

Ballard Library+Ballard Commons Park

Seattle, United States

Architect: Bohlin Cywinski Jackson
Landscape Architect: Swift and Co.
Client: City of Seattle; Seattle Public Library; Parks and Recreation



Dave Bramer+Merritt Ertel



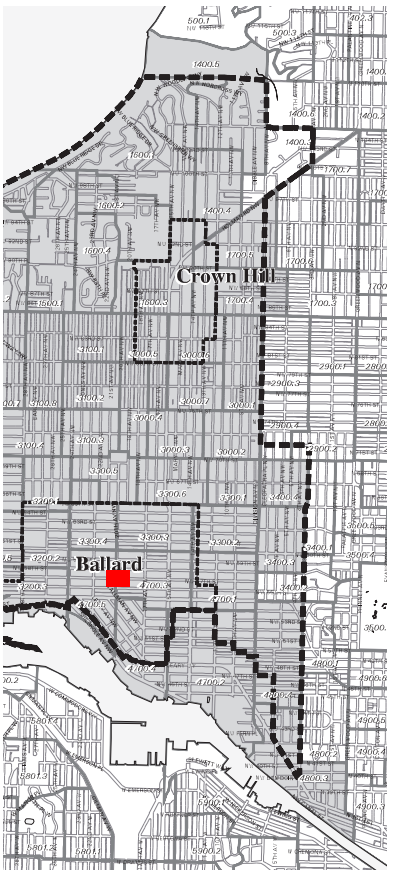
Above:
Photo of exterior lighting display and swooping roofline.
photo: BCJ architects website

Left:
This photo demonstrates a large gathering space with variable seating, water feature, and open site lines to the adjacent library and community center.
photo: m. ertel

Below:
Map of Ballard neighborhood with study site highlighted.
image: Seattle DPD

The Ballard Library and Neighborhood Service Center draws on this established Seattle neighborhood's Scandinavian and maritime roots, while focusing on its future as a popular community composed of a younger, more diverse population. The building presents a powerful civic face along a pedestrian corridor. Its main entry is pulled back from the street to make a deep front porch, where exterior site furnishings are grouped to encourage human interaction and reinforce the civic nature of this sheltered space. Individually metered, photovoltaic glass panels shade the Neighborhood Service Center lobby, demonstrating the effectiveness of photovoltaic technology in a Pacific Northwest environment. The project effectively illustrates that green building is feasible within a modest budget, and offers the Ballard community an ideal example of the benefits to be realized when sustainable design and extraordinary architecture come together.

The Ballard Commons Park is meant to be the heart of the community for the next 50-100 years, and the materials used in the park are durable, supporting of the civic nature of this community gathering place. Elemental materials of stone, concrete, wood, water, plants and light are used throughout the park in a simple elegant manner. Design influences include the natural environment and culture of Ballard, the Ballard Civic Center Master Plan, the Ballard Library, and the modern tradition of Scandinavian design.



"It is designed to work when empty or full."

