

Master Planning Public Involvement Process

for the

Eastgate Area Properties Master Plan

April 2008 through Summer 2010



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Project Vision and Purpose

The City of Bellevue began a park master planning and naming process for a new community park on the Eastgate Area Properties located at 2997 160th Ave SE in May 2008. A park master plan is a conceptual plan that will lay the groundwork for the site's long-term redevelopment and potential phased implementation. City Staff is committed to working with the community to develop a shared, long-range vision for the park. With proper long-term vision and design creativity, we see this site becoming a wonderful new community asset and addition to the City's award-winning park system.

The successful master plan and public involvement process needed to: recognize and incorporate solutions addressing the recreation needs of the community, integrate and inform environmentally responsible solutions for existing and new utility systems (landfill, storm water etc.) attend to the community's diverse expectations ranging from little or no change, to highly intensive recreational use.

The Eastgate Area Properties

The City-owned Eastgate Area Properties are made-up of three parcels consisting of 27.5 acres. The site is strategically located largely within the I-90 Business Park, near the Lake to Lake Trail and major transportation corridors, and is the only remaining undeveloped site within the City that is large and flat enough to be developed for the purpose of providing a park with lit active recreation.

- The smallest (2.47 acres) of the three parcels is a storm water management pond operated by the City of Bellevue Utilities Department.
- The 10.53 acre parcel was purchased from the Bellevue School District in 2004 and is an undeveloped, sloped woodland, surrounded on two sides by single family homes.
- The largest of the three parcels was purchased with the intent of developing active sports facilities and is a relatively flat, 14.55 acre open space that was operated as a municipal landfill from 1951 to 1964 and an airfield until 1983. From a development perspective the site is rife with utility system easements (abandoned and new) such as a landfill gas migration system, ground water monitoring wells, storm water systems, and a major King County Metro sewer line among others.

More recently (2006-08) the neighbors to the south, Schnitzer West, and their contractors have constructed three, seven-story office buildings and a separate eight-level parking structure, surface parking and landscaping. The Schnitzer West project includes construction of a two-lane public road, on Schnitzer West's north property to serve the office development as well as the future park. Schnitzer was granted a temporary Right-of-Entry to use approximately 140,000sf of the south Eastgate Area Properties for construction staging.



Figure 1: Vicinity Map Eastgate Area Properties

Public Involvement Goals

The master plan would not be successful without significant consultation with the public. The public involvement program was created to achieve the following goals:

- Provide a wide range of opportunities for the community to be informed about and involved in the development of design alternatives for the Eastgate Area Properties.
- Create a process that is transparent, inclusive, and broad, but also focused and productive so that the master planning process continues to move forward and achieve results.
- Provide a comprehensive understanding of the full range of community visions, values, and priorities, so the Parks & Community Services Board and City Council can make informed recommendations and decisions related to the Eastgate Area Properties.
- Create a sense of community cohesiveness and ownership in the new park at Eastgate Area Properties.

Interest Groups and Key Planning Issues

A variety of community members, individuals and groups, has been using the park site or have a vision for what the park should become. This community included neighbors, parents, sports/athletic groups, youth recreational groups, walkers and joggers, bikers, dog owners and various others. All of these varying perspectives informed the park design and planning process. Several key issues and challenges distinguished this site from other park master plans, and were a focus of this master planning effort.

