along the property perimeter, and garden etiquette rules posted at the entry kiosk.

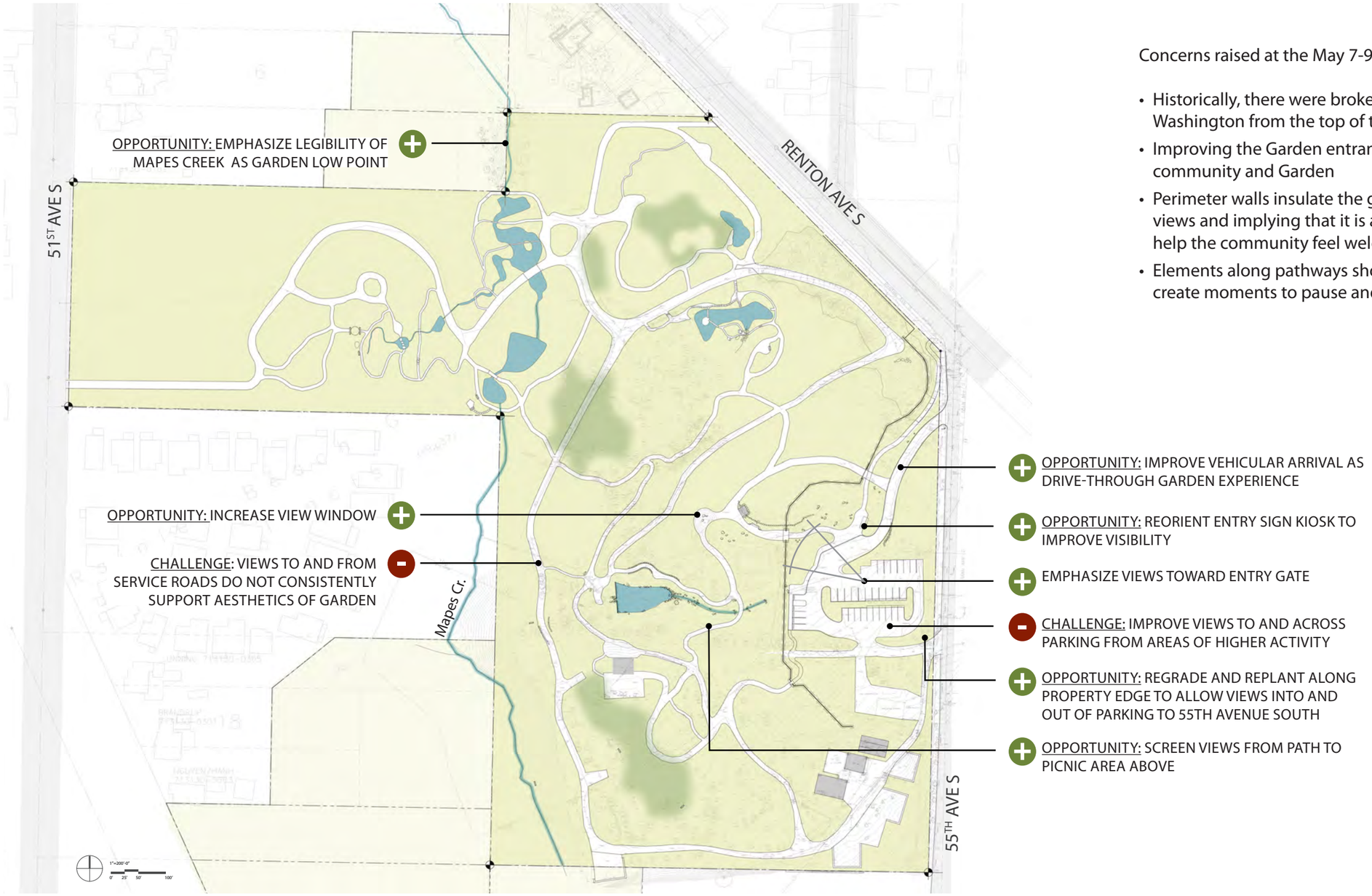
These security mechanisms should be bolstered by adding perimeter fencing that creates controlled entry/exit points into the Garden, improved visual cues to pathway edges and hierarchy to encourage visitors to stay on the path, and a more visible visitor orientation kiosk that identifies the importance of garden etiquette.

Visitor Center

The 1990 Kubota Garden Master Plan identified the need for a Visitor Center at Kubota Garden to provide visitor services that would improved the visitor experience. This need for a Visitor Center has gone unfulfilled for nearly thirty years. With more than 100,000 visitors anticipated in 2020, coupled with the 15% annual increase in visitation, as well as meeting the expectations of a progressively more sophisticated garden visitor, the need to provide services commensurate with Kubota's garden peers is paramount.

Most visitor-related facilities are located within natural, historic, or culturally significant landscapes and the structures are secondary to their settings. This is especially true at Kubota Garden where people are coming to enjoy the Garden; the Visitor Center should play an important yet supportive role in that experience. The primary uses include a welcoming space with a reception/exhibit area and a small gift shop, a meeting room to accommodate program events and indoor exhibitions, restroom facilities, refreshment service, outdoor courtyards and decks for informal gatherings, and space for the Kubota Garden Foundation staff.

MAP: View Challenges and Opportunities



Concerns raised at the May 7-9, 2018 Master Plan Workshop:

- Historically, there were broken views toward the east of Lake Washington from the top of the mountainside
- Improving the Garden entrance will strengthen connection between community and Garden
- Perimeter walls insulate the garden from the community, limiting views and implying that it is a private space; efforts should be made to help the community feel welcome
- Elements along pathways should be developed and emphasized to create moments to pause and enjoy the views

Visitor Amenities

Restrooms & Drinking Fountains

Permanent restrooms are needed to replace the two existing temporary port-o-lets near the main entry and improve the visitor experience. Grant funding is being pursued to install a new permanent restroom structure near the Kubota Terrace that will house two gender-neutral restrooms and a drinking fountain. Additional restrooms as part of the planned Visitor Center are needed near the main entry as well as near the lower garden.

One existing drinking fountain is located near the main entry. Additional fountains should be implemented wherever other future restroom buildings occur.

Seating

Seating opportunities occur throughout the Garden in the form of stone boulders, benches, and lawn areas. Additional seating should be implemented that offers a similar character to the existing seating. Such seating should be highly visible to encourage use, as well as meet accessibility goals.

Interpretive Elements

Based on visitor and community feedback, there is an interest in having more interpretive and/or educational elements in the Garden. A new Visitor Center can accommodate interpretative elements in a variety of ways. Interpretive opportunities could be included in other areas of the Garden as well, such as at restroom facilities and historic garden elements. Interpretation should focus on the history of the Kubota family and the Garden, descriptions of the historic garden elements, and plant identification. This can be done through the use of subtle interpretive panels and smartphone apps. Any interpretive element should not distract from the integrity of the Garden nor limit the existing sense of wonder and exploration that the Garden offers.

Programming & Events

Current events and programming limitations are in response to ambient noise, seating, parking, and the need to balance needs of events users with those of the typical Garden visitor. An Event and Programming Plan should be developed in order to determine space needs for present and future growth. This plan should also include appropriate activities to minimize disruptions within the Garden, define event areas and determine lighting and/or other infrastructure needs.

Collections

The Master Plan identified the following items that need additional planning effort to provide future decision-makers with the proper information for the ongoing growth of the Garden.

Collections Plan, Horticulture

A report detailing the specific trees and shrubs used in the designed gardens and remnant nursery areas, the preferred viewshed/viewpoints shown on the garden map with accompanying narrative, development of a preferred replacement plant list, a hazard tree policy, and an overall plant inventory.

Collections Plan, Objects

There are a number of unique objects that contribute to the Garden experience such as the bell and the stone lantern in the Japanese Garden. A policy document regarding the care and documentation of such objects should be part of a Collections Plan. The plan could also be helpful in assessing the donation of items to the garden.

There are a number of missing objects, mostly small stone lanterns, that appear in historic photographs. A review of all historic photos in the KGF archive should be done to determine the type and approximate location of such items. As renovation of the Core Garden spaces takes place, consideration should be given to purchasing replicas of the missing objects and securely placing them with the Garden.

It would be helpful to develop a policy that outlines the types of items the Garden would like (i.e. bells, lanterns, and benches) and where they would best fit into the Garden. Donated objects should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine if they meet a Garden need. This policy would include how donor recognition within the garden would be carried out.

The Collections Plan would provide an annual audit as to the condition of objects and provide criteria for the time and type of restoration, if any, to occur.

Collections Plan, Wildlife (Koi & Wildlife Management)

It is recommended that a wildlife and koi management plan be developed in order to both monitor and maintain the koi in the ponds as well as desired in-situ and migratory wildlife. An annual census should be taken of koi and protective guidelines should be developed.

Sustainability

Green Infrastructure & Sustainability are key program elements at Seattle Parks. All new work at Kubota Garden should adhere, where feasible, to Seattle Parks Sustainability goals. Where it is not feasible, an alternative plan should be developed and agreed to in order for the Garden to remain a neighborhood asset of green infrastructure and sustainability. This is covered in greater detail on pages 42-43.

Other Recommendations

The Kubota Garden Foundation and Seattle Parks should develop an Optimal Operating Model Study to determine the best approach in handling future management, maintenance and operations, visitor services, and programming. Each organization should exploit its strengths in the best interest of the Garden. This study should be completed prior to fundraising and implementation of the Master Plan elements.

VI. Preferred Concept

The process of arrival to a final preferred concept for Kubota Garden involved the development of guiding principles to a number of Garden areas. Several alternatives were developed, discussed and reviewed with the Kubota Garden Foundation, Seattle Parks, and the Public, whose feedback led to this preferred concept.

Comments included aesthetic intent, visitor circulation, resolving current garden issues and needs, expansion of visitor services in the appropriate locations, stormwater treatment strategies and options, historic preservation, interpretation and stories, creating a compelling immigrant experience, evaluating wayfinding improvements while maintaining the Garden's visual quality of minimal to no signage, and historic preservation strategies that would better meet the Garden's Mission Statement.

"I think that while we are here, we do what we can. Then the next generation comes along and does what they can. There is more to do and, if we strive for it, we will get it done."

—Tom Kubota, Summer 1992

"I feel the garden is ready to go to the next level and start considering what is most appealing visually as opposed to keeping people on a narrow path."

—Allan Kubota, 2018

Kubota Garden Preferred Concept

KEY
1. MAIN PARKING
2. ORIENTATION SHELTER
3. PERIMETER WALL
4. VISITOR CENTER
5. PICNIC AREA
6. KUBOTA TERRACE
7. SERVICE ROAD
8. SPRING POND
9. STONE GARDEN
10. MAPLE WOODS
11. JAPANESE GARDEN
12. TOM KUBOTA STROLL GARDEN
13. FERA FERA FOREST
14. NORTH GARDEN
15. TANYOSHO JUNCTION
16. CENTRAL GARDEN
17. NECKLACE OF PONDS
18. MOUNTAINSIDE
19. WEST GARDEN
20. SEATTLE PARKS NURSERY
21. MAINTENANCE AREA
22. NATURAL AREAS
23. GREEN BUFFER

Guiding Principles

The following principles provide a framework for decision-making and implementing future changes at the Garden that maintain consistency with the tenets of the Garden Mission. They are divided into four categories: History, Visitor Experience, Garden Management, and Sustainability. Any project undertaken at the Garden shall respond to these principles in its planning, design, and execution. Further detail for specific areas of the Garden that have been discussed as part of this master plan update begin on page 48.

"Lots of times you hear people say it's not authentic Japanese... Our feeling was, you make a garden that fits in with the locality. It's a Northwest garden with a Japanese influence."

Tom Kubota

"Family Garden May Become a Park," Joni Balter, Seattle Times Sept 3 1987, B1

History

The rich history of Kubota Garden will be acknowledged and celebrated in perpetuity

- The Garden shall continue to showcase Fujitaro Kubota's original intent:

  "to leave some enduring work, a memorial that will not only beautify the community, but will promote goodwill and give Americans a better appreciation of the culture of Japan."
  (Seattle Times, John J. Reddin, December 6, 1968, p22)

- Since 1988, the Kubota Garden Foundation and Seattle Parks have successfully collaborated in making improvements to the Garden. Together, they have built more than sixty projects that make the Garden more accessible, attractive, and safe for visitors. The work of this successful partnership continues to ensure that Fujitaro Kubota's vision for the Garden is fulfilled.
- Kubota Family history should be embedded in interpretive and educational elements
- Historic Gardens (pre-1988)
  - Core Garden: the three garden areas (Japanese Garden, Mountainside, and Necklace of Ponds) shall be restored and maintained to a standard based on a defined Period of Significance that strives to closely represent the original design intent where feasible without impinging on visitor safety
  - Remnant Nursery: remnant nursery areas should be maintained to promote their legibility and preservation of the diversity and layout of the plant material
- New Gardens (post-1988)
  - New garden areas and elements designed in conjunction with the Kubota Family (Tom and Allan Kubota) will be documented and conserved
  - New garden area and elements added to the Garden by Seattle Parks since 1990 shall be documented and conserved, where appropriate

Visitor Experience

Kubota Garden should offer the public connections to nature and peacefulness

- Kubota Garden is a passive, specialty garden, not an active-recreation park
- Arrival to the Garden should provide a distinctive experience through sequential placement of visual cues (i.e. parking, pathways, plazas, planting, signage, gate)
- Incorporate subtle wayfinding cues that aid in the enjoyment of the Garden, without detracting from the sense of exploration and solitude
- Clear thresholds to major garden areas could bolster wayfinding
- Pathway hierarchy should be implemented to strengthen wayfinding (i.e. widths and surfacing)
- Encourage Garden stewardship and etiquette by offering well-maintained Garden Spaces and Natural Areas
- Create opportunities for direct, hands-on contact with plants in the Garden, either through Docent tours or volunteer work parties
- Provide visitor amenities (i.e. visitor center, restrooms, refreshments, seating, small shelters)
- Accessibility
  - Accessible paths should be provided where feasible and appropriate; new or updated paths should not be a detriment to the visitor experience nor detract from the original garden intent
  - All visitor amenities shall be accessible
- Tell compelling stories through interpretive elements, classes, and tours (i.e. immigrant experience in Seattle, Kubota family history, Mapes Creek watershed, natural areas, wildlife)
  - Permanent interpretive elements should be limited to the Visitor Center area; temporary interpretive elements within the Garden should be subtle and unobtrusive to the Garden experience
- Trash cans should only be provided in prescribed areas (i.e. Terrace Overlook, Visitor Center, Picnic Area, Visitor Orientation Shelter/ Kiosk)

Garden Management

Provide a consistent level of management that highlights the History of the Kubota Family and strengthens a safe and enjoyable Visitor Experience

Plant Material Management

- Plant material should be selected to support visitor safety and risk-reduction
- Plant material selection should accommodate future climatic conditions
- Replacement plant material should reflect the Garden's history and context

Historic Gardens (Core Garden and Remnant Nursery Spaces)

- Restoration of Core Gardens to a defined Period of Significance shall have priority over the development of new gardens
- Replacement plant material should be in-kind, unless it's invasive, poses a safety risk to visitors, or is difficult to maintain. If that is the case, replacement plants should match the characteristics and design intent of the original material
- The Kubota-intended viewpoints and viewsheds shall be identified, restored, and maintained where feasible

Existing Non-Core Gardens

- Existing non-core gardens shall be maintained to a standard based upon original design intent
- Changes to existing non-core gardens must follow guiding principles for New Gardens (see below)
- Replacement plant material should match the characteristics and design intent of the original material; replacement plant material shall consider risk and safety of visitors and surrounding Garden elements

New Gardens

- New gardens should honor Fujitaro Kubota's intent to beautify the community and promote goodwill and appreciation for the culture of Japan
- Planning and design of new gardens should not impede the ability to manage Historic Gardens to the Period of Significance
- New gardens should not distract from or impinge upon the visual quality of the Historic Gardens, i.e. the Maple Woods disrupting the view of the waterfall in the Japanese Garden
- Development of new gardens should be complementary to qualities and characteristics of the whole garden (i.e. plant quirkiness, color, texture, and diversity of plant characteristics)
- New gardens should demonstrate ecologically sound principles, including:
  - Habitat contribution
  - No invasive plant species
  - Improve stormwater quality
- Green buffers should be added in areas that need noise attenuation or provide a visual backdrop to specific gardens. These buffers can double as impromptu garden spaces if accessible.

