

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Review the Bellevue Airfield Park Master Plan and planning process.

STAFF CONTACTS

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POLICY ISSUES

Shall Council adopt the Park Master Plan and official name for Bellevue Airfield Park?

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

- Action
- Discussion
- Information

If the plan continues to receive Council support, staff will return at the next regular meeting to request adoption of the Master Plan and park name, and return later this summer to request approval of a design contract for Phase 1 improvements.

BACKGROUND

The Eastgate Area Properties are comprised of three parcels totaling 27.5 acres (*Attachment 1*). Together with the Utilities-owned 2.47-acre stormwater ponds, Council authorized the purchase of 14.59 acres from the Boeing Company in 2002, and 10.53 acres from the Bellevue School District in 2005, with the intent of developing an active-use community park. The Purchase & Sale Agreement with the Boeing Company provided for a jointly-funded access road along the southern boundary of the site, which is now in place, and 105 priority-use parking spaces on the adjacent office development. In November 2008, the citizens passed the Parks & Natural Areas Levy that identified \$6 million for the Eastgate Area Community Park “*to preserve natural areas and add new recreational amenities*” following a community-based plan.

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

The Master Planning process started in May 2008. The planning effort was led by Parks & Community Services staff, teamed with The Portico Group, an experienced landscape architectural and planning firm, together with experts in landfill management and civil and environmental engineering. There was significant interest in this planning process from nearby residents and several interest groups, with over 2,700 comments received. Public outreach included four community meetings hosted by the City and attended by 280 citizens, a mailing list that grew to over 5,000, a project website with 450 subscribers, four web surveys, media coverage in the *Bellevue Reporter* and *It's Your City*, and over 400 email and phone communications throughout the process (Public Involvement Summary available in Council office).

Most participants in the planning process advocated that the majority of the open area of the site be devoted to one of four elements: 1) an off-leash dog facility; 2) a little league field complex; 3) a regional aquatic facility; or 4) a passive-use meadow.

Plan alternatives presented throughout the process generally reflected a combination of the above uses, giving participants opportunities to hear other opinions and to express their own views. The preferred Master Plan was shaped by those participating in the planning process, Bellevue's recreation needs expressed in the Parks & Open Space System Plan and other City-wide documents, as well as opportunities and constraints unique to the site.

PARK BOARD RECOMMENDATION

The Parks & Community Services Board reviewed the process and master plan alternatives at three meetings throughout the process, and listened to public testimony on each occasion. At their October 13, 2009 meeting, the Park Board recommended Alternative A as the preferred Master Plan for the Eastgate Area Properties, with the requirement that an off-leash area of at least 5-acres be created at Robinswood Park, with improvements funded from the Eastgate Area Properties project. (*see Preferred Master Plan Attachment 2*). The Park Board also recommended the name *Airfield Park* be adopted.

COUNCIL REVIEW AND PREFERENCES

Council reviewed the process and plan alternatives at their March 9, 2009 Study Session. Councilmembers cited lighted, synthetic-surfaced athletic fields as their first priority, but also expressed interest in accessible picnic facilities and generous neighborhood buffers. At the June 15, 2009 Study Session, Councilmembers expressed concern about displacing the historic off-leash use at this site, but stated that if an off-leash facility could not be accommodated here, then enhanced facilities at Robinswood could serve this area of Bellevue.

On January 4 and February 1, 2010, Council reviewed the Park Board's recommended Master Plan, and concurred with Alternative A as the preferred Master Plan, including the recommendation to expand the nearby Robinswood Park off-leash facilities to mitigate for the eventual loss of the historical off-leash use on the Eastgate Area Properties, and to fund the expansion with funds from the Airfield Park project. Council expressed concern with the lack of specificity and certainty of the Robinswood off-leash expansion, and directed staff to work with the community to develop a plan to expand the Robinswood off-leash areas, and to include an environmental review of the expanded facilities into the environmental analysis of the Airfield Park Master Plan prior to returning to Council for formal plan adoption.

Council agreed with the Park Board's suggested historical reference of the former airfield into the park name, preferring *Bellevue Airfield Park* as the new name.

ROBINSWOOD PARK OFF-LEASH PLAN

A community planning effort and environmental analysis was conducted to determine the feasibility of expanding and enhancing the existing off-leash facilities at Robinswood Park. The planning effort was conducted between September, 2010 and June, 2011. The planning process and design alternatives are captured in the *Robinswood Park Off-leash Study* (available in Council Office). Citizen input was encouraged via community meetings, mailings, a City website, web surveys, and emails. Approximately 20 residents attended each of the two community meetings, and over 300 comments, suggestions, and survey results were received

during the process. Feedback from the community on three plan alternatives was used to develop the recommended alternative, noted as Conceptual Plan D (*Attachment 3*). This plan received strong community support and is consistent with the *2010 City-wide Off-Leash Study* endorsed by the Park Board and reviewed by City Council. The plan balances the desire to expand the off-leash facilities at Robinswood while providing adequate buffers for the adjacent neighbors. It preserves the park's existing (non-canine) uses and includes improvements to the condition of the existing off-leash facilities. The recommended alternative would expand off-leash facilities at Robinswood Park from 1.75 to 5.75 acres.

