Rainier Vista: Improvements over Time

Experienced as a sequence of spaces, the large-scale gesture of the Rainier Vista breaks into several smaller landscapes that are important in their own right. Within each area the Concept Plan proposes specific measures intended to improve the experience and function of individual spaces while also reinforcing the strength of the Vista as a whole. The experiential aspects of the proposed landscape are described in the following section and related functional improvements are addressed in the Vista Infrastructure section on pages 49 - 57.

Work within the Upper Vista, between Red Square and Thurston Lane, involves regrading and repaving as well as improvements to the planted edges of the space. A complete landscape renovation is proposed for the Sciences Quadrangle, tying an environmentally-motivated reengineering of Drumheller Fountain and Frosh Pond into an overall plan to renew an important campus space that has served as a construction staging area for much of the last decade. Projects within the Lower Vista, between the Sciences Quadrangle and Pacific Place, include restructuring the large lawn, and constructing a system of water treatment gardens above a new stormwater cistern. Improvements at Montlake Triangle include the lowering of Pacific Place, a new landscape bridge to the Husky Stadium Station, and the introduction of a landscape that invites use and gathering at a location that will quickly become a major campus entryway and community crossroads with the completion of the new Sound Transit station on Montlake Boulevard.
Bagley Hall

Johnson Hall

New Seat Wall

Widened Seat Wall

Drumheller Fountain with Stormwater Cisterns

New Steps & ADA Paths

Shrub and Flower Beds

Shrubs

New Fountain Jets along Pond Edge
The landscape between Bagley and Guggenheim Halls, which includes Frosh Pond, was first identified as the “Sciences Quadrangle” in early planning for the University. Although the programming of the buildings was consistent with this description, the evolution of the landscape has tended to segment the space rather than treat it as a single large landscape in the manner of the Arts Quad.

The buildings surrounding the new Sciences Quadrangle will look down on a compelling patterning of the landscape that will undergo subtle changes in color and texture throughout the seasons of the year. The new design treats the Sciences Quadrangle as a single, continuous space that relates to the scale of Frosh Pond and Drumheller Fountain while also supporting a variety of uses. An abraded network of pathways paved in radiating basalt cobbles flows through the space and facilitates direct connections across campus and between buildings. The space and ground plane is enlivened through planting, including canopy trees that create a sense of intimacy without blocking eye-level views and bursts of shrubs to create seasonal interest.

A more welcoming, human-scale occupation of the space will be created through improved seating around Drumheller Fountain, benches throughout the plan, and lawn areas. A large paved area in front of Guggenheim Hall will accommodate outdoor gatherings and events, thus taking pressure off some of the campus gardens that are currently being used for this purpose.
The Sciences Quadrangle project would include the construction of cisterns within the Drumheller Fountain/Frosh Pond. The installation of the cisterns serves the purpose of capturing stormwater runoff from the surrounding area and reducing the volume of “active water” within Frosh Pond. Work in this area will include the installation of a subsurface irrigation system in the Quadrangle’s planted areas. Once the active volume of water is reduced from the 2 million gallons, a viable treatment and recirculation approach can be implemented (see Lower Vista).

Infrastructure associated with the proposed irrigation system will be installed with dual water distribution and cistern supply capability. Additional investigation will be required to determine if, in the interim, the cistern water can act as emergency backup water supply for the Power Plant.

Creating a cistern below the fountain and within the pond, and capturing stormwater runoff, will likely require a Washington State Water Rights Permit. Although there are several reasons to believe that this project might serve as an excellent test case for this kind of program, this process may take several years before the cisterns are allowed to be operational and connected to the surrounding irrigation systems.
Benches in Shrub Edge

Stone Bench

Stone Bench Fountain Edge

Benches in Donor Garden

Benches in Vista Edge

Benches in Vista Edge

Stone Benches in Water Garden

Stone Bench at Triangle

Benches at Bus Stops
Vista Seating & Pavement Plan

Gray Unit Pavers
The existing paving between the steps leading to Red Square and Drumheller Fountain is badly worn and has required repeated patching. Given the prominence of the Collegiate Gothic architecture framing the Vista in this location, a similarly elegant material expression of the ground plane will reinforce the idea that the space itself is important.

Basalt Cobbles
The new Sciences Quadrangle will be unified by a landscape that speaks to the scale of the fountain, the rectilinearity of the space, and the passage of many students in multiple directions. Cobbles support the diverse functions of this landscape because they are both non-directional and responsive to curved forms and straight lines. Basalt is a material that is elegant and durable, evocative of local rock formations and suitable to define the experience of one of the University’s three major plaza spaces.

Chip and Seal
The lower reaches of the Vista will become more extensively used as greater numbers of commuters arrive via the Montlake Triangle. Replacing the gravel with chip and seal asphalt will suit the still casual use of these landscape spaces while making the pathways accessible by wheelchair.

UW Bench
This classic hardwood bench will be embedded within planted edges throughout the Vista.

Stone Benches and Seatwalls
Throughout the length of the Vista stone benches and seatwalls provide new places to sit, meet, and enjoy the Vista experience, particularly around Drumheller Fountain, the Sciences Quadrangle, and within the water gardens.