Neighborhood Statistics

Ballard Population: 49,260

Area: 3600 Acres

Density Level: 13.7 /acre

Park Acreage: 210 acres

Park acreage per 1000 residents: 4.26 acres

**Governing bodies:
City of Seattle
Parks and Recreation
Seattle Design
Commission**

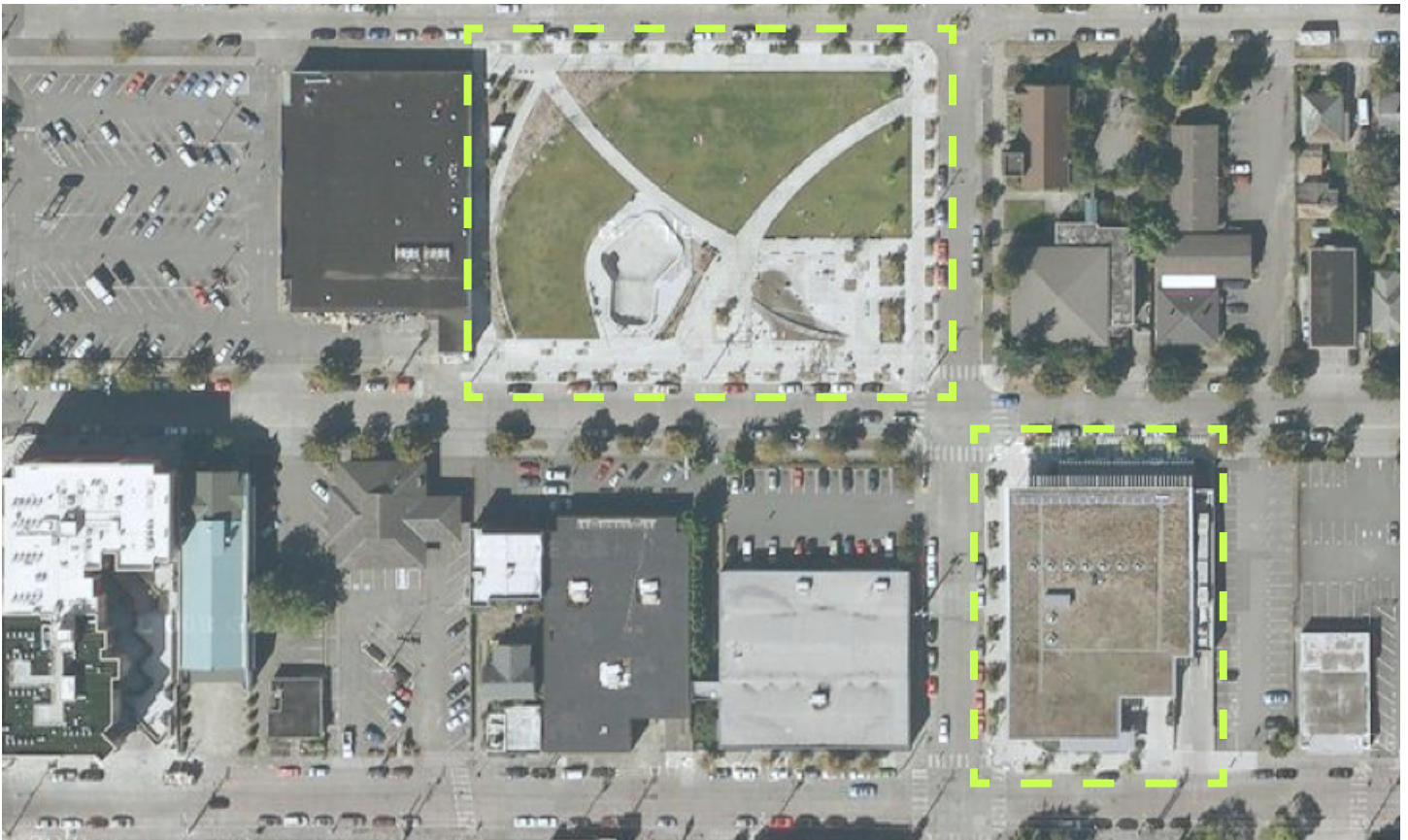
Context

The Ballard Civic Center Park is intended to be inviting to visitors of all ages who engage in a range of active and passive pursuits for an extended day during all seasons. The park supports a variety of uses from solitary activities through group endeavors and community events. It is designed to work when empty or full.

The use plan is an analysis of park occupancy during an ordinary day, during a sunny summer afternoon, and during a festival.

The site design provides clear functional separations of use areas to allow simultaneous cohabitation of multiple, disparate uses, such as skating, conversing, group readings from library staff, playing and picnicking. The relationships and design elements are structured to support people watching and multiple use where appropriate.

