



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

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LPB 09/26

MINUTES

Landmarks Preservation Board Meeting

Hybrid Meeting via Webex Webinar or Room L2-80 Boards & Commissions

Seattle City Hall, 600 4th Avenue, Floor L2

Wednesday, January 21, 2026 – 3:30 p.m.

Board Members Present

Roi Chang, Vice Chair, (RC)
Ian Macleod, Chair (IM)
Lora Ellen McKinney (LEM)
Becca Pheasant (BP)
Katie Randall (KR)
Erica Thomas (ET)
Harriet Wasserman (HW)
Cameron Wong (CW)
Matt Zinski (MZ)

Board Members Absent

VJ Kopacki (VJ)
Lawrence Norman (LN)

Staff Present

Sarah Sodt (SD)
Erin Doherty (ED)
Nelson Pesigan (NP)

Key

BM Board Member
AP Applicant
SM Staff Member

Chair Ian Macleod opened the meeting for the Executive Session at 3:31 p.m.

Chair Macleod opened the regular meeting at 4:25 p.m.

012126.1 EXECUTIVE SESSION

012126.2 ROLL CALL

012126.3 PUBLIC COMMENT

Chris Young, a Seattle Police Department employee since 1994, commented that he has been involved with Gas Works Park safety issues since 2015. Based on his research, he identified 25 serious fall-related incidents at the park since 2008, noting this is significantly higher than the 13 incidents reported by the Parks Department. He supports the proposed plan for Gas Works Park and believes the changes will not detract from its character.

Eric Magnuson, a Seattle resident since 1993, expressed support for addressing safety concerns at Gas Works Park and noted he had reviewed the full proposal and emphasized the importance of preserving and communicating the cultural stories connected to the site, particularly its significance to the grunge era and Seattle's broader history. Eric encouraged pairing any physical changes with interpretive elements that highlight the park's historical relevance.

Lorne McConachie, a former chair of the Landmarks Board, argued that Gas Works Park's defining visual features are multiple and significant from various scales and viewpoints, not solely from across Lake Union. Lorne contended that the proposal's lack of alternatives is based on incorrect assumptions that

zero climbing risk is required and that maintenance is impossible. Lorne criticized the long-term neglect of the structures, stressing that landmarks require active stewardship and urged the board to follow past precedent by pruning the towers for safety rather than allowing incremental loss of the landmark's historic fabric.

Bonnie Rough, a Ballard resident and author of a recent Seattle Times op-ed on Gas Works Park safety, stated that the park's designer had long recognized the towers were deteriorating, prompting a volunteer group in the 1990s to seek landmark status to prevent their removal. Rough emphasized that Seattle Parks is not proposing to demolish the towers, only to remove climbable elements, which she supports.

Judy Smith, an Eastlake resident, recalled designer Richard Haag describing the Gas Works structures as the most essential element of the site and noted that Richard successfully persuaded the public to preserve them when demolition was the prevailing view. Judy agreed that removing lower elements for safety is reasonable and opposed eliminating defining features of the historic structures and emphasized that Gas Works Park is one of the earliest industrial-ruins parks of its kind and that its unique structures should be maintained and preserved as important historic artifacts.

Evan Pierce, a Seattle resident, urged support for removing all pedestrian access features from the Gas Works Park towers. Evan argued that removing deteriorating ladders and walkways would not diminish the site's historic value and urged the board to act so future tragedies can be avoided.

Veronica Wellnitz, a Ballard resident, spoke as the mother of a close friend of Mattheis Johnson, who died in the July 10 incident at Gas Works Park. Veronica emphasized that the elevated pipe between the cracking towers remains an access point and commended Seattle Parks for proposing its removal and asked the board to act so no other family endures a similar tragedy.

Barbara Swift urged the board to deny the application, citing concerns outlined both in her remarks and in her January 19, 2026 letter. Barbara noted that the submission lacks a preservation or Master Plan, provides no long-term conservation strategy for the towers, and identifies no budget for maintaining their structural integrity despite the agency's responsibility to steward the landmark. Barbara concluded that a balanced approach to risk and responsibility is possible, but based on the past six months, no longer believes Seattle Parks and Recreation should be entrusted with the landmark's care.

012126.4 CONTROLS & INCENTIVES

012126.41 Wilde-Streatfield House
2409 11th Avenue W
Request for extension

SM Erin Doherty reported that the signed agreement has been received and is scheduled to go before the board on February 18 as part of the extension.

MM/SC/BP/KR
9:0:0

The motion passed and was approved unanimously.

012126.5 CERTIFICATES OF APPROVAL

012126.51 Central Waterfront Pier 57
1301 Alaskan Way
Proposed change to roofing material

SM Sarah Sodt explained that the proposal involves replacing an asphalt-shingle roof with a metal roof, which the ARC reviewed in October or November. During that review, the applicant received feedback regarding energy-code compliance and ensuring the new roofing material would not negatively affect the clerestory windows on the pier.

SM Sodt stated that these issues have since been addressed, and the applicant is now presenting detailed information showing how the proposed roof system including approximately two inches of insulation will integrate with the clerestory window detailing.