- Existing uses: The site is used by many area residents and employees for walking, jogging and as an off-leash dog area. Long-time users feel a personal connection and sense of ownership of the site. Some feel the park needs minimal improvements and should remain passive, while others believe the park should include features with community-wide interest, such as an off-leash dog facility.
- Sports field interest: The adopted 2003 Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan identifies the site as a potential location for lighted sports fields. Several concept plans have been developed to represent this idea, and the feasibility study supporting the City's purchase of this property identified active sports fields as a potential use of this site.
- Environmental stewardship: As a former landfill site, the property includes a series of landfill-related systems that must be considered during the planning process, including a methane gas collection, groundwater monitoring, leachate collection and stormwater management. The site is also directly upstream from Phantom Lake, a sensitive freshwater lake. The master plan will provide for environmentally responsible solutions to these unique circumstances.
- Shared road and parking: As part of the purchase and sale agreement, the City negotiated specific parking arrangements with the adjacent office development. The master plan will identify these arrangements and explore potential alternative solutions that best meet the needs of the park.
- Indoor recreation facility proposals: The potential for a significant indoor recreation facility, including an Aquatics Center or Field House, was explored.
- Trail connections: The site's strategic location adjacent to or near the Phantom Lake loop trail, Lake-to-Lake Trail, and regional Mountain-to-Sound Greenway trail informed the design outcome.

Planning Process and Public Involvement / Outreach Methods & Response

The planning effort was lead by Parks & Community Services Department staff, teamed with The Portico Group, an experienced landscape architectural and planning firm, together with experts in landfill management, civil and environmental engineering. Following a public involvement process, the proposed plan was reviewed by the Parks & Community Services Board and the City Council. After a SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) review process, the City Council will be expected to adopt the preferred master plan and park name.

The public involvement process was aimed at providing a wide range of opportunities for diverse interests to be informed about and involved in the development of design alternatives for the park, and then to narrow the range of options to a preferred alternative. We believe the master planning process was transparent, inclusive and broad, but also focused and productive so that the process could efficiently achieve results. We expected this work to occur over a period of a year or two. It included a series of public meetings, some organized as workshops, others as open houses or formal meetings. They were structured to encourage widespread participation and constructive public comment, provide information in an easily accessible and understandable manner, quickly raise and respond to issues and concerns, identify opportunities and constraints, and generate enthusiasm and support. Previous site designs and technical work provided a strong foundation of information to support the planning effort. The public outreach process and technical information provided the basis for developing a park program plan that reflects the desired activities and facilities of the community's vision.

Several methods were used to inform the community and to provide opportunities for feedback during the planning process. Well over 2,700 individuals have provided Master Plan comments and suggestions. It should be noted that responses (emails, survey etc.) are not statistically representative of the community. Informing this cautionary note are: multiple survey and email submissions per person, special interest group email campaigns and the virtual "community" on the world-wide-web.

The individual techniques with a general characterization of the responses are described below.

Mailing/Distribution List

Key to the success of the master planning process was a comprehensive up-to-date mailing list. This list included physical addresses, as well as email addresses, of a broad range of groups and individuals. The initial mailing list consisted of approximately 2,500 and grew to over 5,000 people including: neighbors living and working within approximately a mile or two of the park, neighborhood associations, athletic organizations, any person that expressed interest in participating, East Bellevue Community Council, Bellevue City Council, Parks & Community Services Board, and the Environmental Services Commission. The mailing list was updated continually throughout the master planning process.

Timeframe: Initial list developed by the end of April 2008: updates occurred throughout the evolution of the master plan.

Notification Materials

Postcard invitations were distributed prior to each public meeting to provide project information, advertise the event, and obtain feedback. The first postcard was sent to the project's email/ mailing list prior to the first workshop. Subsequent postcards were sent prior to each of the public open houses associated with the master plan. The postcards were also used as a handout at the workshops, and available to any interested parties who request it. The postcards provided clear direction on how to comment on, and be involved in, the master planning process.

Timeframe: The first postcard was distributed two weeks prior to the first public meeting. Subsequent postcards were distributed well in advance of each public meeting.

Project Website

The City of Bellevue's website has provided information and the opportunity to comment on the master plan alternatives and process. The website was regularly updated with information such as project announcements, public meeting summaries, and workshop materials. A website alert was available so that web users were notified of process and website updates. Meeting materials and surveys were regularly posted, so that anyone accessing the website could provide informed feedback on the design or design process. 450 community members subscribe to the City's project website and received regular updates.