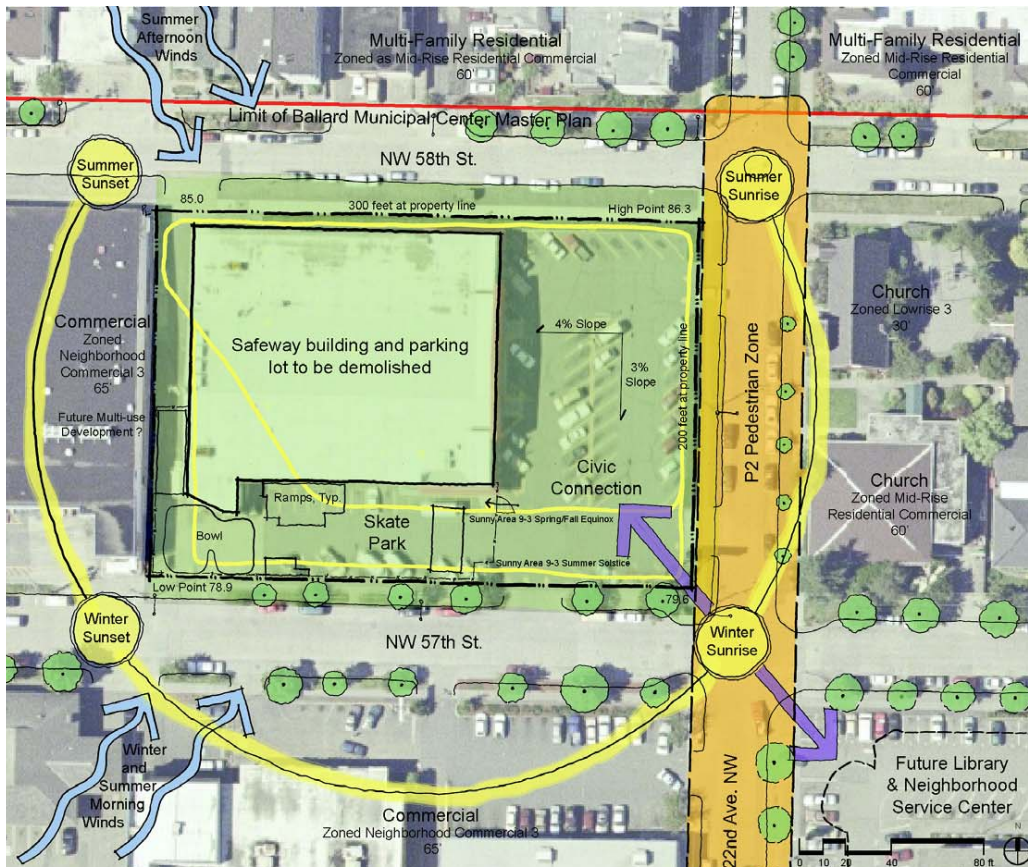
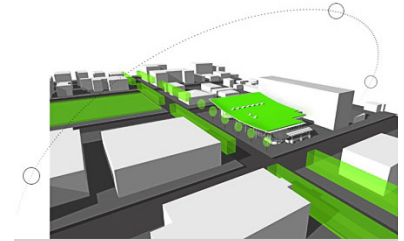
The locus of activity is toward the southeastern area of the park, to connect with the civic buildings to the southeast and in respect of adjacent residences to the north and west. Use areas include the plaza with ample seating, sculptural play elements, and a water feature. The skate facility includes a bowl and limited street elements, with areas for observation and gathering along perching rails. The lawn is large enough for group play and viewing of activities as an informal amphitheater.



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Objectives

- The park is a visually simple, open, civic space that uses radiating arcs of land-form and activities to define areas of activity and those of quiet.
- The sidewalk zone is furnished with chairs, tables, benches and trees, extending the objectives of the Ballard Civic Center Master Plan already underway with the Ballard Library and Neighborhood Service Center to the southeast.
- An entry plaza in the southeast corner leads to an amphitheater and gathering area for everyday use and community events.
- Amphitheater seating and a multiuse pole framework is provided to support special events like performances, fairs and festivals.
- The central area of the park is devoted to play, with a street skate plaza, sculptural stone elements for climbing, and seasonal water play.
- A large lawn area for passive and active use creates a sense of green open space.
- Rain drums give voice to our predominant weather systems and help us celebrate the character of the Pacific Northwest.
- ADA access is integrated throughout the park.
- Evening lighting illuminates park features and provides a safe environment.
- The potential remains for an integrated relationship with the Security Properties / QFC development to the west with the northern plantings and the southern access to the street plaza.