Natural Areas

- Natural Areas shall be maintained to provide a visual backdrop for the Garden
- Management of natural areas should improve habitat quality by reducing non-native species and improving plant diversity
- Access to Natural Areas should facilitate stewardship processes
- Access to Natural Areas should be limited in order to protect their integrity and promote security of the Garden; access should not detract from their natural quality
- Collaboration between Garden and Natural Areas management practices should be maintained

Maintenance Standards

- The primary focus of Garden maintenance shall be on visitor safety and visitor experience
- Grounds, including garden areas and back-of-house areas, should provide a consistent visual message through the maintenance of plants, water systems, and pathways
- Decrease and/or eliminate the presence of invasive plants over time
- Trash receptacles should be managed for timely removal of waste

Water Quality

- Stormwater runoff leading to Mapes Creek should be managed to decrease sediment loads in ponds and downstream
- Sediment reduction measures in ponds should be implemented to improve water quality in the Mapes Creek Watershed
- Stormwater management features should be implemented as a garden amenity wherever possible
- Bioswales should be maintained to maximize stormwater management function

Garden Facilities & Operations

Facilities and operations should enhance the visitor experience as supportive and complementary elements to the Garden

Visitor Center

- The Visitor Center shall support the Garden's mission
- Should reinforce the arrival sequence to the Garden
- Should allow an overview of the Garden but structures should not impinge on the viewsheds from the Core Gardens

Restrooms

- Shall be located for convenient use but not directly in the viewshed of any designed garden area
- Restroom design should complement the character of the Garden and shall meet Seattle Parks standards for accessibility, safety and maintenance

Operations

- Allow for increased staffing to accommodate future visitor growth
- Service and event gates shall be controlled by Garden staff
- Visitor Center structures should be designed for standard maintenance procedures by Parks staff, custodial services and volunteers

Circulation

- Allow for dedicated internal service routes where feasible

Facility Security

- As a public open space, the Garden should be safe and secure
- There are many parts of the Garden's perimeter that are not fenced. Fencing and gates that do exist are a combination of Seattle Parks chainlink of various height and private homeowners wood fencing and gates of various designs. Wood fencing provides the homeowner with privacy, but the gates serve as private entries into the Garden and should be permanently closed for security purposes.
- The other perimeter weakness concerns the boundaries where the Garden and Natural Areas meet. Much of the Natural Areas are inaccessible due to the ravines on the west. The north natural area abutting the Garden's north boundary is currently an impromptu access trail to the Garden from Renton Avenue to where the existing fencing ends. Seattle Parks Property Management should address these as garden security issues.
- Maintenance area shall be fenced and secured to distinguish between visitor/non-visitor areas
- Maintenance operations area shall have a separate entry/exit gate from the visitor vehicle entry and exit
- Security measures should be implemented in the main parking lot to deter vandalism and theft
- Designed elements in the Garden should promote safety and security of visitors and Garden resources; vandalism, break-ins, and sense of security should be addressed through maintenance standards where feasible
- Garden etiquette guidelines shall be prominently posted at Garden entry and on the visitor map

Healthy Environments

Improvements to Kubota Garden should also meet, where feasible, the sustainability principles identified by the Seattle Parks and Recreation Healthy Environment Action Agenda below:

- Expand Equity
- Increase Engagement
- Reduce Energy Use
- Conserve Water
- Increase Biodiversity
- Improve Air Quality
- Reduce Solid Waste

In addition to the above principles the Garden should also seek sustainable lighting options if lighting is planned for the future.

- Permanent Garden lighting should be unobtrusive where feasible, and designed to meet Dark Skies Initiative guidelines to minimize light pollution.

Source:

https://www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/special-initiatives-and-programs/healthy-environment-action-agenda

History: Fujitaro Kubota's Life, Inspiration, and Garden Style

Fujitaro Kubota: Inspiration Sources and Garden Styles

The Kubota Garden mission statement incorporates respect as one of three key principles guiding the maintenance and development of the garden. To fully realize this objective it is vital that Fujitaro's style and the interconnections between his gardens and the Japanese tradition are clearly understood. The conclusions made are based on direct evidence where available while also drawing upon close study of the similarities between representations of Japanese gardens common when Fujitaro started working as a gardener with the Japanese-style gardens he built throughout his career.

This stylistic analysis of Fujitaro's work is based on the understanding that design and reception of Japanese gardens is historically dynamic. Although the mannerist fashion that dominated Japanese gardens during the 19th and early 20th centuries is now widely dismissed, that fashion had been the prevailing narrative in guidebooks and garden manuals since the middle of the 18th century. In the intimate, reflexive relationship between audience and artist, an "authentic" Japanese garden when Fujitaro started working in Seattle was different from our contemporary understanding.

The record about what Fujitaro may have studied, as well as his access to possible Japanese garden design source materials (books, postcards, prints, etc.), is limited. Even such basic information as the extent of his travel to Japan during his life, or his ongoing engagement with his family in Japan, is minimal. Despite this lack of certainty, it is possible to situate Fujitaro's work within contemporaneous trends in Japanese garden design. The designs he executed are remarkably close to the forms and elements espoused by the available literature at that time (Conder, 1893, 1912 and Newsom, 1939). His use of rockeries, and the expansive, park-like spaces captured in early photographs of the Kubota property appear to be a combination of the large lawns and rock walls found in Edo period gardens with the Olmsted Brothers naturalistic design work for Seattle parks - making the case that Kubota was likely combining the gardens that he would have seen while visiting Japan with a sensibility cultivated in his adopted homeland.

One key conclusion is that Fujitaro was not an iconoclast with a deliberate disregard for tradition, but rather a master craftsman who showed a lifelong commitment to cultivating his skill and his art. In the vogue of the past half-century or so, such a conservative approach to following rules as they are written might seem 'square'. However, such an approach is not widely embraced even among Japanese gardeners at the time of this writing; when Fujitaro started his career as a gardener, the idea of rejecting tradition would have been even more extreme.

Classifying Fujitaro Kubota's Garden Styles

The Kubota Garden Foundation's collection of historical images was used to understand the development of the Kubota property and for the types of gardens Fujitaro built for clients and for himself over his career. There are several garden styles built by the Kubota Gardening Company that are recognizable from the archival images:

- Hill-and-pond gardens (*tsukiyama*) (Japanese Garden, Necklace of Ponds)
- Large-scale works (The Mountainside)
- Rockeries
- Pocket gardens

The hill-and-pond gardens created by Kubota are recognizably Japanese. The word *tsukiyama* means "artificial hill" and it is this eponymous feature that is the defining element of *tsukiyama*-style gardens. An area is excavated to create a pond with the excavated soil mounding as a hill that would serve as a backdrop for the garden. These hills would be set with stones, would often incorporate a small stream and waterfall, and would be planted in to represent fanciful mountain scenes. The *tsukiyama*-style incorporated a set number of other features that are defined in careful variety in the garden manuals like *Tsukiyama Teizo Den*. Japanese Gardens: an Illustrated Guide to their Design and History. Josiah Conder's 1893 adaptation of this manual for an English-speaking audience elaborates these elements in slightly more detail than the Japanese originals. The chapter titles of Conder's text provide a tidy list of Japanese garden features as follows: stones, lanterns, pagodas, water basins, enclosures, wells, bridges, arbors, ornamental water, vegetation, and garden composition. Each of these chapters provides examples and sets forth elaborate rules about the appropriate use and meaning attributed to each feature and style. When describing the creation of the Japanese Garden at Kubota Garden, Tom Kubota described his father using this process of construction.

Interestingly, Fujitaro did not include all of these features in his gardens – water basins, wells, and fences are notably absent from his designs – but the features he did employ are recognizably laid out in the manner described in the texts. This pattern can be recognized in the comparison on the opposite page, pairing plates from garden manuals with gardens built by Fujitaro.

Hill-and-pond gardens were a staple of the Kubota business: the oldest preserved promotional materials are photos of hill-and-pond gardens. The waterfall at Seattle University campus incorporated the basic structure of hill, waterfall, pond, and islands. The same set of elements appear in a picture of a demonstration garden built for a 1962 trade show. (Images of these gardens are below in the section '*Tsukiyama* Gardens'). The waterfall gardens of the post-war period differ from the gardens illustrated in the garden manuals but they follow similar precedents: the core principles of stone placement that are employed in Kubota's hill-and-pond style gardens are used as the building blocks for each of the smaller waterfalls that compose the scene as a whole.

Fujitaro's large-scale works also have their design roots in the garden manuals. The hill-and-pond gardens are evident in early photographs of the Kubota property: images of Kubota standing with guests on the original Heart Bridge, or photos of Fujitaro's sons on the property while work was being done to create the Necklace of Ponds. The grand lawns, punctuated with Japanese-inspired waterfalls and planting details, exhibit a park-like sensibility that would also feature in his work in the late 1950's and 1960's at the Bloedel property on Bainbridge Island (now Bloedel Reserve). During the 1960's several other large-scale waterfalls were created, including the grand waterfall at the Mountainside built in 1962.

Another of Kubota's garden types, rockeries, have a potential precedent in a type of Japanese wall commonly found in the countryside, but it is likely that these were an adaptation of a local practice found in hilly Seattle. If Kubota were running a volume business during those early years, one possibility is that rockeries would have been a ready source of income that played well to his skills with stone and the diversity of his plant palette.

Lastly, the Foundation photo archive has images of "pocket gardens" - planting boxes and other narrow, urban sites that utilize an abbreviated set of Kubota's design elements: carefully set stones, pruned conifers, and an assortment of shrubs to fill out the design. While the Seattle University campus is quite large, several pocket gardens built by Kubota at Seattle University can be considered examples of this type of work.

Classifying Fujitaro Kubota's Gardens: Elements

In categorizing Fujitaro's gardens according to the style of construction, the list of materials and plants he used in his designs also provides a useful approach to understanding his work. He used many elements of Japanese gardens: natural boulders, earthwork to create hills and slopes, a variety of bridges, stepping stones, and lanterns are all recognizable elements drawn from the Japanese tradition. Yet some common garden features are unusually absent in his design work: stone water basins, wells, arbors, fences and gates, and garden buildings.

Fujitaro incorporated a range of plants in his design work, notably carefully trained pines. Yet he also utilized a range of other conifers not typically associated with Japanese gardens. This choice of plant materials is often cited as a departure from the perceived strictures of Japanese tradition. But in the garden manual Japanese Gardens, Josiah Conder introduced a list of plants used by Japanese gardeners with the disclaimer, "(T)he following list of Japanese domesticated trees, shrubs and plants may be found to some extent wanting in completeness," adding that while the plant names offered may be unfamiliar, "to omit all mention of them would be misleading and fail to give a correct idea of their rich diversity .... they imply an important addition to the landscape artist's stock of material for designing" (Conder, 1964, 110). The list that he provided ran to 12 pages of plants names, set out in paragraph form. Unfortunately, the middle class gardens of the Edo period that would have used the plants named in Conder's list are no longer extant. In this regard, we might regard Fujitaro as the messenger for a type of Japanese garden that has been lost in the shuffle of time, a marker for an overlooked historical diversity.

One of the woodblock prints from the Edo-period printings of Tsukiyama Teizo Den. The placement of stones on the hillside, used to support the main waterfall stone group, can also be seen in early photographs of the grand waterfall at Kubota Garden. (Source: Landscape Gardening in Japan, Figure 27, by Josiah Conder)

Photo of the Mountainside as viewed from the Zig Zag bridge at the Necklace of Ponds
KGF Photo #574, dated 1975

Sources of Inspiration: World's Fairs, Garden Manuals, and Travel to Japan

The gardens built for World's Fairs and private estates may have played a minor role in Fujitaro's decision to become a gardener, but are less likely to have provided material for his study of Japanese garden design. When the Meiji Emperor took power in 1868, the new government set to establish Japan as a respected nation on the world stage. World's Fairs were a new phenomenon at this time, a prime opportunity for national image building, and the decision was made to present a Japanese pavilion at the 1873 Universal Exposition in Vienna.

The success of the Vienna Exposition established a formula that endured in Japanese World's Fair pavilions, yielding many of the Japanese gardens built in U.S. cities: Philadelphia (1876); Chicago (1893); St. Louis (1904); and San Diego (1915). Fujitaro could have has access to the Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco, built for the 1894 exposition, but is unusual in that G.T. March, an Australian antique dealer who had immigrated to the United States by way of Japan, played a significant role in the design. The notable exception from this period was the Japanese garden not built for Seattle's Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in 1909, although an abbreviated garden in front of the teahouse on "Tokio Street" is preserved in archival photographs.

By the turn of the 20th century Japanese architecture had exerted a profound influence on American architects and houses – Frank Lloyd Wright had been deeply impressed by the Japanese pavilion at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Architects Greene and Greene, practicing in Pasadena, California from 1894-1922, had been to both the Chicago and St. Louis expositions and were openly emulating Japanese carpentry in their design of Craftsman-style houses. This influence included gardens and a Japanese garden became a de rigueur component for the estates of the wealthy. These private Japanese gardens were documented in magazines such as The Craftsman, American Homes and Gardens, and even in Scientific American. In Seattle, one Japanese garden remaining from this period is still extant: Katie Black's Garden, located on the north end of Beacon Hill. Frank Black, owner of Seattle Hardware Co., had built a Swiss chalet on three acres of land on Beacon Hill in 1896. In 1914 Frank offered to take Katie, his wife, on a grand tour of Europe as an anniversary gift; she replied that she would rather have a Japanese garden built.

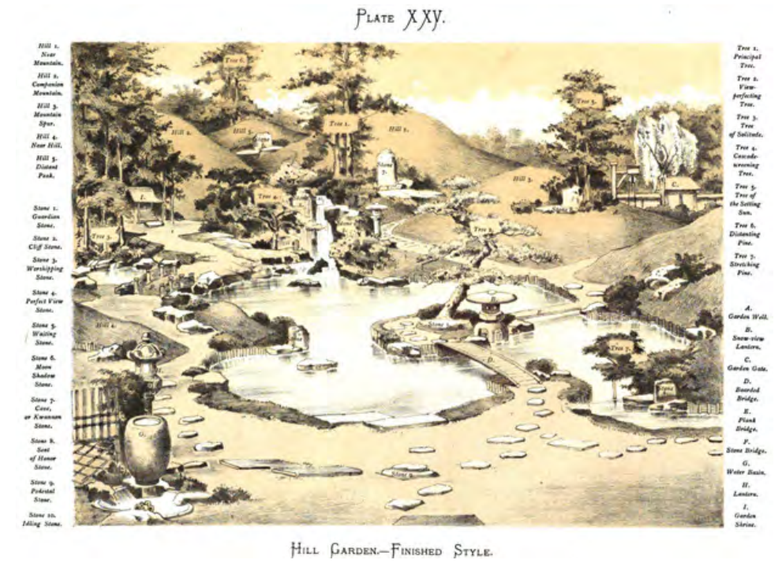
Fujitaro started building Japanese gardens in Seattle after the first great wave of fascination with Japan had crested.

Garden Manuals

The gardens built for World's Fairs and private estates might have played a role in Fujitaro's decision to become a gardener, but they are less likely to have provided material for his study of Japanese garden design. Tom Kubota described Fujitaro's approach to the Japanese Garden on the family property as one that closely followed a set pattern: "In those days, [Fujitaro] used to study some Japanese garden design, and most of it … is more conventional, 'they build it like this,' and, 'it should be like this,' so [Fujitaro] followed that pattern and built this." (Tom Kubota, interview with Don Brooks). When asked about any books or other guides that Fujitaro might have used, Allan Kubota did not recall seeing any books (personal communication, 2018). However, it is possible that any books Fujitaro had were lost during the 1942-1945 internment.

Garden manuals have a long and well-respected role in the Japanese tradition. The oldest of these texts, the Sakuteiki, was written in the 12th century and is still studied today. Over the following centuries, numerous new texts elaborated on existing principles or articulated new modes of garden design, thus establishing garden design as a treatment of serious inquiry among elites. The manual that Fujitaro is most likely to have encountered, in one form or another, was *Tsukiyama Teizo Den*, first published in 1735 by Kitamura Enkin. Akisato Rito republished this text in 1828 and it was further adapted and re-published several more times during the 19th century.