AP Robin Murphy presented an overview of the proposed roof replacement project, explaining that the plan involves removing deteriorated asphalt shingles from most of the roof and installing a gray “gunmetal” standing-seam metal roof consistent with other portions of the building and pier.

AP Murphy concluded that the proposed approach meets technical requirements and has been approved by the city.

Board members expressed strong support for the roof-replacement proposal, noting that the applicant had thoroughly addressed prior questions and demonstrated a clear rationale for the selected materials and design approach. Overall, the board agreed that the project is well-justified, sensitive to the building’s historic character, and ready to move forward.

MM/SC/ET/KR

9:0:0

The motion passed and was approved unanimously.

012126.52 Gas Works Park

1901-2101 N Northlake Way

Proposed selective removal of elements of old gas plant equipment.

SM Doherty noted that board member Katie Randall and Vice Chair Roi Chang recused themselves from the discussion.

AP David Graves of Seattle Parks and Recreation explained that the department is seeking approval to remove various appurtenances from the Gas Works Park cracking towers including ladders, catwalks, stairways, supports, and an elevated pipe connecting the north and south towers. The goal is to make the structures less appealing and less accessible to trespassers, reducing the likelihood of injuries, while also protecting maintenance staff from falling metal. Their intent is essentially to “prune” the towers to improve overall safety.

BM Becca Pheasant asked about interpretation on the site. AP Graves said they have a lot of information and could prepare new and expanded materials. AP Andy Sheffer said that Parks can commit to preparing interpretive exhibit and installation in consultation with the Landmarks Board.

BM Lora-Ellen McKinney left the meeting at 5:52 p.m.

BM Cameron Wong left the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

BM Matt Zinsky wanted to better understand the Gas Works structure in history and thinks the secondary elements are important. He asked if a historian had assessed it?

BM Pheasant reiterated her desire for a larger, holistic master plan for the park. She wanted to understand if the fence could come down in the future, and if there were other potential alternatives to mitigate impacts.

BM Harriet Wasserman agreed with BM Pheasant. Said she was thinking about the reasonableness of the proposal, and wants to see a balance that both improves safety and preserves designated features.

BM Erica Thomas recognized the applicant's desire for improved safety and appreciated the discussion to possibly move the fence line outward to enclose the west pipe. Thinks that some elements can be removed, but not all shown in the proposal.

Chair Ian Macleod said he is not opposed to selective removal of appurtenances, and hears Parks' concerns about condition. He wants to see a master plan/vision outlined. He would also like to hear directly from the consultants who prepared the reports that were submitted with the application.

BM Pheasant said it may be appropriate to remove the walkways and stairs, but not the west pipe and its supports. She said the pipe is part of the actual gas generating equipment.

BM Wasserman understood the need for removal of some elements like the horizontal surfaces and ladders, but thinks more of the texture of the historic fabric should be preserved.

BM Thomas agreed that the west pipe and support is important to preserve.

Board members expressed a shared concern about the significant tension between improving safety at Gas Works Park and preserving the historic integrity of the cracking towers. Several members emphasized that while safety is essential, the proposal lacks a comprehensive Master Plan or long-term vision for the site, making it difficult to evaluate the appropriateness of removing numerous historic features.

Board members noted the absence of detailed analysis identifying which elements are historically defining, questioned whether less drastic alternatives had been fully explored, and cautioned against irreversible decisions made without broader context. They questioned if the consultants were asked to look at a potential preservation project or just the need for removal.

Chairperson Macleod underscored that the issue is fundamentally about stewardship, not aesthetics, and voiced frustration that deterioration and limited planning have forced the board into this position. Both the board and chair called for additional expert input, comparative options, and a more comprehensive approach before moving forward with such substantial alterations to the landmark.

AP Graves clarified that a preservation master plan could take 6-9 months.

Chair Macleod suggested they could possibly outline a framework.

SM Doherty asked if the board might support a conditioned approval or whether additional information is still needed before any decision can be made. She noted that, depending on the board's direction, Parks could choose to defer the proposal to a future meeting in order to provide further analysis, as they had done in September and early October. Some Board members indicated support for a conditioned approval, but not the majority needed.

AP Andy Sheffer said that Seattle Parks & Recreation was open to tabling the application.

SM Doherty advised that, given the board's feedback, a motion to table the items would likely be appropriate and suggested scheduling a follow-up meeting with Parks staff, Andy Sheffer, David Graves, and Jessica Murphy to clarify what actions are feasible, what limitations may exist, and what timelines

might apply. This additional discussion would help address outstanding questions and provide clearer guidance on how the proposal could move forward.

Action:

I move to table the Certificate of Approval for Gas Works Park at 1901-2101 North Northlake Way until a future meeting, yet to be determined.

MM/SC/MZ/HW

5:0:0

The motion passed. Board member Katie Randall and Vice Chair Roi Chang were recused. Board members Lora Ellen McKinney and Cameron Wong were not present for the vote.

012126.6 BOARD BUSINESS

Meeting adjourned at 7:42 pm