BELLEVUE AIRFIELD PARK PREFERRED MASTER PLAN

The preferred Master Plan for Bellevue Airfield Park would provide recreational amenities that respond to the needs of the community, the opportunities and challenges of the site, and interests expressed through the master planning process. The Park can be developed with sensitivity to the neighbors and implemented in a manner that reflects the City's commitment to environmental responsibility.

The plan's central features are two lighted, synthetic surface athletic areas. Both areas contain little league-sized baseball/softball fields with soccer field overlays. A total of three little league fields and two soccer fields could be accommodated. The majority of the site's woodlands are preserved, with ample buffers maintained to the adjacent residential properties to the west and north. A unifying feature of the preferred plan is a landscaped space extending from the park entrance northward to the reconfigured stormwater ponds. This feature unites the park elements and provides opportunities for passive, flexible places. This responds to a common theme expressed in many meetings that the essential park-like character of the site not be lost in attempting to accommodate the requested programmatic elements. Improved with walking paths, interactive water features, and play areas, this space provides convenient connections and uninterrupted views to the various park features, which will extend beyond the park to the southeast. The following additional elements that enjoyed support throughout the planning process are included in the preferred alternative:

- Accessible picnic facilities with shelters and parking in the wooded northwest quadrant;
- Trail connections to nearby neighborhoods, and new pathways and trails throughout the park;
- Restrooms and children's play areas are provided in two locations, one convenient to the picnic area and trails, while the other convenient to the sports fields;
- Vehicle access is limited to 160th Avenue NE, and at least 100 foot wooded buffers are maintained from the nearby residential property;
- Existing parking is utilized along the southeast side of the property, and shared office development parking exists south and west of the park;
- Reconfigured and aesthetically improved stormwater ponds will become a park asset; and
- Natural drainage practices will creatively address stormwater management. The landfill will be capped, and environmental quality control systems will be state of the art. Best practices for sustainable building and land management including low impact development techniques will be incorporated.

This Master Plan best responds to the programmatic goals expressed by the community, and:

- is most consistent with the original intent of the purchase of the property;
- is consistent with the goals outlined in the City's Park & Open Space System Plan;
- is consistent with the recreational priorities identified in earlier discussions by Council;
- responds to the need for additional high-quality sports fields;

- when combined with the recommended off-leash improvements in Robinswood Park, responds to the community's desire for more and better off-leash facilities in Bellevue;
- can be implemented in a manner that is both sensitive to the neighbors and responsible to the environment; and
- is recommended by the Parks & Community Services Board.

An application for environmental review and SEPA threshold determination for the Bellevue Airfield Park preferred Master Plan and Robinswood Off-Leash plan were submitted 6/15/11. A SEPA Determination of Non-Significance (DNS) was issued 2/16/12 and the appeal deadline expired 3/8/12.

The estimated cost to implement the preferred Bellevue Airfield Master Plan is \$23M. The proposed Plan assumes that park development will occur in phases over a long period of time. Phased development is typical of the City's large scale community park developments projects. Familiar examples include Downtown Park and Crossroads Community Park that began with adopted Master Plans in the 1980s, and have undergone multiple development phases.

Funding for the first phase of park development has been approved through the Parks & Natural Areas Levy (\$6M) and general CIP funding (\$4M). \$1.6M has been programmed in the adopted 2011-2017 CIP to complete Phase 1 design and permitting. The scope of Phase 1 is expected to combine the need for access, site preparation, and infrastructure systems with the desire to provide priority recreational facilities, including:

- Landfill pre-loading and cap;
- New methane and leachate systems;
- Stormwater system upgrades and pond improvements;
- Entry and parking improvements at the southeast quadrant;
- Park trail extensions;
- Central sports meadow (sand fill, drainage, synthetic surface, field lighting and restrooms); and
- Robinswood off-leash expansion (Park Board recommendation and Council concurrence).

ATTACHMENTS

Vicinity Map
 Bellevue Airfield Park Preferred Master Plan
 Robinswood Park Off-leash plan (Conceptual Plan D)

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL OFFICE

Master Planning Public Involvement Process for the Eastgate Area Properties
 Robinswood Park Off-Leash Study
 Council minutes for January 4 and February 1, 2010

Attachment 1
Vicinity Map



Attachment 2
Bellevue Airfield Park - Preferred Master Plan



Attachment 3 Robinswood Park – Preferred Off-Leash Plan