Comic illustrator Honda Kinkichiro's version of *Tsukiyama Teizo Den* utilized the lithographic process available in the 1880's to create illustrated drawings of various garden designs. Honda provided these illustrations for Josiah Conder's book Japanese Gardens: An Illustrated Guide to their Design and History (1893), the first English monograph on Japanese garden design. Honda used variations of his drawings in his own 1909 book Zukai Teien Zoho. Josiah Conder lived in Japan from 1877 until his death in 1920 and is best known as the founding professor of the Department of Architecture at the Imperial College of Engineering in Tokyo. Honda, in 1902, presented a lecture about Japanese gardens, accompanied by "lantern slides," to the American Institute of Architects in Chicago; the notes from this lecture, along with reproductions of the slides, was published that same year. The list of books that relied upon the illustrations from *Tsukiyama Teizo*



A lithograph produced by Honda Kinkichiro. Many of the features are recognizable from Fujitaro's gardens.

Bridge over pond in a private garden with a Kubota Gardening Company sign
KGF Photo #114, dated 1926

Den to explain the proper rules and true nature of Japanese gardens to Western audiences is quite long – it is easier to state that *Tsukiyama Teizo Den* featured prominently in nearly every book about Japanese garden design being published. Between 1890 and 1920 seven separate publishing companies produced editions of *Tsukiyama Teizo Den*, sometimes with separate authors listed, but all under variations of the original title. In the 1930's as many as 10 new books were being published in English every year. It is unknown if Fujitaro may have utilized the English or Japanese versions of the *Tsukiyama Teizo Den* but he would have been comfortable with the written Japanese used in academic writing from his experience studying at an agricultural school in Japan.

Direct study of gardens while visiting Japan is the second major source of knowledge and inspiration for Fujitaro's work, based on statements from both Fujitaro and Tom Kubota. According to Tom's statement, Fujitaro's travel to Japan could have been as frequent as every year. As with the other elements of Fujitaro's life during this period, details remain elusive. There are no confirmed travel dates that place Fujitaro Kubota in Japan during the early 1920's. An image in the Kubota Garden Foundation archive dated "1920-0-0" shows the Kubota family on board a ship bound for Japan (KGF Photo #69) does provide evidence of travel. Yet the only confirmed dates are trips in 1931 and 1939 per the Pacific Coast Architectural Database (http://pcad.lib.washington.edu/person/5033).

In the Kubota Garden Foundation archives, there is a picture postcard of the Joju-en garden at Suizenji – as this postcard is the only concrete evidence of Fujitaro's study in Japan, it bears some consideration. There is a caption on the front of the postcard that reads (in Japanese), "(100 views of Kumamoto); Overall view of Suizenji Joju-en, where there is a cold mineral spring." While the postcard in the archive is not dated, the image shown is still available in reprints and through antique book auctions, in addition to other images from the "100 views" series. Searching auction lots listed on the Internet in 2018 returned one auction lot for the identical image dated Taisho 12 (1923), while another dated image from the same series was dated 1929. It has long been common practice in Japan to re-print images of many years, so this long duration is not unexpected. Significantly, these two dates bracket the years when Fujitaro was starting his business and was most likely studying gardens while in Japan.

The garden of Ritsurin Koen, in Takamatsu, has been put forward as a significant influence on Fujitaro's work but the basis for this is not clear. A 1968 Seattle Times article states that Fujitaro saw gardens in Kochi as a youth and that his appreciation developed from that experience. One possibility is that a lack of familiarity with Japan lead to Ritsurin Koen being equated with 'gardens in Kochi.' Modern travel time from Kubokawa, where Fujitaro grew up, to Takamatsu, where Ritsurin Koen is located, are 5 hours at minimum. It is unlikely that Fujitaro would have had the opportunity to make the much longer trip while living in Japan. However, both Ritsurin Koen and Suizenji are the former palaces of Edo-period feudal lords. Although these gardens were built at the grand scale of palaces, they were both in the *tsukiyama*-style, built during the same historical period that produced the garden manuals that Fujitaro appears to have studied, again lending support to the decision to recognize Fujitaro's gardens as a local synthesis of the *tsukiyama*-style.

Takeo Shiota was trained as a gardener in Japan, and made his career designing Japanese gardens in the New York area. He designed the Japanese Garden at Brooklyn Botanical Garden, and also published two books on Japanese gardens in 1914 and 1915.

Girl in a kimono in front of Kubota Gardening Company sign
KGF Photo #110, dated 1926

One of the images from the lantern slides presented before the AIA by Honda Kinkichiro.

Postcard from Japan, 1920's. Japanese text reads, "(100 Views of Kumamoto); Garden of Suizen-ji Jojuen, where there is a cold mineral spring". Suizenji was the site of a feudal garden, built in the tsukiyama-style at a grand scale.
KGF Photo #120, 1926

VI. Preferred Concept

History: Setting the Period of Significance

Site Evolution

What makes Kubota Garden unique is its history as an evolving working landscape that supported three generations of the Kubota family with a secondary function as a community gathering place. Unlike the Portland Japanese Garden and the Seattle Japanese Garden in the Arboretum, Kubota Garden was not precisely planned. Mr. Kubota was an innately talented self-taught garden designer drawing upon selected Japanese garden elements, using the plants and locally available materials to shape his gardens in ways that made him happy, and more importantly, showed his clients what they could expect from the Kubota Landscape Company. Tom Kubota noted that his father had said "he couldn't relate to the clients what he wants to do, so he'd have them come to the gardens, and he'd point out a place and (say) your place will look like this in certain areas and so forth, so it was a showplace to the customer what he's going to do for them." (Don Brooks interview with Tome Kubota, Tom_Kubota_Tape1.mp4).

Mr. Kubota purchased the Renton Avenue property in 1927, moved his gardening business, and implemented three design projects: the Rockery Wall Showcase, the circular lawn areas and road system, and the Necklace of Ponds. All three were completed by 1930, along with nursery and sod areas. Why were these areas completed first? The Rockery Wall Showcase, the lawn areas and the Necklace of Ponds were envisioned as sales rooms. This also meant that the plants, rocks, and sod were often sold to customers and used in Kubota Gardening Company landscaping projects. An example of this is highlighted in a Seattle Times article from September 29, 1929 showing Kubota sod being unrolled in front of the Rainier Club in downtown Seattle.

Construction of new garden spaces continued through the 1930's, likely starting with the Lily Pond, Rose Garden and Planting Island, all completed prior to 1936. The Japanese Garden was completed between 1938 to 1940. Kubota continued to improve and upgrade the Necklace of Ponds from 1935 through the mid-1970's, and the Mountainside was last major garden to be completed in 1962.

There are several lost gardens based on a review of historic photos and aerial imagery. Gone are the Log Entry Gate and business sign on the Renton Avenue entrance. The Lily Pond, Planting Island, and Rose Garden were once featured aspects of the business and existed in some form from the mid-1930's to 1942. The Rockery Wall Showcase may still lurk under the mature plantings (if its rocks were not used in residential projects) that currently serve as a green backdrop to the Tom Kubota Stroll Garden.

After Mr. Kubota's death in 1973, his sons and grandson maintained both the business and property, eventually selling the property to Seattle Parks in 1987. Since then, the Kubota Garden Foundation and Seattle Parks staff have worked hard to bring the gardens to a level that would meet the Department's standards for visitor safety and comfort. Since 1991, more than 60 projects were carried out, from fencing, pond dredging, and bridge restoration to the new terrace overlook, ornamental gate and walls, informational kiosk, and the maintenance facility and yard. New gardens were also added: the Tom Kubota Stroll Garden (2001), the Entry Stone Garden (2004), the Stone Garden (2012), the Terrace Overlook (2015) and the Maple Woods (2016). Two of the consistent themes in Kubota Garden are change and adaptation.

Looking north, view of the Rockery Wall Showcase with Renton Avenue above, log entry gate on the far right. KGF Photo #46, dated 1930.

Period of Significance

The garden spaces on the Kubota property were always open to new improvisations created by the selling of trees, shrubs, and rocks as part of his landscaping business. As such, Mr. Kubota was not locked into a finished product - he continuously transformed the property's gardens to meet his business needs, his family's needs, and to continue to challenge himself as a garden designer. It is this ever-evolving timeline of changes over a 46-year period (1927-1973) that challenges setting a period of significance.

> "Period of significance refers to the span of time during which significant events and activities occurred. Events and associations with historic properties are finite; most properties have a clearly definable period of significance."[1]
>
> Defining an appropriate period of significance at Kubota Garden involved examining the site's overall integrity which assists in determining "authenticity of physical characteristics from which properties obtain their significance. When properties retain historic material and form, they are able to convey their association with events, people, and designs from the past… Historic integrity is the composite of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association."[4]

Determining the period of significance for Kubota Garden requires an understanding of how the property was used in support of the business and family, determining the order of construction and oversight of garden maintenance, and defining the areas of the Garden that were directly guided by Fujitaro's design style and philosophy. When evaluating the Gardens for integrity, the focus is on intactness of the hardscape, the colors and forms of the plants, and assessing how the setting and workmanship are reflected in the design.

[4] U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register Bulletin.

The recommended period of significance for Kubota Garden is 1970-1973. While garden construction began in 1927 with major work ending in 1962, the focus on 1970-1973 reflects the final "edits" of the property's gardens carried out by Fujitaro Kubota, his sons, and his grandson up to Fujitaro's death. This period, through photographic records and oral histories, best demonstrates the accumulated knowledge, passion, and design philosophy of Fujitaro and provides the strongest opportunity to share this with the public.

There are three areas within Kubota Garden that merit establishment of a period of significance: The Japanese Garden, The Ponds, and the Mountainside.

The following information could be used to renovate and establish the level of maintenance to bring these three specific gardens closer to the original vision of Mr. Kubota.

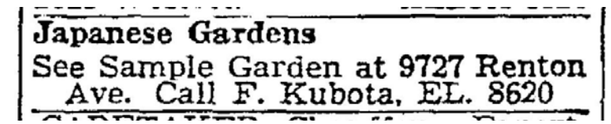
Design style and philosophy

As discussed earlier, Fujitaro likely used contemporary Japanese garden manuals to create a stylistic approach that interpreted the 'Hill and Pond' style in the majority of his built work. He took this style and adapted it in two ways for the American marketplace. First, the fusion of Japanese elements with two American elements: lawns and rockeries. Fujitaro had to have been aware of the garden trends happening right at his doorstep – the Seattle parks designed by the famed landscape architectural firm of the Olmsted Brothers. The Olmsted's broad lawn areas, ample walkways, and deciduous trees were hugely popular with Seattlites. Secondly, Fujitaro consciously omitted a number of standard Japanese garden elements from his design palette: raked gravel/sand, cut stone paths, stone water basins, fences and gates, stone arrangements, shishi-odoshi (water scare), dry stream beds, wells, cut stone walls, and buildings. Why these elements were not used in his design work both at the Garden and in client gardens is unknown but an informed conjecture is likely the initial investment in both materials and labor made them financially challenging to implement.

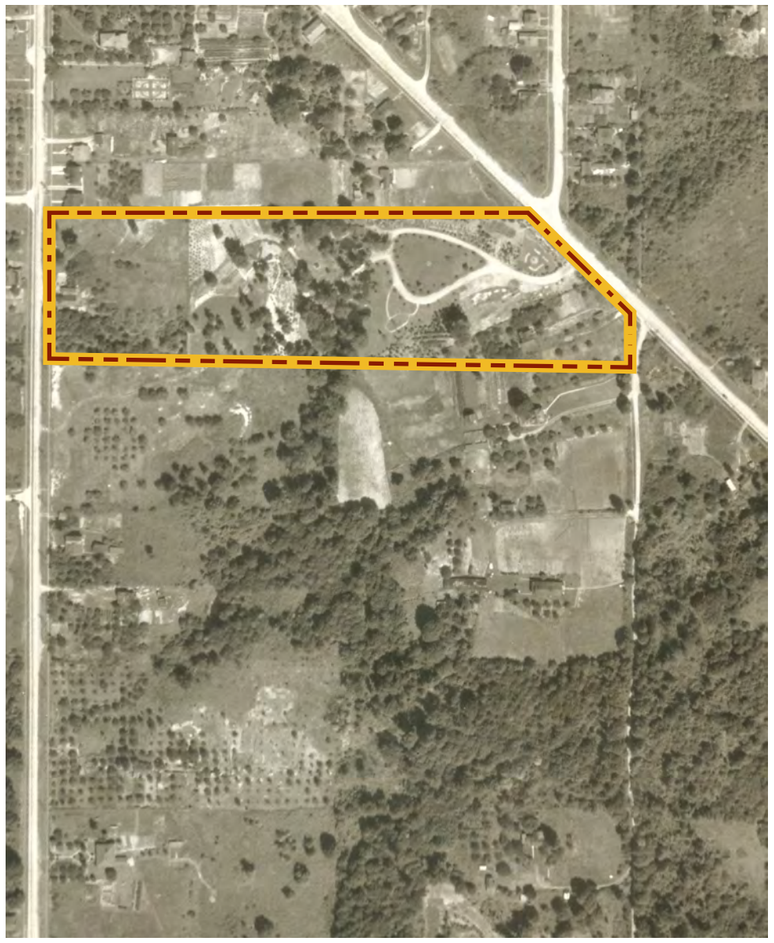
Garden Renovation to the Period of Significance

Samuel Newsom, in his 1953 book "A Thousand Years of Japanese Gardens" noted that, "The planting of the Japanese garden is based on the idea of creating a permanent picture, as the constructed scene must be presentable at all times. Just as a natural view of mountains or seashore is beautiful in Summer or Winter, the made landscape must never be unsightly." Much of this permanence was done through the selective pruning of shrubs. Conder noted in his book that "in dressing low garden shrubs, they are generally clipped into hemispherical forms, presenting rounded masses of varying shades of green upon the hill-sides, and between rocks and monuments. . . such spherical masses are frequently arranged in clumps on sloping ground so as to give the appearance of green hills." Such selective pruning is visible in the majority of pre-1975 archival photos and is evidence that Fujitaro was an adherent to this element of Japanese garden design philosophy. Reestablishment of this philosophy should be a goal in each of the garden renovations below.

NOTE: All Period of Significance Recommendations should be part of an overall Plant Collections Maintenance Plan to be developed and approved by the Garden Committee and Seattle Parks.


Japanese Gardens
See Sample Garden at 9727 Renton Ave. Call F. Kubota, EL. 8620

Source: Seattle Times, May 3, 1936, p.35



Aerial of Kubota Garden, 1936
Source: DENSHO

Aerial of Kubota Garden, 1946
Source: DENSHO

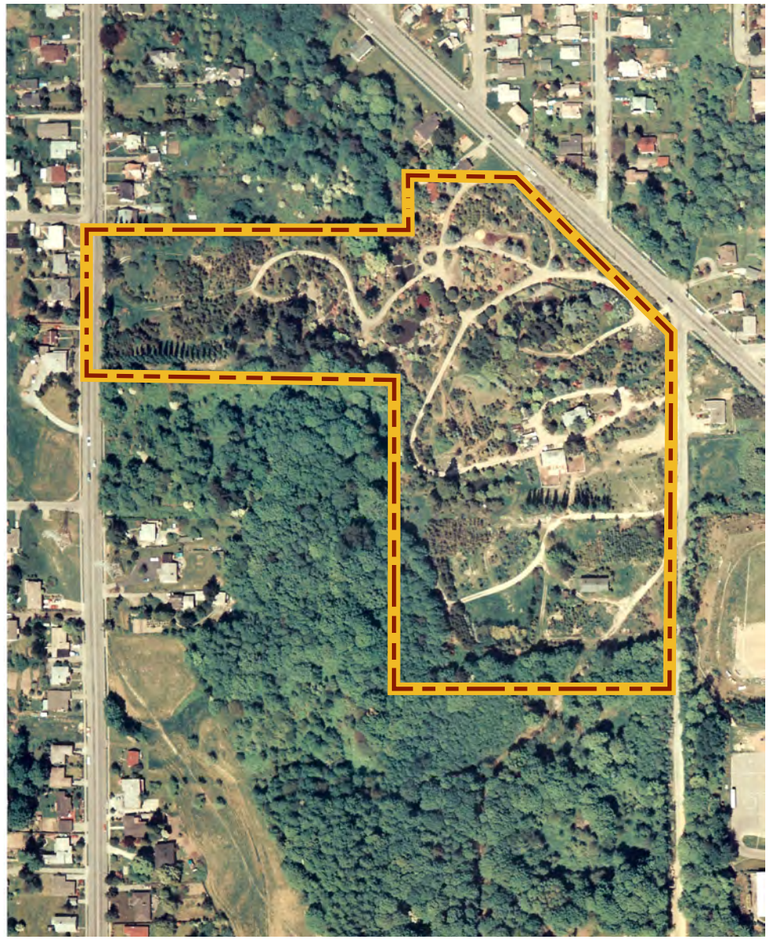
Aerial of Kubota Garden, 1974
Source: DENSHO

From Left to Right:

1936 The Necklace of Ponds, the Rockery Showcase, the Rose Garden and the Lily Ponds are visible

1946 The Japanese Garden, Necklace of Ponds, the Rockery Showcase, and the Lily Ponds are visible

1974 Kubota Garden a year after Fujitaro's death, showing the Mountainside, Necklace of Ponds, and the Japanese Garden



Aerial of Kubota Garden, 1980
Source: DENSHO

Aerial of Kubota Garden, 1990
Source: DENSHO

Aerial of Kubota Garden, 2018
Source: Google Earth

From Left to Right:

1980 The Garden, a year prior to the establishment of the Core Garden Landmark

1990 The Garden showing increased growth in the tree canopy, the road system and pathways are made accessible by Seattle Parks

2018 The Garden's forest continues to grow, numerous Park's improvements are visible

The Necklace of Ponds (built 1928-1930, revised up to 1973)

As the first of Fujitaro's designed gardens, his transformation of the unnamed creek (now Mapes Creek) in 1926-1927 created a series of reflecting ponds connected by small cascades. He limbed up and shaped a number of large native trees already growing along the stream then added weeping willows, pines, and evergreen shrubs along the banks to soften the edges. Large boulders, lanterns and the Heart Bridge were installed. The lawn areas, scattered rocks, treed island with bridge, and the existing tall trees is strongly reminiscent of an image from Hondo's book, an image that possibly presaged the later creation of the waterfall and cascading stream of the Mountainside.