Above:

- Interior rendering of library image: SPL website
- Sun Diagram image: landscape+urbanism blog
- community design meeting image: SPL website

Left:

Site analysis diagram showing connection from library to park; sun relationship on site; basic wind direction; extension of pedestrian zone along 22nd Avenue NW. image: Parks and Recreation website

Opposite:

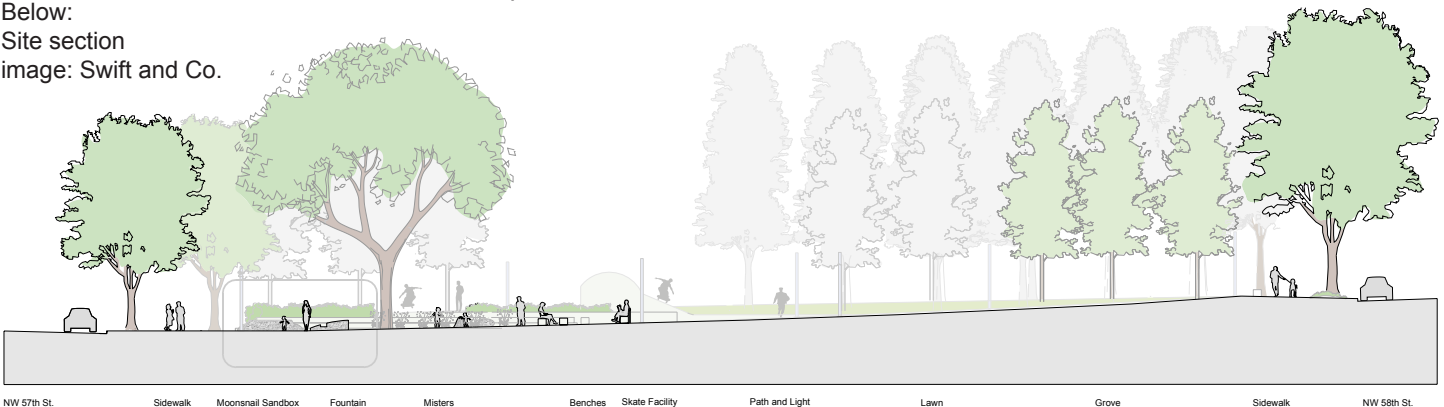
Map view of study site image: Google website



Top right:
Public meeting on 10/28/2003
image: Parks and Recreation

Above:
Site images
image: m.ertel

Below:
Site section
image: Swift and Co.



Funding Mechanism and/or Planning

Ballard Library:

November 1998: Seattle voters approved the \$196.4 million “Libraries for All” bond measure. The bond money, which could be used only for construction of libraries, funded a new Central Library and new and improved branches.

October 1999: Residents discussed the opportunities and challenges of six sites at a community meeting to talk about where to build the new branch. The Library added to the list three more sites that residents proposed.

April 2001: As an outgrowth of Ballard’s municipal center master planning process, residents and business owners, Library staff members and representatives of other city agencies formed the Ballard Library Project Advisory Committee to articulate the community’s goals before design begins.

June 2001: Residents attended a “hopes and dreams” meeting to share ideas on design, collections, programs and artwork for the new branch and neighborhood service center.

October 2002: The Seattle Design Commission approved schematic design plans for the new building.

March 2003: Residents attended a public meeting to see the building design.

February 2004: Construction began on the new branch and the neighborhood service center.

May 2005: The new Ballard Branch of The Seattle Public Library and the Ballard Neighborhood Service Center opened at noon Saturday, May 14.

Ballard Commons Park:

