

It Starts With a Declaration of Faith in a Place.

July 28, 2018

This is a story with a Pea Patch and a Park as its heart.

Pea Patches, also known as P-Patches, are community gardens with a heritage dating back to 1923. The “P” comes from the name “Picardo”, the family who allowed portions of its commercial market garden to be used as a single piece of land tended collectively by residents of the neighborhood. The idea was adopted by the City of Seattle and today there are approximately 55 P-Patches in the City.

The P-Patch featured in our story is part of Cascade Park, located in what was once a historic blue-collar neighborhood that has since been incorporated into Seattle’s vibrant South Lake Union district. But before that could happen the Park and the P-Patch had to undergo a transformation because at the time the Park could be a truly scary place – a haven for the homeless, petty criminals and drug-users. The decision to resurrect the Park was prompted in part by the fact that across the street from the Park was Spruce Street, a private school and a day-care center.

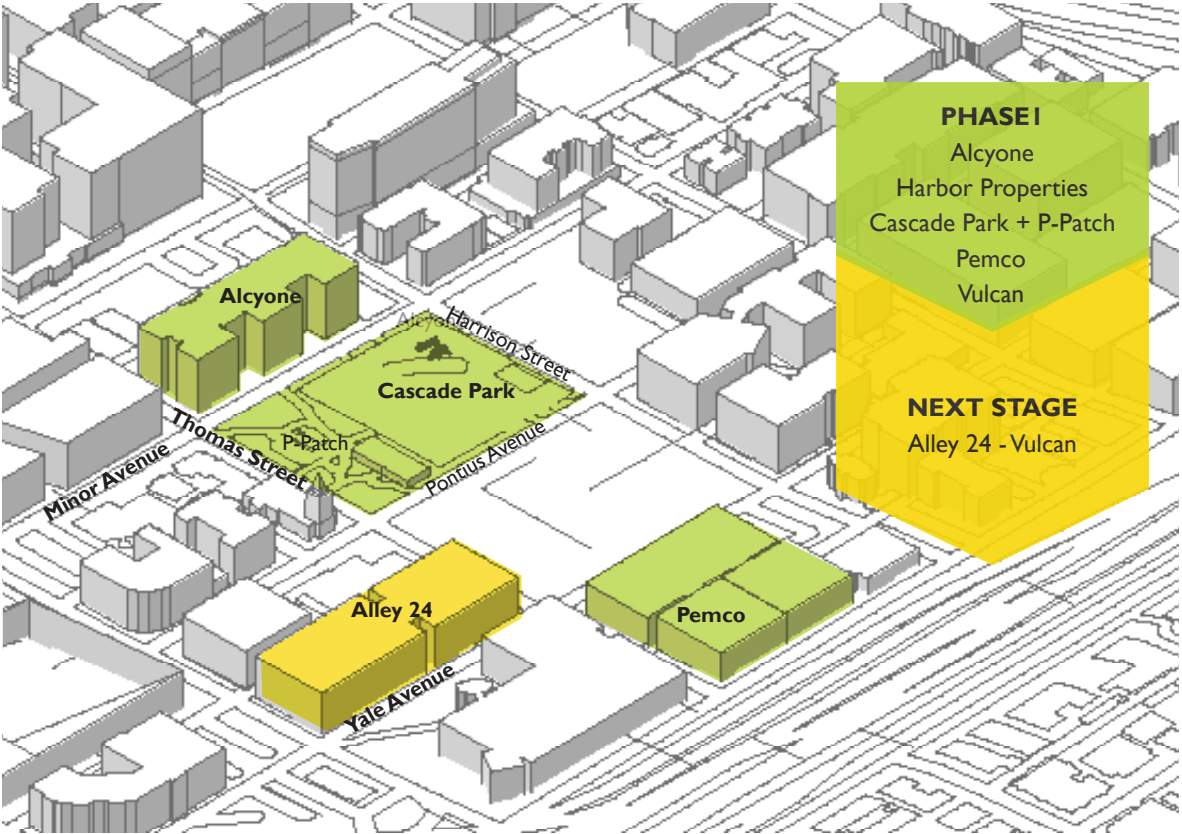
The story’s cast-of-characters also included developer Harbor Properties, Vulcan Real Estate (a Paul Allen company), PEMCO Insurance and The City of Seattle Parks Department. All had their own interest in seeing the neighborhood become a safer place and so together, in 2006, they jointly contributed \$3.5 million towards a shared vision for the Park – a vision, guided by the Parks Department and managed by Harbor Properties. Key to the vision was a major restoration of the Park.

Harbor and Vulcan planned to build an apartment, known as Alcyone, across from the Park. Designed to LEED standards, it is a 161-unit, seven-story building covering nearly half a block and comprised of a mix of loft apartments, studios, and one and two-bedroom units plus a highly popular bistro (Paddy Coyne’s Irish Pub) at street level. But to ensure the success of Alcyone, Harbor and Vulcan had to be confident that they could change the perception of neighborhood. They used the restoration of the Park and the P-Patch to “build faith in a place.”

During the restoration, fences came down, the grade relationship between perimeter sidewalks and the park was made more inviting, lighting was added, new connections through the park were introduced, digital surveillance was installed, playgrounds and playing fields were fitted into the park, and landscaping went through a process of ecological upgrading.

It was a wonderful example of a public-private partnership that helped transform an entire neighborhood, was a catalyst for other positive development surrounding the Park, and eventually became a centerpiece for South Lake Union, now one of Seattle’s most desirable corporate and personal addresses. It also smoothed the way for a highly successful mixed-use project next door, known as Alley 24, that reunited three of the original contributors to the Park’s restoration – Harbor, Vulcan and PEMCO. Alley 24 integrates ingenious planning, modern architecture and sustainable materials to create yet another lively urban experience.

In the world of enlightened public-private development, 1 plus 1 DOES equal 3. It just takes a little faith.



Cascade Park

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