The Heart Bridge was the original viewing platform for observing the movement of the creek and to hear the sounds of the waterfalls. The original bridge has a strong similarity, both in the structure and railing detail, to a bridge in Honda's book.

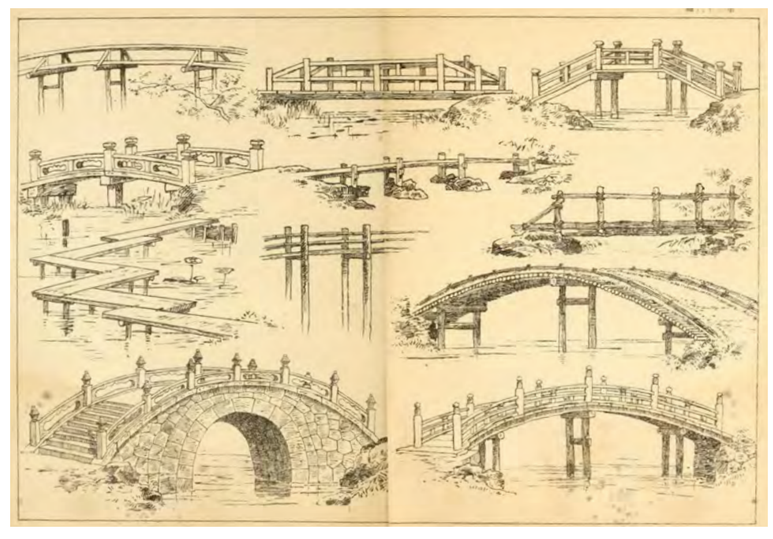
Fujitaro and his sons would constantly revise and edit this garden as the trees and shrubs came into maturity and as new ideas and concepts arose. Between 1927 and 1972, new bridges (Zig Zag bridge in 1962, Moon Bridge in 1972), paths, and concrete lily pads were added. Pond 4, north of the Heart Bridge, underwent significant changes to it shore edge and plantings when the Mountainside garden was built between 1960-1962.

View from the Mountainside slope looking east to the Necklace of Ponds. The Rockery Wall Showcase, Heart Bridge, roads and lawns and the lower pond are visible. Pines dot the inner perimeter of the road. Boulders occupy the location east of the Japanese Garden. The cedar to the right of the bridge still exists.
Source: KGF Photo #42, dated 1930

Photos also show continuous change between 1930 and 1975, particularly in the treatment of water edges, placement of viewpoints, and management of the tree canopy to create openings for light and reflections. A timeline analysis of the aerial photos between 1936 and 2019 was most helpful in regards to assessing the extent of tree canopy coverage. The 1936 aerial image of this area has remnant conifers and maples partially obscuring Pond 1 while the other ponds were quite visible from above. In the 1946 aerial these conifers and maples obscure a large amount of pond surfaces. The majority of these trees were missing in the 1956 aerial image likely in conjunction with new rows of nursery stock to the east of Ponds 1, 2 and 3 as well as preparing for the installation of the Mountainside garden. These nursery rows and minimal tree canopy were still evident in the 1969 aerial but are gone in the 1974 aerial. The 1974 aerial clearly shows the lily pads and the coniferous canopy to the east of the ponds is tall enough to cast shadows. Later aerial images show the canopy extending over the ponds. The tree canopy in the 2019 aerial image is similar to that in the 1946 aerial, with some obscuring of Ponds 1, 2, 4 and 5 and logically indicates that light levels to the ponds and edge plantings has decreased over time.

The 1970 photos in particular, taken two years before Fujitaro's death, convey the intended sense of planting scale and shape in carefully clipped plant materials, a minimal tree canopy that allowed for a much brighter light quality than exists today, and a distant borrowed view looking south from the Heart Bridge. Views of both Lily Pads along with a cobble stream and beach could be seen from the north side of Pond 1 (image #1305 (1987)). The cobble stream and beach (images #509 (1978) and #1499 (1970)) are currently buried under vegetation. Today, the each of the ponds have become cloistered individual rooms with minimal viewing opportunities of other garden features, such as the stone edges and freestanding boulders. The overarching canopy surrounding the ponds has strongly altered the type and character of the plant materials underneath, which currently consists of shade-loving shrubs and perennials mixed with invasive plants.

Cascading ponds, Kinkichiro Honda, Zukai Teizoho, Tokyo: Rikugokan, 1909; pages 80-81.



Bridges, Kinkichiro Honda, Zukai Teizoho, Tokyo: Rikugokan, 1909; page 28-29

View to the Lily Pads
Source: KGF Photo #1305, dated 1987

Cobble Stream & Beach, currently buried under vegetation
Above two photos, from top: KGF Photo #1499, dated 1978, KGF Photo #509 dated 1970

The visual access and character of the waterfalls and bridges has changed significantly as the understory has filled in, affecting the visitor's intended spatial experience. The waterfalls, while audible, are difficult to spot as is evidenced in the desire paths to reach them. The Moon Bridge, when viewed from the north Lily Pad, should be reflected to a fuller extent in the foreground pond but is screened by overgrowth. Lastly, the waterfall should be clearly visible from the Heart Bridge as water movement and sound are key elements to the visitor's bridge experience.

Speaking of the Heart Bridge, the archival photos do show a consistent contorted tree element about ten feet away from the Bridge's southwest corner, which allowed for trunk reflections off the pond. At least two contorted trunk trees have occupied this spot. In 1958 (KGF image #568) it was a pollarded weeping willow. It was replaced prior to a 1965 photo (KGF image #474) with a similarly shaped pine that survived at least through 1992. Today, a contorted trunk tree in this location should be planted to fulfill the design intent. Two stone Buddhist figural sculptures flanked the east end of the Heart Bridge between 1962 and 1970 before succumbing to erosional loss. They were not replaced during Fujitaro's lifetime and thus replacement is not recommended.

> *"The Moon Bridge was later, in the early '70s maybe. People didn't go to that part of the Garden so we wanted to put something there. Dad was retired then, so he just commented a bit. We built the bridge and cement frame in the driveway, put it on the truck and carried it down to the pond."*
>
> Tom Kubota
>
> p. 53 of the Kubota Garden Tour Guide Manual, March 2017

Poplared Weeping Willow at Southwest Corner of Heart Bridge
Source: KGF Photo #568, dated 1958

Shaped Pine at Heart Bridge
Source: KGF Photo #474, dated 1965

The Necklace of Ponds Recommendations

The Necklace of Ponds has specific recommendations to bring the Garden back to its 1973 Period of Significance. This would include the following items:

- Clearing of the existing curb top on the east side of the lower pond; lowering/thinning pruning of the shrubs between the curb and the lower pond to re-establish the visual connection of the viewer to the pond's reflections
- Removal of all English and Portuguese Laurels
- Open the views from the Heart Bridge looking south; the shore edges are dense with vegetation that should be thinned or pruned to expose the underlying branching structure; This would allow more light, and more reflections, to illuminate the pond
- Open the views of the ponds north of the Heart Bridge to see the lowest most pond; the pump shed should either be painted a darker color to hide it from view or turned into an architectural feature of the garden
- Open the views of the ponds from the Moon Bridge Overlook point; the yews on the connecting peninsula block views of the downstream ponds and should be removed
- Add a siltation settling device south of the uppermost pond to assist in improving the water quality in the ponds

The Japanese Garden (built ca 1936, revised up to 1973)

The smallest of the three landmark gardens has undergone a number of minor revisions since it was first completed in the fall of 1936. Slightly larger than a Seattle residential lot, the original design was based on a typical Japanese hill and pond garden: a circular loop around water with set viewpoints that focused on reflections, lanterns, a waterfall, stepping stones, and cascading vegetation (weeping willow and mulberry). This is counterpointed with pruned pines extending over water and embraced by a tightly clipped holly edge marking the north edge of the garden. Each viewpoint focuses on specific garden elements that also minimize views of other visitors. Overall, the garden shares strong similarities to illustrations in both Hondo's and Condor's books as seen below.

Kinkichiro Honda, Zukai Teizoho, Tokyo: Rikugokan, 1909; page 73.

Note weeping willow tree on far right. Source: Josiah Condor, Landscape Gardening in Japan, London: Kelly & Walsh Ltd.; page 135.

The spring-fed pond has a multi-stage waterfall as the prominent feature element of this garden. The pond showcased a number of charismatic plants and provided reflections at contemplative viewpoints. The water, through comparison of photos taken in 1940 (#2), 1975 (#339), 1990 (#226) and 2019 show that the vegetation has grown to such an extent that the waterfall and the pond edge are currently obscured.

Waterfall at Japanese Garden ; James M. Amano, photographer, active in Seattle 1919-1942; 1946-1961
KGF Photo #2, dated 1935; more likely taken ca. 1940-1941

Waterfall at spring-fed pond; KGF Photo 339, dated 1975

Waterfall at spring-fed pond; KGF Photo 226, dated 1990

VI. Preferred Concept

Two small and narrow dobashi footbridges were originally built in 1936 - simple wooden bridges with 2-3" diameter logs laid parallel to one another and supported on a truss-work frame supported by a center beam resting on posts, covered in earth or gravel. Archival photos are unclear if the original surface of these bridges had a either an earthen or gravel overlay, but such an overlay would match similar bridges the Kubota Landscaping Company were constructing in their residential projects. The two bridges are linked to a small island (roughly 10 feet in diameter) that is edged in large stones and planted with small conifers. Small islands, whether freestanding or connected by bridges to the shore edge, are a typical Japanese Garden water feature element. The south bridge currently has a gravel overlay with a filter fabric cloth between the gravel and the wood logs. Review of archival photos show the north dobashi bridge was replaced between 1968 and 1975 with a double arch cast concrete bridge, now called the Eyeglass Bridge. Given that the bridge was built during Kubota family ownership of the property, restoration to the dobashi style bridge is not recommended.

The stepping stone path, tobi-ishi, are another common Japanese garden element. These stones are typically aligned in single file to reduce side-by-side conversation and focus the visitor's attention on precise steps – looking down until arriving at the next large viewpoint stone. The stones should also be easy to walk on. The stepping stones here, placed in 1936, are original to the Japanese Garden and are first visible in 1940 photographs. They are set into a gravel pathway with the tops of the stones vary between 1 to 2 inches above the path surface. These stepping stones are integral to the original design and should be retained. The question is how to make the overall pathway accessible to all visitors. The answer is in the historic photos. The 1940 photo (#1989) and 1975 photo (#507) shows the stepping stones close to the pond edge with a wider gravel path to the north. Plant growth since 1975 has squeezed this gravel path to such an extent that wheelchairs cannot pass. Removal and/or pruning of the shrubs and trees to widen the path to the minimal 36" width from the west entry point to the waterfall viewing area would provide accessibility. Another minor path modification accommodated accessibility into the garden when the holly hedge and gravel path was extended west of the two stone stairs a grade of less than 5% in 2004.

There are a number of viewpoints around the pond with archival photos showing that the three popular views were looking west towards the dobashi bridges with the large stone lantern in the background flanked by a pollarded weeping willow; looking north at the waterfall; and looking east at the north dobashi with the pond in the background. The weeping willow is first evident in the 1936 aerial and in archival photos from 1940 until the mid-1990's. Weeping willows were a key element for Fujitaro, thus consideration should be given for replanting willow near the stone lantern. Another viewpoint is found at the sitting boulder above the pond to the west of the waterfall. This location gives the visitors views of the pond as well as the Tom Kubota Stroll Garden.

From east end of Japanese Garden looking west. The weeping willow in the background is next to the stone lantern in a number of images. Hedge is visible behind the gentleman and on the far right of the image.
Source: KGF Photo 1989, dated 1940

From east end of Japanese Garden looking west. The weeping willow in the background is next to the stone lantern in a number of images.
Source: KGF Photo 507, dated 1975

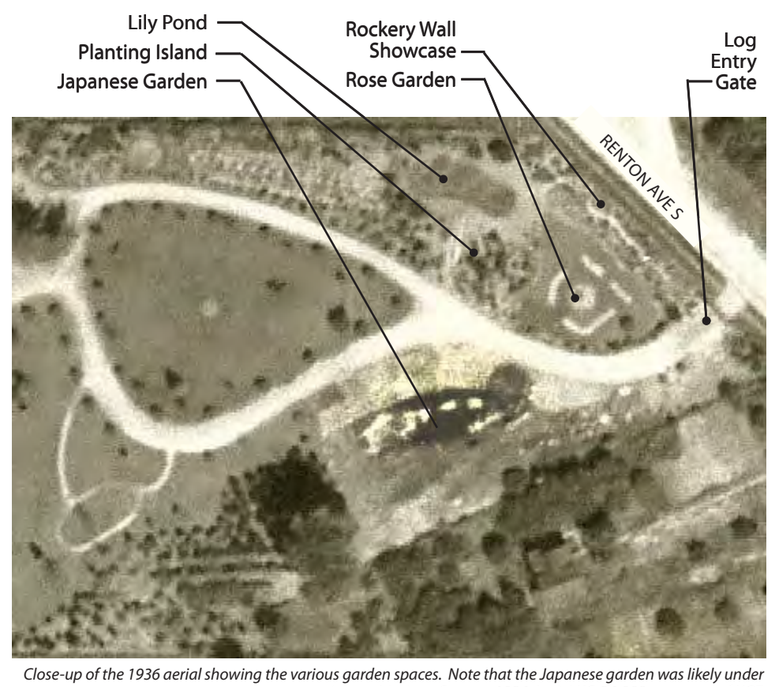
From south west corner of Japanese Garden looking north, utility poles along Renton Avenue are visible.
Source: Modified version (rotated & cropped) of KGF Photo 1988a, dated 1940

From south west corner of Japanese Garden looking north, utility poles along Renton Avenue are visible.
Source: KGF Photo 158, dated 1929, but more likely taken after 1930 as *hedge and secondary drive does not appear in the 1936 aerial photo. The lantern and umbrella tree are smaller in this image than in the previous one.*

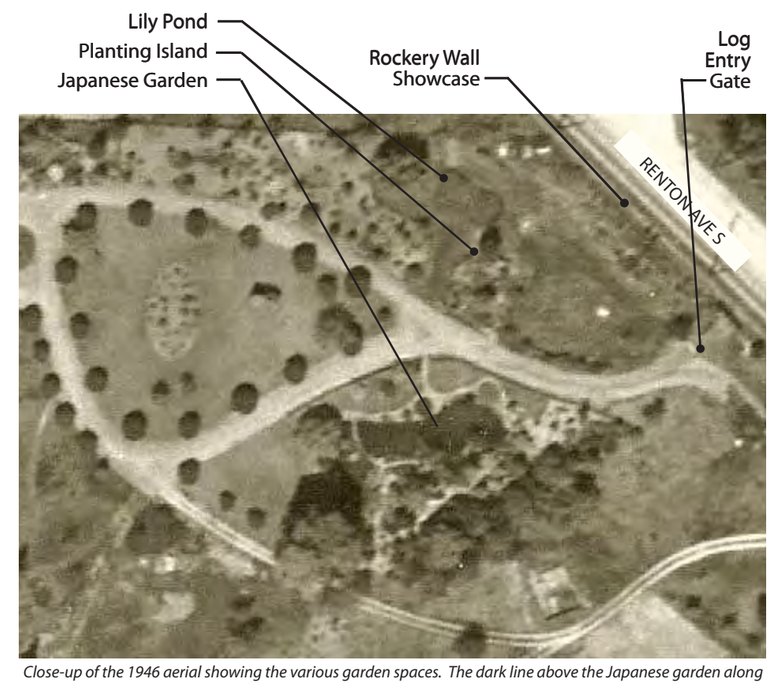
Enhancing and framing the viewpoints were the plantings, particularly the willow's weeping shape and contorted trunk. The willow's shape was echoed by a Camperdown elm (#1967, dated 1975) on the east end of the pond (to the left of the waterfall) as well as a tree-form blue wisteria (#170, dated 1962). Each of these 'weepers' also provided significant yellow fall color that reflected well in the still water surface. Consideration should also be given to replanting these in their historic locations.