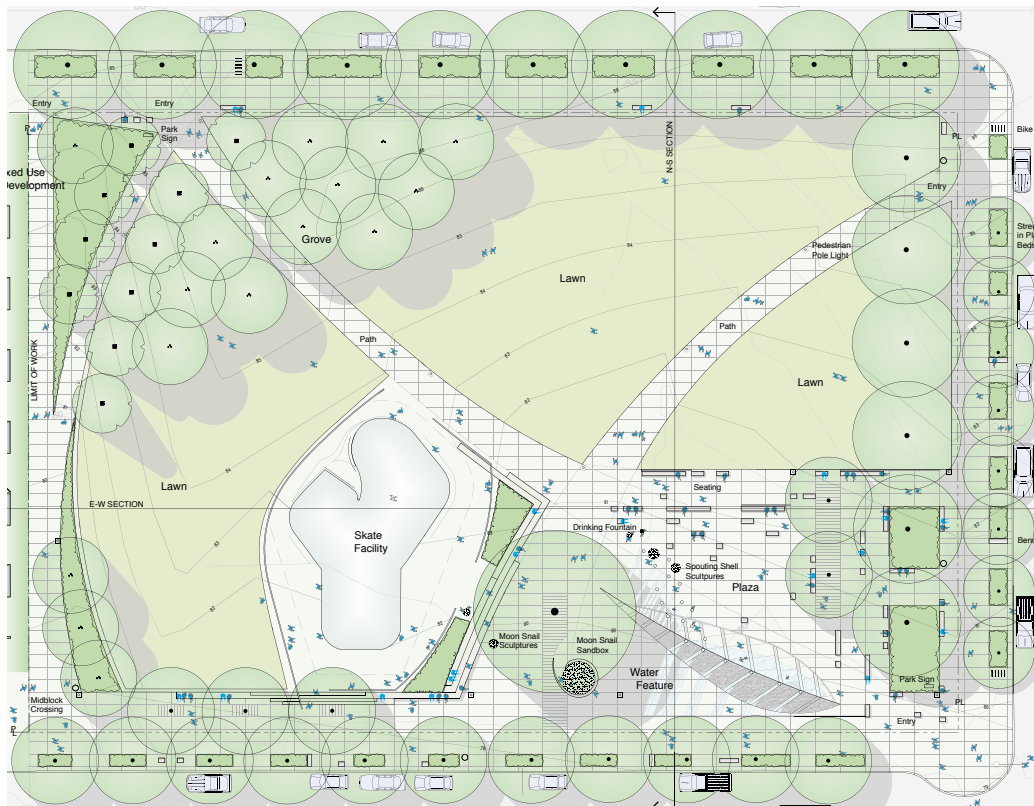
The Pro Parks Levy provided \$2,474,000 to plan, design and construct the Ballard Civic Center park in April 2005.

The new park was developed on the northwest corner of 22nd Ave. NW and NW 57th St. The 1998 Crown Hill/Ballard Neighborhood Plan recommends the creation of a park within the Hub Urban Village to become the centerpiece of a new Ballard Civic Center. The Civic Center also includes a new library and neighborhood service center on the southwest corner of 22nd Ave. NW and NW 57th St.

Public input on park design was conducted in 2004. Park construction, including demolition of the Segway building and parking lot, took place in 2005.

Swift and Company Landscape Architects were selected in August 2003 by City staff and Ballard community members to be the design consultant for the development of the new park.