Camperdown elm at Japanese Garden pond; Source: KGF Photo 1967, dated 1975

Camperdown elm at Japanese Garden pond; Source: KGF Photo 1967, dated 1975



Close-up of the 1936 aerial showing the various garden spaces. Note that the Japanese garden was likely under construction at this time. Source: 1936 Aerial KC-36 992, courtesy of KGF

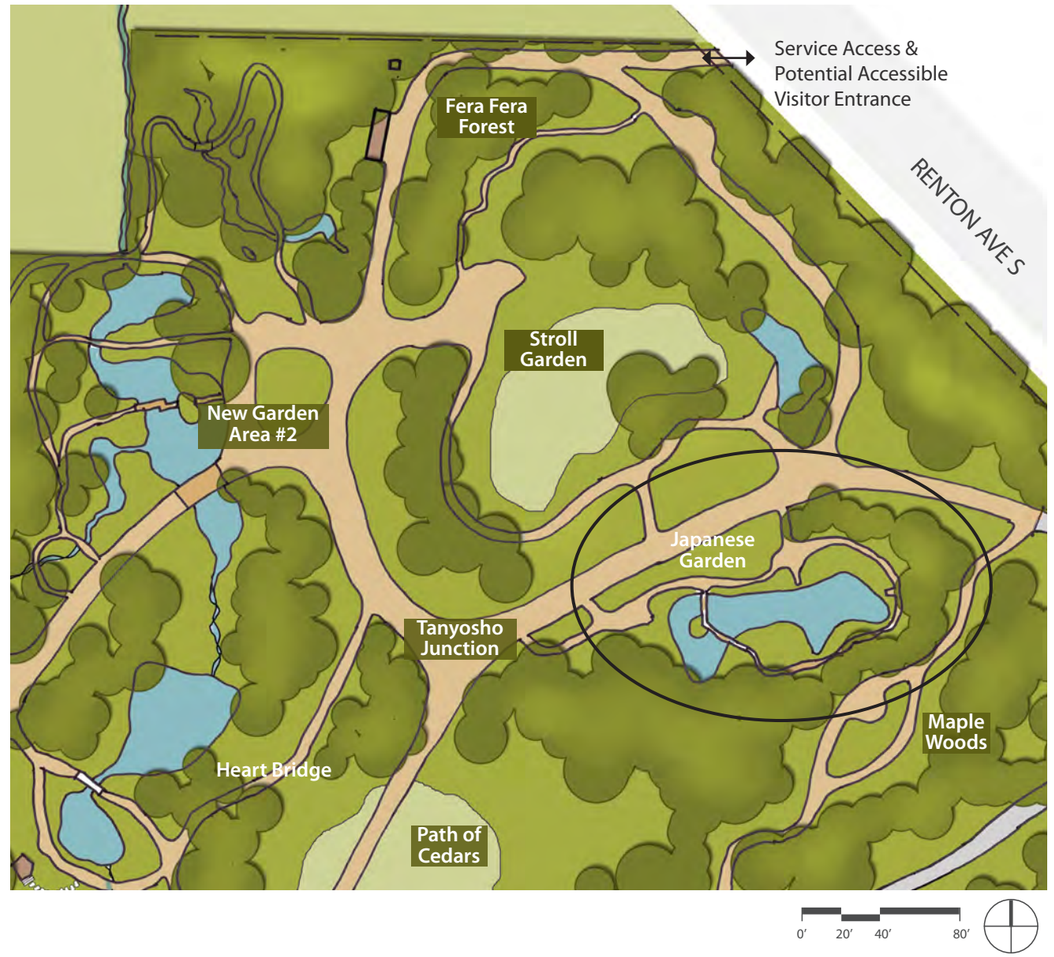


Close-up of the 1946 aerial showing the various garden spaces. The dark line above the Japanese garden along the road is the hedge. The large mass at the west end of the pond is the weeping willow. Source: 1946 Aerial A-46 391, courtesy of KGF

Japanese Garden Recommendations

The Japanese Garden has specific recommendations to bring the Garden back to its 1973 Period of Significance. This would include the following items:

- Re-establish the historic entry into the Japanese Garden and restore the pathways and experience as close to its 1973 condition as feasible while resolving accessibility issues. This would include leveling the stepping stones flush to the gravel paving or removing them for use elsewhere in the Garden.
- Renovate the plantings at the pond's edge to re-establish the sightlines visible in the 1975 photos.
- Key views need to be restored, particularly one from the east end of the pool westward to the foot bridges and the stone lantern. This should be done through pruning or replanting.
- Restore pathway experience to become accessible to all visitors by removal and/or pruning of shrubs and trees to widen path at west entry point to the waterfall viewing area
- Lastly, a weeping willow, a major component in American Japanese Gardens, was seen in most of the historic photos adjacent to the stone lantern. The intent, visible in the photos, was to see the willow's reflection in the pool. It also served as a textural and sculptural counterpoint to the pines and other evergreens around the pool. Knowing these willows are rather short-lived, consideration should still be given to replanting a weeping willow in its original position, thus re-establishing the original design intent.



The Mountainside (built 1961-1962, revised up to 1973)

Mr. Kubota lived in a house (image #93, dated 1950) to the east of Pond 5 of the Necklace of Ponds. He would place a white folding chair along east side of Pond 4 to appreciate the sounds of water and contemplate the large hillside to the west. For nearly 10 years, his chair appears in photos in or near this location (image #590 dated 1960). He likely studied the changing light on the landscape, listened to the water and the breezes rustling the weeping willows on both sides of the Heart Bridge. He likely envisioned a series of interconnected waterfalls beginning at the top of the slope and cascading-rushing down and, with a design in his head, construction of the Mountainside commenced in 1961.

When interviewed by the Seattle Times (Nov. 4, 1962, p19) about the newly-completed Mountainside he said "What I have tried to make is the equivalent to a painter's painting a landscape – everything is in miniature. Every rock and every key plant have a meaning." This garden completes what he began in 1930 with the Necklace of Ponds. The Mountainside's water course comes very close to meeting the definition that Conder noted on page 133, the 'Hill Gardens' section, of his book: "…the "Mountain Torrent Style," in which a wild mountain torrent and a small lake or pool are indicated. A number of river boulders and stepping stones are arranged in the stream, which is specially designed to suggest both swiftness and shallowness."

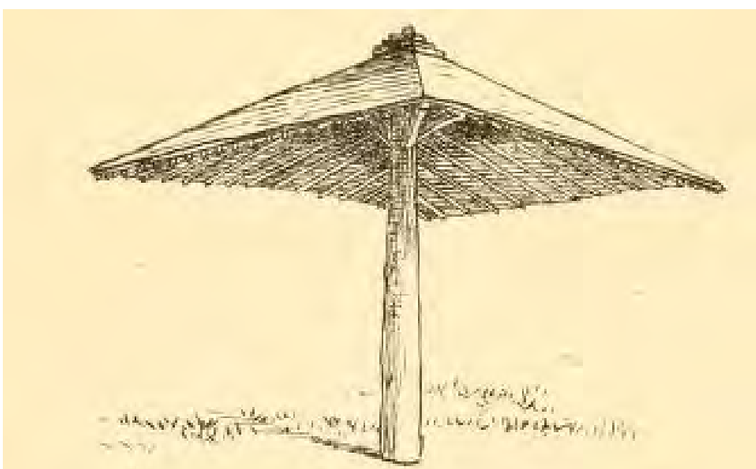
> *"The feeling you get when you go in the natural woods in the mountains - serenity, quiet, that's the kind of feeling we try to give."*
>
> Tom Kubota
>
> "Family Garden May Become a Park", Joni Blater, Seattle Times Sept 3 1987, B1

Taken from the Mountainside prior to construction.
Note the chair under the tree to the left of the stair to the granite bridge. Renton Avenue is visible.
Source: KGF Photo #590, dated 1960

Taken from the Kubota House east of Necklace of Ponds
Source: KGF Photo #93, dated 1950

Another of the Mountainside's features, the Lookout, is remarkably similar to one on a plate in K. Honda's book Zukai Teizoho. As the lone remaining building erected by Fujitaro within the historic garden, documentation, structural assessment, and restoration of the Lookout Shelter is highly recommended.

The Lookout Shelter; Source: KGF 710, dated 1987



Umbrella-shaped shelter, Kinkichiro Honda, Zukai Teizoho, Tokyo: Rikugokan, 1909; page 17.

The photo documentation of the Mountainside slope area between 1960 and 1975 is the most complete of the three core gardens. Shrubs were tightly clipped on the slope to allow for viewing of the waterfalls and the stones as well as the subtle sunlight effects on the colored Japanese maples. The path where Fujitaro's folded chair sat had a clean minimal curb wall installed that further defined the seating area for taking in views of the entire mountainside from one location. Today, much of the original design intent, particularly views of the stones on the hillside, is hidden due to overgrowth of planted shrubs, seeding and growth of invasive shrubs, as well as tree canopy expansion. In order to expose the stones, removal and reduction of the plant layer needs to be tempered to address public safety concerns, particularly in minimizing climbing access to rocks currently obscured by vegetation. Restoration of the plantings should begin with removal of invasives - Portuguese laurel, English laurel, English ivy, and Cotoneaster - at key locations from the top of the waterfall down to the Necklace of Ponds to reestablish views of this watercourse. Secondly, pruning of shrubs that are suitable for shaping and size reduction should take place. Trees and shrubs that are too large to shape should be removed and replaced in-kind with the intention to begin shaping maintenance. It is recommended that the 1962-1970 photos be used as a guide to restoration of the views, vegetation scale, and stone placement.

Image 17: *Mr. Kubota's chair, in its usual position, observing the Mountainside. Taken north of the Heart Bridge east of the Necklace of Ponds, showing the sitting area and curb.*
Source: KGF Photo #279, dated 1963

Mountainside at start of construction, *taken north of the Heart Bridge east of the Necklace of Ponds,looking west to the top of the Mountainside.*
Source: KGF Photo #160, dated 1962

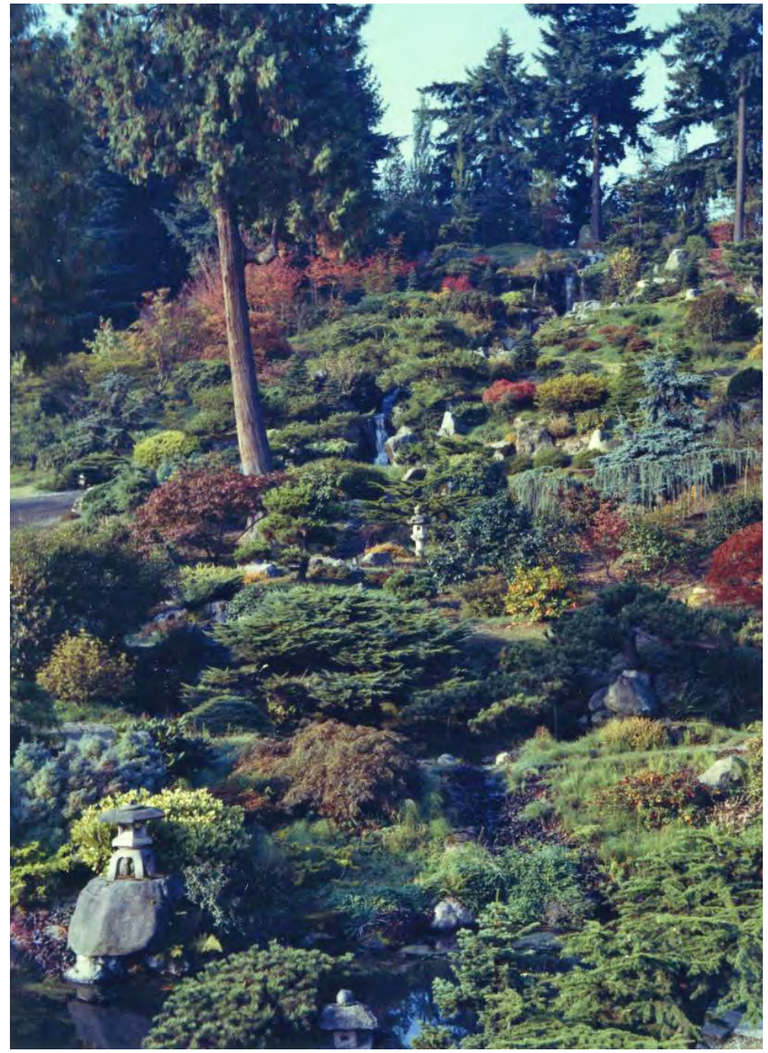
Taken north of the Heart Bridge east of the Necklace of Ponds, looking west to the top of the Mountainside.
Source: KGF Photo #165, dated 1962

Taken north of the Heart Bridge east of the Necklace of Ponds, showing the sitting area and curb, looking west to the top of the Mountainside, with views of back-lit Japanese maples.
Source: KGF Photo #274, dated 1962

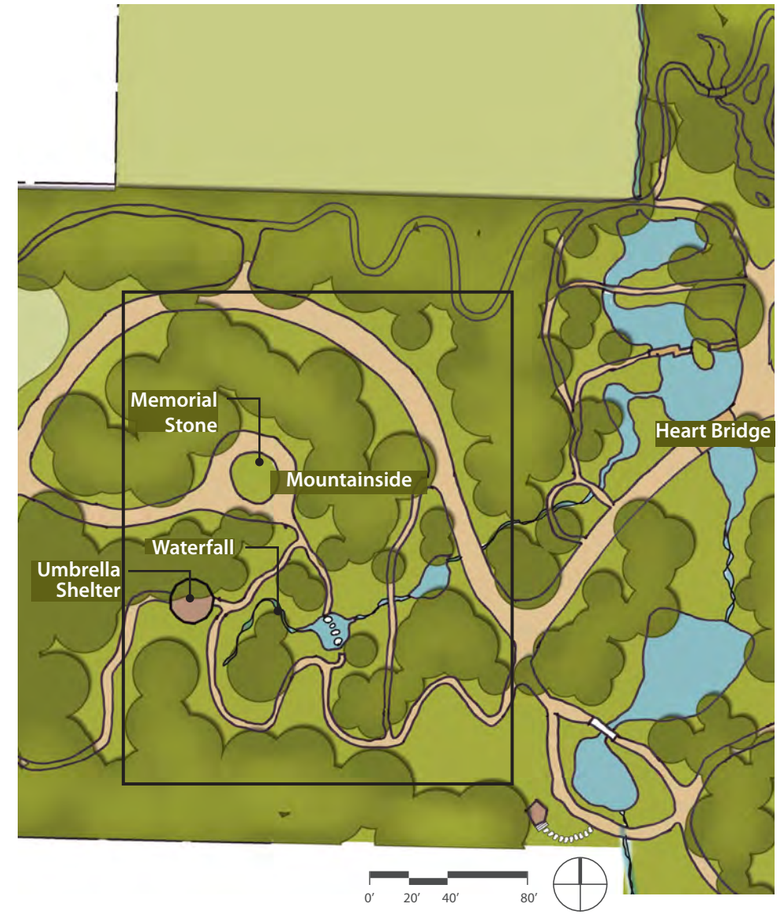
The Mountainside Recommendations

The Mountainside has specific recommendations to bring the Garden back to its 1973 period of significance. This would include the following items:

- Removal of all English and Portuguese Laurels
- Plant removal/pruning/thinning to reveal the viewsheds from the bottom and the top of the gardens, especially between the cedars and the big leaf maples to re-establish the viewing "bowl" from side to side and from top to bottom; expose the large boulders on the hillside and near the waterfalls; the goal is to better see the water course from the top to the bottom, from both the top and the bottom
- Relocate the hillside seating areas that conflict with visitor viewing of the waterfalls; this may mean looking down the Mountainside rather than up
- The roadway was originally 12' wide and is currently 8' wide; this area may need to be widened depending on how accessibility to the upper reaches of the Mountainside is determined
- Clear and replant the Prayer Stone planter; repair the text on all the stones



KGF Photo #506, dated 1963



Artifacts

The Japanese garden elements used by Fujitaro in the design work at Kubota Garden include a number of stone statuary and stone lanterns, bridges, engraved stones, stepping stones, and landscape stones. These elements followed the parameters within the contemporaneous garden manuals available during Fujitaro's career. Each element contributes to the overall character of each of the historic gardens and merits further discussion below.

Statuary and Lanterns

Historic photos in the Foundation Archives show that Fujitaro had installed a number of stone statuary and lanterns typical of Japanese Gardens (Hondo, pgs. 32-36; Conder, pgs. 59-69) in each of the three designed gardens. These lanterns were used as both viewpoint markers and as an added element of human-made contradistinction to the curated natural character of each garden. The large lantern at the west end of the Japanese Garden often has offerings of small coins, as well as candle wax, figurines and other items that show visitors interacting with the lantern on a spiritual level. The majority of the Garden's lanterns were either sold prior to 1980 or removed due to vandalism when the Garden opened to the public. In tribute to the Garden's history Don Brooks installed a tall stone lantern on a light pole on the southwest corner of the property as a boundary marker which can be seen in the winter from some of the paths near the Terrace. Two Buddhist statues at the east end of the Heart Bridge were visible in period photographs, but were removed by Fujitaro due to stone decay.

Thus, stones lanterns are a key missing historic element to the gardens whose reinstallation would enhance visitor's experience of the Garden. Review of historic photos noting the location, style, and size of these elements throughout the Garden should take place with the goal of replacement. Protection of these lanterns (either in original stone or cast reproductions) would assist visitors in finding the intended viewpoints, recalibrate the scale of the views, and provide them with a clearing understanding of Kubota's design intent.

Engraved Stones

There are a number of engraved stones throughout the Garden that need to be inventoried for stone type, text legibility condition, stone text documented and transcribed, and, if know, purpose of the stone and date of installation. While seemingly permanent, carved stones are prone to decay through weathering and other natural forces. These stones would include the Memorial Stone, Prayer Stone, Japanese Garden Boulder, and the Tom Kubota Stroll Garden Boulder, among others. Guidance for restoration and preservation of carved stones can be found in the National Park Service Preservation Brief 48: Preserving Grave Markers in Historic Cemeteries. This brief provides additional information for condition assessment and preservation treatments.

Landscape Stones

There are a number of important stones throughout the Garden, such as the Fossil Stone, the Symposium Stone Garden, and the Stone Garden by Don Brooks. Stone locations and positioning should be confirmed from historic photos, installation dates recorded, and design integrity and intent determined. Legibility of stones will also require an assessment of adjacent vegetation removal to restore intended views of these stones.

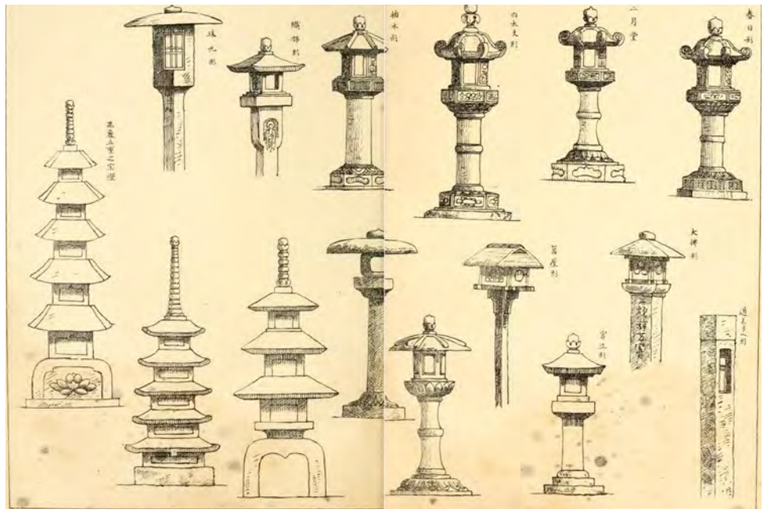
Bridges

There are four types of bridges associated with the Japanese garden design tradition and each is represented at Kubota: slabbed stone, dobashi (earth bridge), moon bridge (high arched) and arched bridge. These bridges occur in the three historic gardens: Necklace of Ponds, Japanese Garden, and the Mountainside. The conditions of each bridge varies. Some are possibly original or slightly modified (south dobashi bridge in Japanese Garden) to rebuilt (Heart Bridge and Moon Bridge). All the bridges need to be inventoried, locations noted, and each assessed for design intent, structural integrity, and visitor safety.

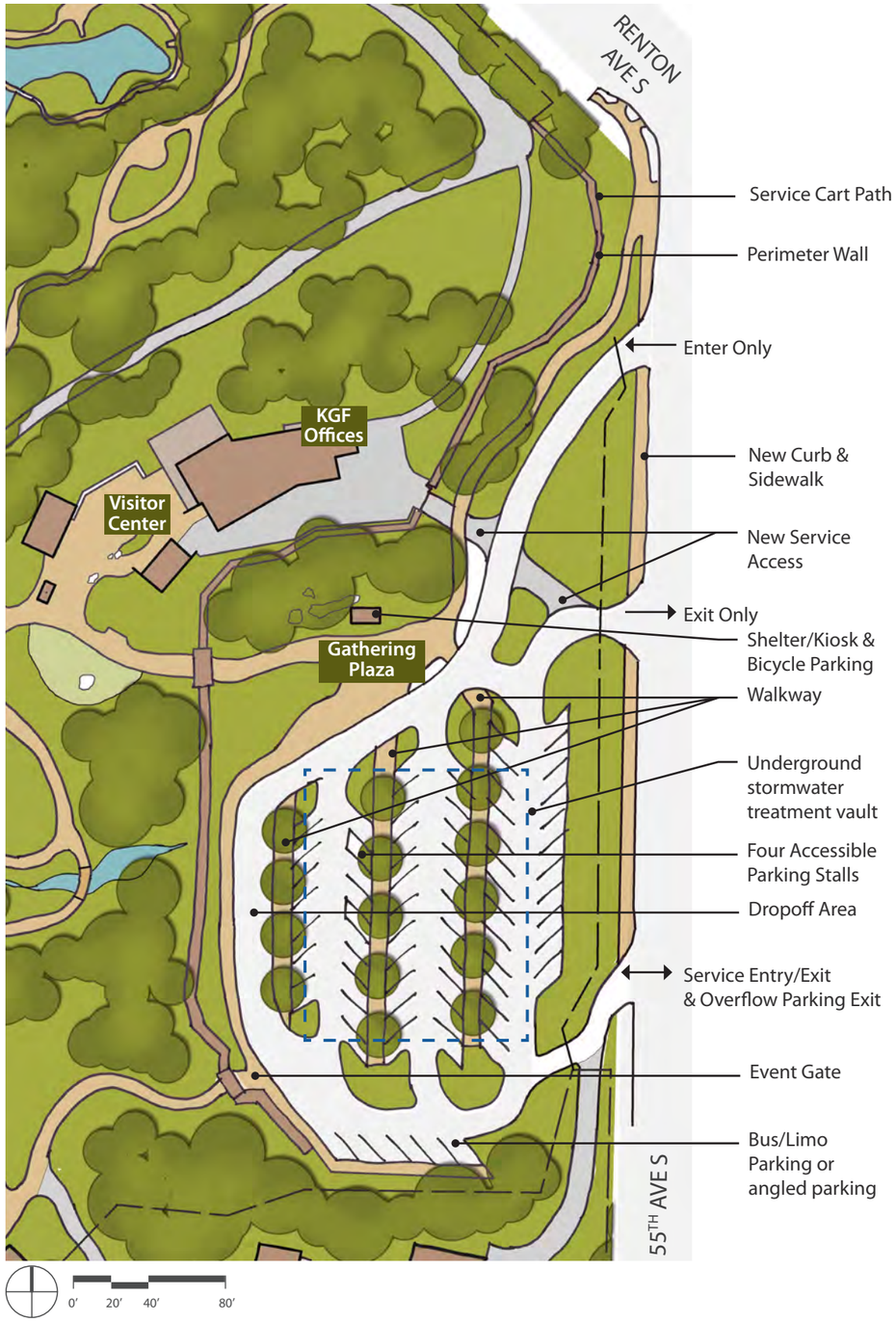
Garden Nomenclature

The Necklace of Ponds, the Japanese Garden, and the Mountainside areas were purportedly named by docents when developing a guide map for the Garden. Review of aerial imagery and archival photos show that the Necklace of Ponds was the first Japanese Garden, completed around 1930. A Seattle Times interview with Fujitaro (November 4, 1962) noted that Kubota "completed a formal Japanese garden in 1936." The same article says he was "nearing the completion of his second Japanese garden." Although not named in the article, this garden would be called the Mountainside. Given the alterations he undertook at the Necklace of Ponds during the construction of the Mountainside, he may have considered his original work in 1930 to be subsumed into the Mountainside.

The names of the Necklace of Ponds and the Japanese Garden are relatively fixed into the recent history of the Garden. The slope and plantings serve as the framework for the main feature of this garden – the waterfall. There is an opportunity to rename the Mountainside to something more appropriate and attractive to visitors: Ootaki – The Grand Waterfall.



Stone Statuary typical of Japanese Gardens; Source: Hondo, pgs 32-36



Visitor Experience

There is an opportunity to extend Kubota Garden outside its fence line along Renton Avenue that would serve as a visual vegetative signpost of the Garden's presence. Such an extension highlights to visitors that they are approaching the Garden's entry, may intrigue people who are otherwise driving by, and might spark streetscape improvements along Renton Avenue. The current collection of hedges provides a visual screen of Renton Avenue from within the garden, so care should be taken in maintaining view quality.

Entry Road, Parking, and Gathering Plaza

A new pedestrian sidewalk and curb will be installed on the west side of 55th Avenue to provide a defined edge to both the road and to the Garden planting area as well as capture stormwater runoff for treatment. The Kubota Garden carved boulder will be relocated from Renton Avenue, where it's not readable at driving speed, to the south side of the driveway to serve as a marker for the entry driveway. The plantings along the entry driveway from 55th into the garden's entry area will be modified to increase visibility. The existing drop-off zone will be moved west to create clear and unimpeded access to the Gathering Plaza from the parking lot pedestrian walkways.

The accessible parking stalls will be relocated to the west side of the central walkway, with a total of four provided. The parking area's southernmost stalls can be striped for either angled parking or bus/limo parking and signed for use depending upon the need. Trees in grates will be planted in the center of the walkways to provide shade to visitors and vehicles. The parking lot is set on one-way traffic flow in and out of angled parking stalls. The entry/exit of the maintenance area has been set away from the exit of the parking area. Plantings within the parking area will be kept low to improve visibility.

Parking area drainage will be handled via sheet flow to an underground storm water treatment vault with an oil/water separator. This treatment system will also include a separate settling chamber to address off-site silt and storm water entering the Garden, piped under 55th Avenue from the ditch on the east side of the road.

To improve the safety of the parking area, plantings within and immediately adjacent to the parking area shall meet Crime Prevention through Environmental Design safety and security standards to increase visibility. Seattle Parks security policies, particularly regarding the use of surveillance cameras, should be consulted as part of the design of the parking area. Parking lot lighting will be added.

At the gathering plaza outside of the main garden gate, a new entry shelter will provide cover for seating, bike parking, and a kiosk with community bulletin board, maps, and current information about the garden.

Key Plan

Visitor Amenities

Restrooms

The increased attendance at the Garden is making the port-a-potties untenable to visitors. The Garden's extent and physical challenges provides justification for multiple permanent restrooms throughout the Garden. The three preferred locations are at the Kubota Terrace, at the new Visitor Center, and at the lower garden near the new North Gardens. Restroom facilities should be gender-neutral, complementary and non-disruptive to the design aesthetic of the Garden, and installed in tandem with trash cans and include drinking fountains. They should also serves as an interpretive node in the Garden.

Trash Cans

Trash cans should be limited in quantity and only located where adequate servicing can occur. They should be located in tandem with new restroom facilities and/or where service truck access occurs.

Wayfinding Plan

An overall Wayfinding Plan for pathways, signage, and maps should be developed. This plan would create a Kubota Garden 'visual' identity to provide graphic and materials consistency for all visitor wayfinding signage, interpretive signage, as well as garden etiquette and other informational visitor signage. This graphic consistency would also be used in the map handouts, informational flyers, etc. The Plan could also propose vehicular, pedestrian, and bicyclist directional signage to the Garden.

VI. Preferred Concept

Wayfinding & Visitor Circulation Hierarchy

Proposed changes to circulation route hierarchy and legibility responds to visitor feedback relating to wayfinding. The visitor experience could be improved by following prescribed pathway standards for primary, secondary, and tertiary paths. Examples of improving pathway legibility include clearly defined path edges and changes in surfacing between different pathway types. Additionally, incorporating subtle wayfinding mechanisms at key decision-making points could vastly improve the navigability of the Garden.

Providing clearly defined primary paths will aid in visitors finding their way through the Garden on a route that is wholly accessible. Wherever they occur, primary paths should be a minimum of 6' wide with accessible compliant surfacing and grading.

Secondary pathways should also be wholly accessible, but their widths can range from 3' to 6'.

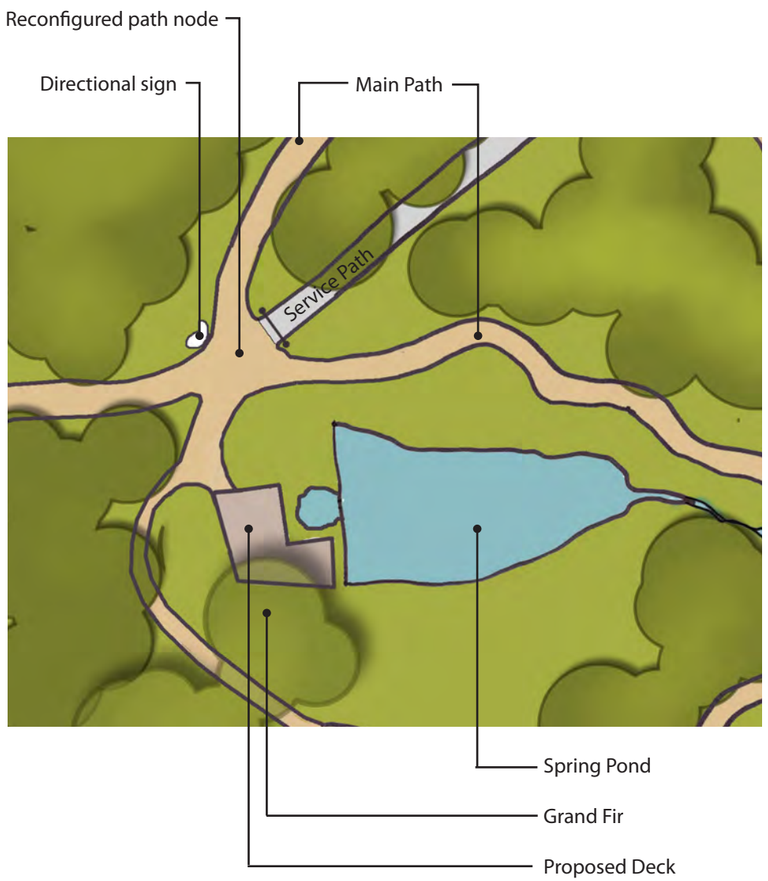
Tertiary paths are characterized by narrower widths, steep slopes, and/or uneven surfacing. These paths are important to have in the Garden as they contribute to the sense of exploration and adventure, as well as allowing the visitor to escape the larger paths in search of peace and solitude.