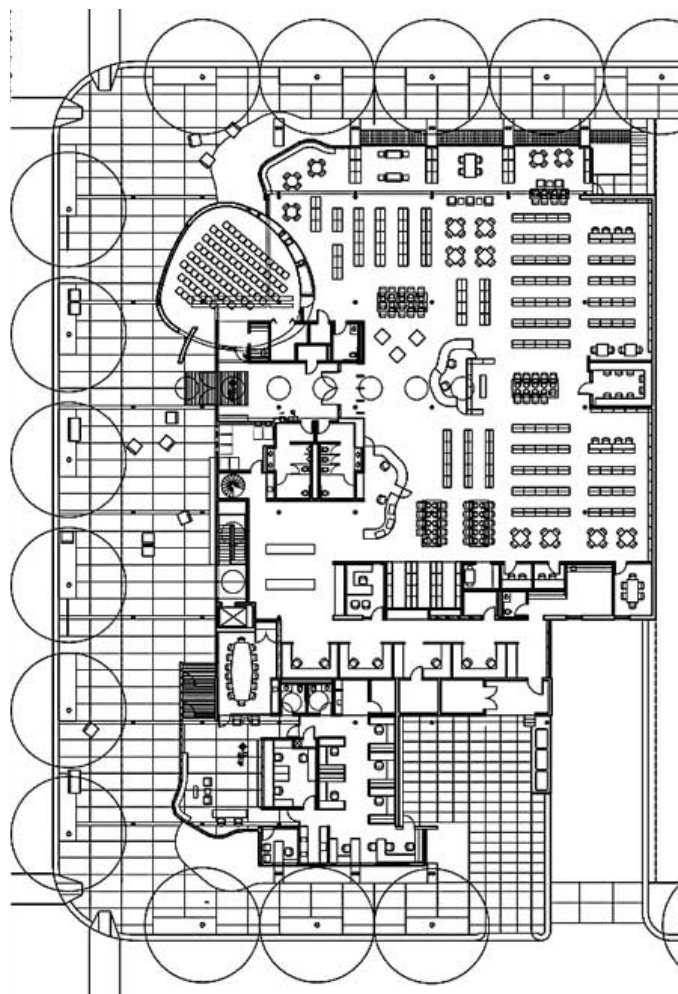
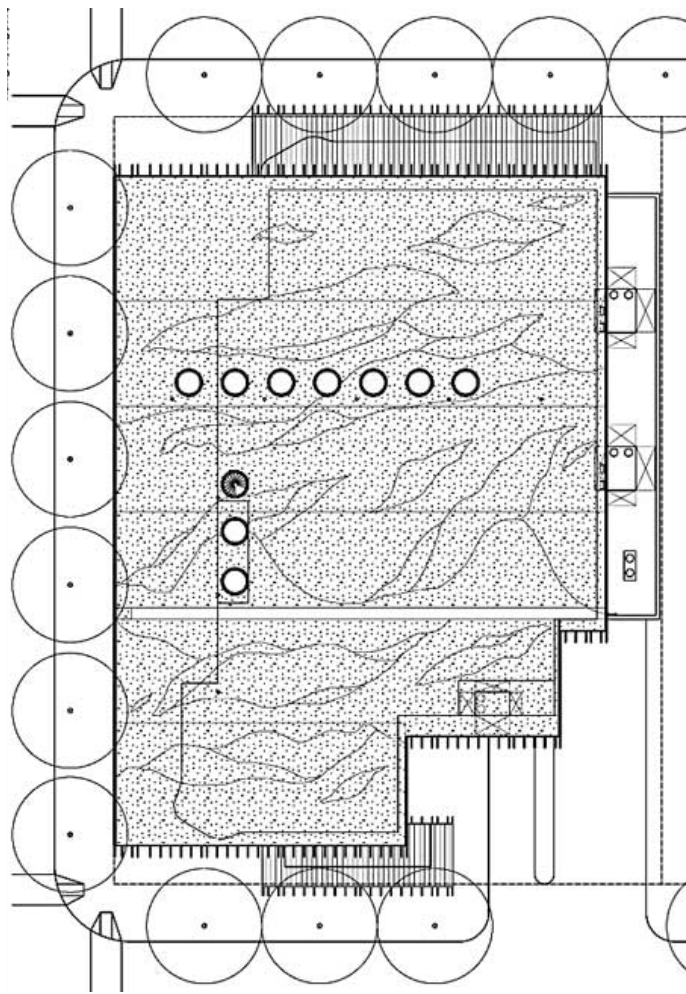
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Left:
Illustrative plan of park showing southeast corner, adjacent to library, as locus of activity image: Swift and Co.

Lower Left:
Roof plan of library showing planting scheme and daylighting elements. image: BCJ Architects

Lower Right:
First floor plan of library showing wide sidewalk with outdoor seating. image: BCJ Architects





"Best open space in the heart of the 'Llard..."

User Comments:

Kim B. "..., I am harassed by drunks! I literally could not even sit there without being approached, asked for money, cigs or whatever, and them being all super loud and arguing and drunk and it's not been enjoyable for me at all so I stopped going altogether...I am NOT against "homeless" or "transient" people at all, but I AM against being harassed, approached by strangers asking for stuff, smelling drunk breath..."

Cathy G. "This is a cute little park. Lots for everyone."

Katie S. "...it really is a nice place to walk, sit, skate, drink, and play. Best open space in the heart of the 'Llard, since the inception of the Farmer's Market."

Jason H. "I liked the old ballard skatepark. We had a street area and a bowl...The morons demolished it and made a new boring and bland one...(now) there wasn't a street area for little Timmy and Suzie to go skate."

Terrel M. "I like the Commons because there is a diverse crowd and plenty of seating."

amie C. "Just another reason to love love love Ballard...my daughter...doesn't care if its 50 degrees, so loves the water fountain."

Tarewyn M. "Great water features! Lots of lawn and happy skaterkids to watch, only downside is the cities inability to turn the water features on when they say they will."

Resources

User Comments:

yelp: <http://www.yelp.com/biz/ballard-commons-park-seattle> January 13, 2010

Library Resources:

<http://www.spl.org/lfa/neighborhoodlibs/ballard/ballarddesigns.html>

http://www.spl.org/default.asp?pageID=branch_open_factsheet&branchID=3

Landscape+Urbanism Blog:

<http://landscapeandurbanism.blogspot.com/2008/08/ballard-library-seattle.html>

Parks and Recreation:

<http://www.seattle.gov/parks/proprparks/projects/BallardCommonsPark.htm>

Architects:

<http://www.bcj.com/>

Google Map:

http://maps.google.com/maps?q=seattle&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&um=1&sa=X&oi=geocode_result&resnum=1&ct=title

Seattle DPD:

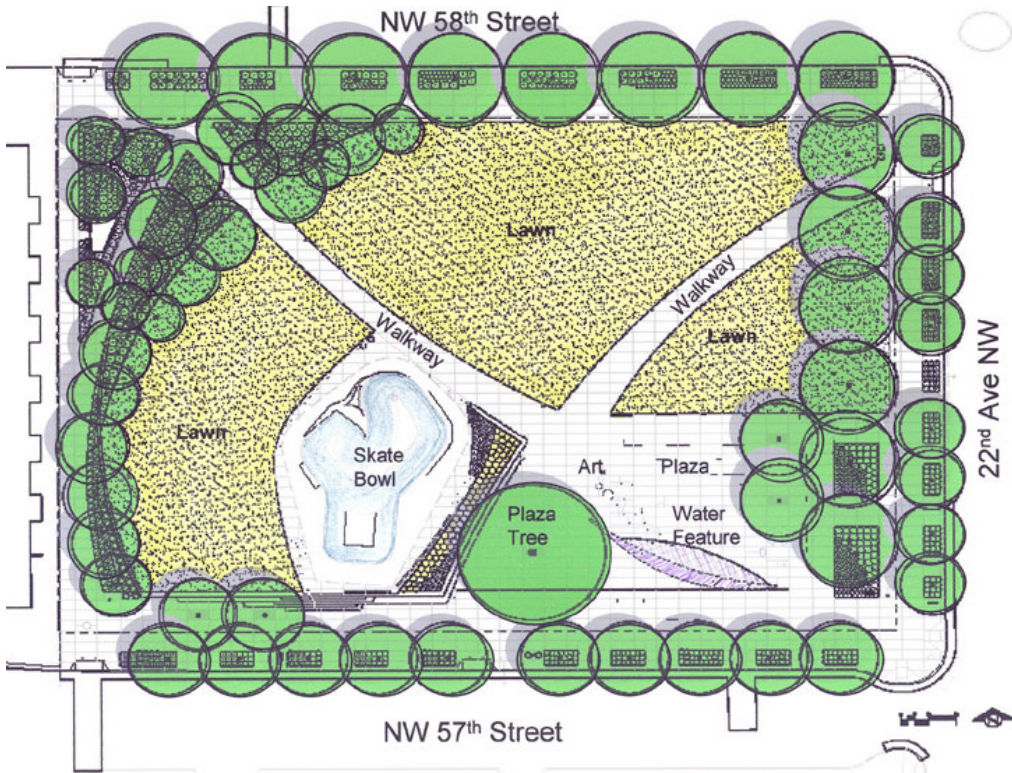
http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Research/Population_Demographics/Census_2000_Data/Data_Maps_for_Locally_Defined_Areas/DPDS_007016.asp

Left:

Site photos; visit on January 10, 2010

image: m.ertel

Ballard Library+ Commons Park



Above: Illustrative plan of basic form and layout of Ballard Commons Park. image: Swift and Co.



Above: A variety of seating is available in the park to invite both groups and individuals to sit and hang out for awhile.

Right: The material palette consists of multiple textures and patterns. image: m.ertel