The proposed circulation plan includes three areas that should be considered for changes that would improve accessibility at the Garden.

1. Create an accessible path from bottom of Mountainside to West Garden
2. Create accessible link from Straight Road to Necklace of Ponds
3. Convert path to service access only

Wayfinding at the Spring Pond

One area of particular confusion is found at the west end of the Spring Pond where five different pathways converge under the Grand Fir. There is an opportunity to clarify the pathways, provide clear wayfinding cues to the main pathway, and develop a raised platform deck that provides better viewing of the Spring Pond and protects the roots of the Grand Fir. Additionally, this deck would provide an accessible koi and pond viewing experience.



Jones & Jones (2018)

VI. Preferred Concept

Visitor Center

All of the planning efforts over the past twenty-five years have identified the need for a Visitor Center at Kubota Garden in order to provide basic services and an improved visitor experience. With the dramatic increase in the number of visitors, the need to provide these services is becoming critical.

Most visitor related facilities are located within natural, historic or culturally significant landscapes and the structures are secondary to their settings. This is especially true at Kubota Garden where people are coming to enjoy the Garden, and the Visitor Center should play an important yet supportive role in that experience. The primary uses include a welcoming space with a reception/exhibit area and a small gift shop, a meeting room to accommodate program events and indoor exhibitions, restroom facilities, refreshment service, outdoor courtyards and decks for informal gatherings, and space for the Kubota Garden Foundation staff.

Site Location

The ideal location for the Visitor Center is just inside and to the northeast of the main entry gate. This is a prominent site adjacent to the main visitor pathway and provides overlook views to the lower gardens. The area is relatively flat and is easily connected to the existing service access.

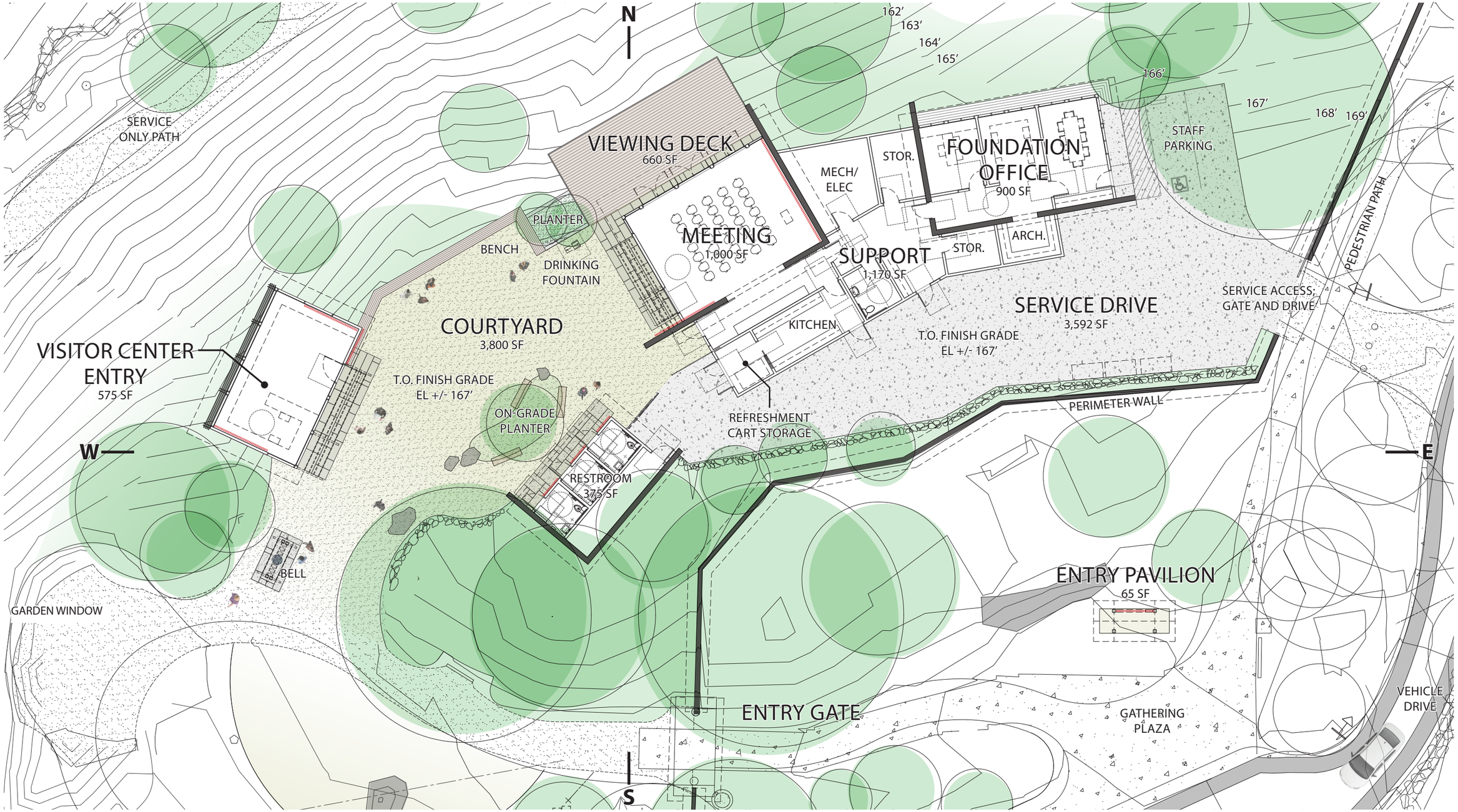
Conceptual Design

In order to integrate the Visitor Center into the Garden, the program uses are separated into a loose arrangement of structures clustered around an informal courtyard - reducing the scale and impact of the facility. The structures include stucco walls that enclose private areas and recall the perimeter garden wall, and the use of natural materials, exposed wood beams, large glass panels to connect the interior to the site, and green roofs will create an architectural character in harmony with the Garden.

The Courtyard is a gathering place for events in the Meeting Room and for Garden tour groups and features the "Rainforest Bronze Bell" as an interactive display for visitors. Seating areas for refreshments of light snacks and beverages purchased at the Visitor Center Entry are provided, and a food cart could also serve this area on special occasions. The Viewing Deck also accommodates outdoor activities related to the Meeting Room.

Program Uses

- Currently, the existing informational kiosk and donation box sits on the east edge of the entry plaza. The proposed Entry Pavilion serves as a prominent welcome and orientation feature within the entry sequence and can accommodate visitors being dropped-off or picked-up, garden greeters, and display panels with maps and upcoming events.
- The Visitor Center Entry is the introduction to the Courtyard after passing through the Entry Gate, and it features a Reception Desk, Exhibit Space and a Gift Shop.
- The Meeting Room is sized to accommodate 70 occupants, and the intended use is primarily Garden related functions such as educational programs, indoor exhibitions, docent and volunteer training, and Foundation Board meetings. Support Spaces include a Prep Kitchen, Restroom, Storage and Mechanical rooms.
- The Kubota Garden Foundation Office includes offices and workspaces for Foundation staff and volunteers, conference/ lunchroom, and archive storage room.
- The Restroom structure includes 3 gender-neutral toilet rooms.
- A Service Drive provides secure access for deliveries, maintenance and janitorial functions, as well as storage of dumpsters for garbage, recyclables and compostables. Limited space for service vehicles and staff parking is also provided.
- A Service Cart path to the back of the Visitor Center is proposed to provide an internal service route.


N
162′
163′
164′
165′
166′
167′
168′
169′
SERVICE ONLY PATH
VIEWING DECK
660 SF
MEETING
1,000 SF
MECH/ ELEC
STOR.
FOUNDATION OFFICE
900 SF
STAFF PARKING
PEDESTRIAN PATH
PLANTER
BENCH
DRINKING FOUNTAIN
SUPPORT
1,170 SF
STOR.
ARCH.
SERVICE DRIVE
3,592 SF
SERVICE ACCESS, GATE AND DRIVE
COURTYARD
3,800 SF
KITCHEN
T.O. FINISH GRADE
EL +/- 167′
VISITOR CENTER ENTRY
575 SF
T.O. FINISH GRADE
EL +/- 167′
ON-GRADE PLANTER
REFRESHMENT CART STORAGE
PERIMETER WALL
W
E
RESTROOM
375 SF
BELL
GARDEN WINDOW
ENTRY PAVILION
65 SF
ENTRY GATE
GATHERING PLAZA
VEHICLE DRIVE
S

Garden Improvements

The Garden Window

Slightly south of the Visitor Center is a viewing opportunity that offers visitors a tantalizing taste of what's to come. Flanked on two sides by trees and a low hedge in the foreground is a viewpoint that captures one of Kubota Gardens' longer vistas. The hedge is tall enough to block views for people under 5'6" in height. It is recommended to prune the hedge to about 36" in height to allow most people to view over the hedge and look down towards the Heart Bridge. Key to the success of this viewpoint is the view from the lower garden back up. The goal is to have minimal visual interruption of seeing people at the viewpoint from the lower garden.

Bioswale & Pond

Stormwater from the parking lot and 55th Avenue South will be daylighted to create a pond and swale to further treat the water prior to entering the spring pond. A new footbridge over the swale will double as a gateway to the Terrace.

Terrace & Terrace Overlook

There are modest modifications proposed in this area of the Garden, such as a new restroom building and clear pathway delineation to assist visitors in wayfinding. The west maintenance pullout will be relocated to the west side of the maintenance road and the old pullout planted to provide a defined edge to the lawn as well as directing visitors to the path adjacent to the Terrace Overlook structure.

Spring Pond Outfall Area

This is one of the major wayfinding decision-making points in the garden as a number of pathways converge here. Minor changes to this area include:

- Modifying the pathways to assist in wayfinding. Extend the planting to create a cul-de-sac viewing area of the Spring Pond headwall – this would also simplify the connection to the Terrace Overlook.
- Connecting the maintenance road to the Promenade service road.
- Providing soft substrate or accessible deck/boardwalk under the Grand Fir tree to minimize root compaction from visitors.
- Thinning/pruning and a new exploration trail from the path to the Contorted Filbert Grove.
- Extending the planting to create a cul-de-sac viewing deck of the Spring Pond headwall – this would simplify the connection to the Terrace Overlook. Extending the deck to the Pond's headwall creates an opportunity for safely viewing the koi.

Garden Improvements

The waterfalls and other large projects that Kubota completed in the 1960's suggest that his design aesthetic had started to move beyond some of the more conservative Japanese garden conventions of his early career. However, he never lost that grounding, thus any new garden addition to Kubota Garden should include a statement relating how the proposed design reflects Japanese garden tradition.

New Garden Area #1

Long used as a nursery space in the past and converted into a large lawn by Seattle Parks, this space has some seasonal drainage issues. Given its western solar exposure and garden backdrop, the lawn is used for specialty event photography as well as an impromptu picnic space. This area is a prime candidate for a new designed garden space. Ideas in the past included a large pond with new paths that would also resolve the drainage problem. It should be noted that Fujitaro Kubota did not have an issue with lawns, as noted in the quote below:

> *"It is not good to have too many trees. Everybody says, 'I don't want a lawn.' But you need some lawn to give the eye a little rest."*
>
> Fujitaro Kubota
>
> Man, 92 was City Trailblazer, Seattle Times, November 12, 1972.

Stone Garden & Maple Woods

The intent of these improvements is to eliminate the backdoor access into the Japanese Garden from the Stone Garden. People entering from this direction are not seeing the Japanese Garden as intended and they visually distract visitor's views within the Japanese Garden, interrupting the intended experience. With the closing of the backdoor access, a new exit route from the Stone Garden to the north is needed to avoid a pathway dead-end. Installation of a new accessible trail will connect the Stone Garden with the existing service road which will then guide visitors west towards the Stroll Garden and Japanese Garden entrances.

VI. Preferred Concept

Garden Improvements

Tom Kubota Stroll Garden

Partially located in the current Core Garden landmark area, the Stroll Garden, completed in 2001, will be landmark eligible in 2026. The landmark status should be amended at that time to include the Stroll Garden, which would acknowledge the roles that Tom and son Allan have played in the Garden's history. This garden should be maintained to retain its design intent. No new improvements are proposed here.

North Gardens: Fera Fera Forest and New Garden Area #2

The master plan proposes maintaining the Fera Fera Forest with the addition of a low boardwalk to reduce root compaction.

New Garden Area #2 is an opportunity to create a garden space where Fujitaro's house once stood. A simple shelter where the house was located would provide a contemplative space for visitors to listen to the Creek and the birds. The addition of low areas to create bog-like conditions offers the opportunity to showcase the shade-loving Northwest native plants such as mosses, skunk cabbage, trillium, devil's club, and pacific fire vine maples. Unique non-native plants such as gunnera, hellebores, kerria, and Japanese forest grass add scale, texture, and color to this shaded forest.

A new restroom structure is proposed here to serve visitors using the lower part of the Garden as well as those who have pre-arranged entry at the accessible north gate and are unable to reach other restrooms.

Garden Improvements

New Garden Area #3

The long-term vision for the area west of the Mountainside garden to 51st Avenue is restoration to a more natural condition for both habitat and for ease of maintenance. In the interim, as maintenance and development efforts are focused on rehabilitation of the Core Garden and surrounding areas, a temporary nursery could be implemented in the southwest corner. Kubota Gardens was once a working nursery that allowed potential customers to drive through and see the various gardens and plants. A native plant holding nursery reintroduces a working nursery open to visitors to see how plant materials are grown; plants grown in the nursery would be used in restoration of the Kubota Garden Natural Areas. The nursery would be accessed from either the Mountainside pathway or the existing service road from below. Any changes would need to take into account this area's role as a visual backdrop from the Japanese Garden, Necklace of Ponds, Stroll Garden, and the Visitor Center. Given the steep nature of the ravines in Mapes Creek, this forested area would provide a more accessible area to enjoy the view of the dancing pines, a restored meadow, and other natural garden amenities.

- Service vehicle access to this area should be limited to the existing gate at the southwest corner of the property line
- Nursery area should be located in the southwest corner near the gate; protected from direct sunlight; selected removal of plants in the West Garden area (which will occur for natural area restoration) should consider maintaining the canopy to shade the nursery and provide a visual buffer to screen it from visitors
- Nursery area should consider use of shade cloths supplement for any loss of shade in the event of vegetation removal; shade cloths can also be used to prohibit the seeding of invasive or exotic plant species in the soils of potted plant material
- Tranquility and wildness of the West Garden area should be maintained to the greatest extent possible
- Establish a dense native plant buffer between nursery area and the rest of the Garden and Natural Areas to screen views and noise of 51st Avenue South

Maintenance Area

The long-term vision for this area is to simplify work flow, increase usable work areas, expand the nursery and propagation spaces, add additional material bin storage areas, add securable equipment storage space, provide sufficient employee parking, and completely fence the maintenance area to prevent visitors from wandering in.

VII. Implementation

Phasing & Implementation

Given the number of needs, determining the priorities of Garden projects is neither clear nor easy. Highest priority should be given to projects that bring the Garden into Accessibility compliance. There are a number of projects already in planning, such as the Restroom, Visitor Center, and parking expansion that can address the bulk of identified visitor accessibility items. Some of these priorities can run concurrently while others need to have specific infrastructure in place or have future infrastructure accounted for. The list below is a first pass at larger projects, schedule, and responsibilities and are not yet in any particular order:

Crew Quarters Accessibility Compliance
(2 months, in-house)

Given that the Master Plan does not propose any improvements within the Crew Quarters, it should be a high priority to bring the building's restrooms and entry walks into Accessibility Compliance. This can be done without affecting the visitor's experience to the Garden. It would also take care of 28 of the 48 deficiencies identified in the 2017 Kubota Garden Meeting the Challenge accessibility spreadsheet.

- Corrects Paving Accessibility items 5401, and 5403-5405.
- Corrects Restroom Accessibility items 5411, 5411, 5414, 5417, 5418, 5421, 5422, 5424, 5429, 5432, 5435, 5437, 5438, 5442, 5445, 5448, 5449, 5451, 5452, 5455, and 5457-5459.

Existing Parking Lot Accessibility Compliance
(4 months, in-house)

It is likely that the new Visitor Center and Parking Lot expansion are several years off, thus bringing the existing parking into Accessibility Compliance should be a high priority. Corrects items 5346, 5347, 5348, 5350, 5353, 5357, 5358, 5361, 5370, and 5395-5398.

Updating the Landmarks Application and Landmarks Boundary Readjustment
(2 - 4 month effort, consultant)

The Garden has been operating under a landmark boundary established in 1981 by Seattle's Landmark Preservation Board. A property line adjustment, the new master plan, as well as new historical information and interpretation on the history of the Garden, present in greater detail a rationale for re-adjusting the landmark boundary that will assist in properly addressing preservation and garden renovation issues.

Stormwater Management Plan
(9-12 months planning, consultant)

Prior to the design for the Parking Lot and improvements on 55th Avenue, a stormwater management plan and conceptual design should be developed to facilitate the required upgrades for capturing and cleaning the water coming off of 55th. There is a need to address the murky water quality in the Spring Pond as well as the Necklace of Ponds. Any new plan would also address storage and treatment of proposed parking lot runoff. This plan should include Mapes Creek Natural Areas storm flow mitigation design to better understand and address storm flow impacts to the Necklace of Ponds.

North Gate Accessibility Pilot Project
(6 months, in-house with KGF support)

For trial use on a seasonal (April-October?) appointment-only basis, the north service gate on Renton Avenue would be modified and the paving leveled and compacted. A van parking space/drop-off point would be identified with paint and signage. This would allow access to the lower gardens for visitors with limited mobility. Visitors would be met by a tour guide, given a tour of the lower gardens, and then led back out to the gate. An accessible port-o-let would be required. At the end of the trial period, the project can be reviewed and a determination made to either implement on a permanent basis or leave as is. If permanent, then a restroom structure will need to be included in this area and placed on the Phasing and Implementation schedule.

Restrooms, east of Terrace Overlook
(6-8 months planning and permitting; 9-12 months construction; architect, contractor)

- Currently closest to implementation in terms of design and funding
- Corrects Restroom Accessibility items 5372, 5374, and 5382 by replacing port-o-lets with a permanent restroom structure
- Sewer line routing should account for potential stormwater vaults in future parking lot expansion

Japanese Garden Period of Significance Renovation
(1st year 4-6 months of garden renovation; 2nd and 3rd years 2 weeks of follow-up, in-house)

- Reestablish selected views, planting scale, and exposed pond edges as identified in the 1962 and 1975 photographs
- Reduce the size of plant materials and open up more views of the pond edge
- Block off views of the Maple Woods from the main pathway
- Expose views to the waterfall
- Expose the rocks visible in the 1975 photographs
- Increase flow capability at waterfall

Seattle Parks Temporary Nursery Holding Area – west of the Mountainside
(6 weeks, in-house)

- Will require irrigation source (new meter?)
- Shade netting to prevent seed rain
- Rebuild access gate to 51st Avenue
- Possible bioswale for surface drainage from nursery area

Wayfinding Project
(3-6 months planning and design, in-house and design consultant)

- Refinement of pathway system (may include closure or re-routing of certain paths
- Directional signage
- New Garden pictorial map showing updated pathways, visitor amenities, and key garden features

Visitor Center
(12-18 months planning and permitting, 12-18 months of construction; consultant and contractor)

- New Courtyard garden and pathway connections
- Updated entry garden and Garden Vantage viewpoint

Expanded Parking
(12-18 months planning and permitting, 12 months of construction; consultant and contractor)

- New pedestrian circulation layout
- Improves stormwater management:
  - Stormwater storage
  - Parking lot runoff treatment (oil/water separator)
  - Overflow bypass
  - New treatment pond/bioswale serving the parking area and spring pond
  - 55th Avenue sidewalk and upgrades (SDOT involvement will extend timeline)

Maintenance Area Reorganization and Expansion
(12-18 months planning and permitting; 12 months construction; combination of contractor and in-house)

- New materials bin areas
- Relocated containers with attached spanning roof structure
- Staff parking
- New nursery, heel-in, and laydown areas
- Utility upgrades
- New fences and gates

Fencing and Gating the Perimeter Gaps
(2 months planning and permitting; contractor)

- Fencing should be installed in conjunction with maintenance area fencing to minimize mobilization cost

The Tanyosho Junction and Roads Period of Significance Renovation
(1st year 2 months of garden renovation; 2nd and 3rd years 2 weeks of follow-up, in-house)

- This area is limited to the cast concrete curbs, surfacing, and plantings; this project will seek to reestablish selected viewsheds and plantings as identified in the 1962 and 1975 photographs

The Necklace of Ponds Period of Significance Renovation
(1st year 4-6 months of garden renovation; 2nd and 3rd years 4 weeks of follow-up, in-house)

- Reestablish selected viewsheds as identified in the 1962 and 1975 photographs
- Conduct arborist review of and thinning/removal of trees posing a fall hazard to visitors, Moon Bridge, Lily Pads, and other fragile hardscape items
- Reduce viewshed-blocking understory

The Mountainside Period of Significance Renovation
(1st year 6-9 months of garden renovation; 2nd and 3rd years 6 weeks of follow-up, in-house)

- Reestablish selected viewsheds as identified in the 1962 and 1975 photographs
- Improve functionality of waterfall

Mapes Creek Natural Areas: Storm Flow Mitigation Implementation
(12-18 months design and permitting; 1st year 6-9 months construction; 2nd thru 5th year monitoring and adjustment, in-house with Green Seattle Partnership?)

- In-channel installation of large woody debris upstream from Necklace of Ponds (will require coordination with the Kubota Garden Estates to install within their easement)
- Removal of concrete head wall at north property line to restore channel flow

New Garden #1 – The Western Meadow and Forest, west of Mountainside
(9-12 months of design, 9-12 months construction; consultant & contractor)

- Removal of invasive plants
- Installation of new paths
- Installation of new meadow lawn and plantings

New Garden #2 - Fujitaro's house, west of the Fera Fera
(9-12 months of design and permitting, 9-12 months construction; consultant & contractor)

- Removal of invasive plants
- Installation of new paths
- Installation of new seating area to view the Necklace of Ponds and the Mountainside

New Garden #3 - The Central Garden
(9-12 months of design and permitting, 12-18 months construction; consultant & contractor)

- A conceptual plan exists for a pond and water feature, but this large informal lawn area can be left as is with an improved border planting, or an entirely new garden space can be created here, building upon Fujitaro's vision for cultural understanding and respect

Staffing

One of the most impressive feats at Kubota Garden has been the high level of maintenance achieved with just 3.0 full-time gardeners covering 20 acres. They are periodically assisted from Seattle Parks' Landscape Crew, a handful of seasonal summer workers as well as increasing support from volunteers. The expertise and depth of knowledge that Don Brooks (now retired) provided the garden was easily equivalent to having a fourth full-time gardener. The gardening staff, trained by Brooks, are extremely dedicated and their passion for the Garden is exemplary. Yet as visitation increases, visitor expectations of garden quality rise, events and programs at the Garden increase, and as future Garden renovations and new Garden projects come online more garden staff will be needed.

What is the optimal number of gardeners for Japanese gardens? Japanese gardens require a higher level of training and philosophical understanding than typical botanic gardens. Dwayne Barrett of the Shinzen Japanese Garden in Fresno, California believes that "A typical Japanese garden has two full-time gardeners per acre." That statement led to an examination of garden staffing at other West Coast peer Japanese public gardens. The following gardens were selected based on three criteria: being owned by a city government, operated/managed/assisted by a non-profit organization, and established more than 50 years ago. The 50 year minimum limit represents a mature plant collection and associated maintenance issues similar to Kubota Garden. Examination of these peer public Japanese gardens on the West Coast provides a set of comparative numbers of gardeners per acre. In addition to garden staff, numbers for annual visitation and entry fees are also provided to check for any correlation of staffing to visitor numbers or fees.

- The Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco is the oldest Japanese garden in the US, built in 1894. Portions of the garden are on the National Register of Historic Places. San Francisco Recreation and Park provides three full-time gardeners to maintain the garden's five acres. Carol Murata of the Friends of the Japanese Tea Garden, the non-profit group operating the Tea Garden, believes that more garden staff is needed.

- Hakone Garden is an 18-acre property in Saratoga, California, established in 1918 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. It is owned by the City of Saratoga and operated by the non-profit Hakone Foundation. Per Jacob Kellner, Hakone's Head of Grounds Maintenance, six acres are maintained regularly with the remaining twelve acres attended to as time allows. Hakone employs 2.5 FTE seven days a week for grounds maintenance and 2.5 FTE five days a week for building maintenance. Kellner felt that to meet any reasonable standard of maintenance, that 4 FTE grounds maintenance (trained and paid well) were needed as well as 3 FTE building maintenance staff.

- Kubota Garden in Seattle, Washington was started in 1927 by Fujitaro Kubota as part of his landscape and gardening company. The property was purchased in 1987 is now owned and maintained by the City of Seattle Parks and Recreation and supported by the non-profit Kubota Garden Foundation. The Garden was designated a City of Seattle Landmark in 1981. Of the Garden's twenty acres, approximately eleven are actively maintained with the remaining nine acres attended to as needed.

- The Seattle Japanese Garden at the Arboretum was established in 1960 and was originally maintained by the Arboretum Foundation until 1972. It's now owned by the City of Seattle Parks and Recreation and operated and supported by the non-profit Arboretum Foundation since 2015. The Garden was designated a City of Seattle Landmark in 2008. All of the Garden's three and one half acres are intensively managed to provide the highest level of guest experience.

- The Portland Japanese Garden was established in 1961 in the City's Washington Park. The property is owned by the City of Portland. All of the improvements have been developed and operated by the non-profit Portland Japanese Garden Foundation since 1961. The Garden is listed as a Class II Historic Resource Property, but not a formal landmark, by the City. All of the Garden's twelve acres are intensively managed to provide the highest level of guest experience. Current staffing includes a Garden Curator, a Director of Grounds Maintenance, nine full-time gardeners and two full-time facility technicians to maintain the hardscape.

- Shinzen Japanese Garden in Fresno, California, was established in 1967 as part of a sister city relationship between Fresno and Kochi, Japan. It is owned by the City of Fresno and operated by a non-profit group. Four of the Garden's five acres are actively maintained as the fifth acre is a lake.

Garden	Location	2018 Visitation	Fee	FTG	FTG Acres	per acre
Portland Japanese Garden	Portland, Oregon	452,000	$17	11	12	0.92
Seattle Japanese Garden	Seattle, Washington	110.000	$8	2.3	3.5	0.7
Japanese Tea Garden	San Francisco, California	500.000	$6	3	5	0.6
Shinzen Japanese Garden	Fresno, California	unknown	$5	2	5	0.4
Kubota Garden	Seattle, Washington	97,389	none	3	20	0.15
Hakone	Saratoga, California	30,000	$10	2.5	18	0.14

Taking the mean average FTG per acre of the six gardens translates to 0.49 FTG per acre.

Current garden staffing at Kubota Garden is set at 3.0 full time employees (FTG) with Park's gardeners and seasonal help from Landscape Crews and volunteers as directed by the gardeners to assist with basic garden maintenance and in the pruning of the pines. Kubota's FTG per acre is 0.15. Eleven acres of Kubota Garden are actively maintained which is 0.27 FTG. If we use the average of 0.49 FTG divided by eleven acres then the Kubota Garden staffing should be at 5.4 FTG. Thus, it is recommended that the garden staffing be increased to 5.0 FTG immediately. The training of new staff within the existing Garden allows for a period of learning about Japanese garden maintenance techniques and philosophy over the course of a full year. Once trained, the garden staff can then take on the renovations and new garden projects with confidence. Garden staff should be added as additional projects come online. Once the Garden's twenty acres have been fully developed, the garden staff will need to be, at minimum, 9.8 FTG.

Of the six peer gardens referenced above, only the Portland and Seattle Japanese Gardens fund a plant curator position. Seattle Parks' other Specialty Gardens - the Volunteer Park Conservatory a has a plant curator position, while the Washington Park Arboretum has a plant registrar position. It is recommended that a similar position is needed at Kubota in order to better understand the plant inventory of the Garden as well as to begin preparations for garden renovations and new garden construction. This position could be a shared one within the Specialty Gardens Department.

Another recommendation is providing Kubota Garden staff access to training in Japanese garden maintenance and philosophy as well as attending the annual conference of the North American Japanese Garden Association. Continuing education in other forms should also be provided to maintain and enhance the necessary skill set required to maintain and grow Japanese Gardens.

Additional Seattle Parks and Recreation staffing levels should increase as the Garden's renovations and improvements are being made along with routine maintenance. This would include supports from the following divisions: NRU units: the gardeners from Landscape Crew, Heavy Equipment Crew such as Heavy truck operator and drivers, Tree Crew trimmers; Shops, such as tasks from plumbers, drainage, electrician, and carpenters; as well as support staff for the Specialty Gardens program and event office.

Jones & Jones (2018)

The Master Plan recommends that highest priority should first be given to projects that bring the Garden into Accessibility compliance. The next priority would be Core Garden renovations. Once the Core Garden renovations are completed, an additional FTE will be needed to maintain those renovations. Any new garden areas, as listed below, will require a minimum of 0.5 FTE per garden for the three-year establishment period. And the existing garden should have a minimum staff contingent of 5.0 FTE, an increase of 2.0 over the current level. The list below is a first pass at staffing the renovations and new projects:

Japanese Garden Renovation

(1st year 4-6 months of garden renovation; 2nd and 3rd years 2 weeks of intense follow-up, in-house)

The smallest of the four Core Area historic gardens, this renovation project should take two full-time staff with supervision from senior gardener, as well as additional support to improve the waterfall feature's plumbing, and labor to reset the stepping stones flush to finish grade. 2 FTE for 6 months, then 0.25 annually.

The Tanyosho Junction and Roads

(1st year 2 months of garden renovation; 2nd and 3rd years 2 weeks of follow-up, in-house)

This area is limited to the cast concrete curbs and plantings. This project will seek to reestablish selected viewsheds and plantings as identified in the 1962 and 1975 photographs. 1 FTE for 2 months, can be incorporated into the regular maintenance routine.

The Necklace of Ponds

(1st year 4-6 months of garden renovation; 2nd and 3rd years 4 weeks of follow-up, in-house)

This renovation project should take two full-time staff with supervision from senior gardener, as well as additional support to improve the water flow between ponds. 2 FTE for 9 months, then 0.25 annually thereafter.

The Mountainside

(1st year 6-9 months of garden renovation; 2nd and 3rd years 6 weeks of follow-up, in-house)

This renovation project should take two full-time staff with supervision from senior gardener, as well as additional support to improve the water flow between ponds. 2 FTE for 9 months, then 0.5 annually thereafter.

New Garden #1 - The Western Meadow and Forest

(3 years of garden establishment)

Assuming installation by garden staff, the new project should take two full-time staff with supervision from senior gardener, as well as additional support to improve the water flow between ponds. 0.5 FTE annually thereafter.

New Garden #2 - The Wet Forest

(3 years of garden establishment)

Assuming installation by garden staff, the new project should take two full-time staff with supervision from senior gardener, as well as additional support to improve the water flow between ponds. 0.5 FTE annually thereafter.

New Garden #3 - The Central Garden

(3 years of garden establishment)

Assuming installation by garden staff, the new project should take two full-time staff with supervision from senior gardener, as well as additional support to improve the water flow between ponds. 0.5 FTE annually thereafter.

Visitor Center Courtyard

(3 years of garden establishment)

Assuming installation by garden staff, the new project should take two full-time staff with supervision from senior gardener, as well as additional support to improve the water flow between ponds. 0.5 FTE annually thereafter.

Stormy Waters

(3 years of garden establishment)

Stormwater pond and swale on the west side of the parking lot. Assuming installation by garden staff, the new project should take two full-time staff with supervision from senior gardener, as well as additional support to improve the water flow between ponds. 0.5 FTE annually thereafter.

Staffing Recommendations Summary

- Increase staffing from 3.0 to 5.0 and train new staff in Japanese garden maintenance techniques prior to starting any renovation or new construction. Renovation projects require a minimum addition of 2.0 FTE, assuming that renovation projects occur sequentially, not all at once.
- After renovations are complete, the FTE can be supplemented per recommendations and used for the annual maintenance of those areas.
- At the completion of all projects, staffing level should be at 9.0 FTE.

Thank You

WINDSMITH design

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