Web Surveys: Approximately 1,200 people have responded to four web surveys conducted at separate points throughout the process. Each web survey followed a community workshop, posing the same questions asked at the community meetings in the small breakout groups and in the written exercises.

Timeframe: The project website went live prior to the first public meeting. Meeting notices were posted prior to every meeting; materials were posted after each public meeting. Website updates continued throughout the master planning process.

Media Outreach

Feature articles about the master planning process appeared in a variety of newspapers, including *It's your City*, and the *Bellevue Reporter*. These articles shared information about the process and also provided the website address and key phone numbers if readers wanted to share their views with city staff.

Timeframe: The project kick-off and an invitation to participate was announced in the *Bellevue Reporter*, and the planning process was described in the October edition of *It's Your City*.

Email, Phone and Written Communication

Over 400+ separate email or phone communications have been received, and responded to by City staff.

Meeting Requests by Individuals or Groups

Requests to attend meetings, share presentations or visit with community members were attended by staff. Among many one-on-one discussions with community members, the project team attended a meeting organized by the "*Save the Meadow*" neighborhood group, attended by approximately 40 residents on October 1, 2008 at Spiritridge Elementary.

Community Meeting Chronology, Activities and Feedback

A series of public meetings were conducted throughout the master planning process and consisted of workshops within the local neighborhood as well as meetings with the Parks & Community Services Board and the City Council at City Hall.

380 citizens have participated in four community meetings, organized as workshops, which took place May 28, July 17, October 1, 2008 and July 17, 2009. The first three meetings included presentations of information followed by smaller breakout sessions to encourage an exchange of ideas and preferences. The last community meeting with approximately 40 attendees ended with a question and answer session. At the conclusion of all the meetings, participants were handed cards and given the opportunity to provide written comments on the subjects discussed at the meeting. A total of 160 comments and suggestions were received.

A chronology of meetings, meeting activities and community feedback follows:

Community Meeting #1 (May 28, 2008 at Spiritridge Elementary School)

This workshop was attended by approximately 100 residents, mostly from the immediate neighborhood. Attendees were invited to “dream big” about the possibilities for the new park. Working in small groups of 8-12 to facilitate a more focused discussion and exchange of ideas, participants shared their visions, values, and ideas for the future of the new park. A broad list of possible site uses was developed from this meeting and the follow-up card exercise, and used to develop a series of five plan alternatives that would be shared at the second workshop. Broad interest was expressed for low-intensity development and passive recreational uses, with a focus on protecting the neighborhood from noise, traffic, and lights. Interest was expressed in the creation of a large off-leash area for dogs.

Web Survey #1 (conducted 7/8/08 through 8/1/08)

We received 195 responses to this survey, with nearly half of the respondents supporting an off-leash area. Lesser interest was expressed for athletic fields, walking trails, a major swimming pool, and for general open space.

Community Meeting #2 (July 17, 2008 at Bellevue Community College)

Attended by approximately 170 residents representing a wide range of interests, this workshop introduced five alternative plans for the park using program elements identified from the first workshop. Working again in small groups, participants described their likes and dislikes about each alternative, with the goal of reducing the number of alternatives for the next workshop. The working groups were organized to include representation from several interest groups, encouraging participants to exchange ideas and hear multiple viewpoints. Although significant interest was expressed for athletic fields, an off-leash dog facility, a large aquatic facility, and passive recreational development, workshop comments reflected more balanced interests in multi-use over any of the single-use program elements. The universal sportfields and meadow development alternatives were most preferred, while single-use alternatives, such as the off-leash dog park and baseball sport complex alternatives were least preferred.

Web Survey #2 (conducted 8/8/08 through 11/25/08)

149 people responded to survey #2. Responses, though somewhat similar to the preceding meeting and card exercise, were more polarized. The single-purpose baseball complex Alternative was overwhelmingly preferred, followed distantly by the off-leash dog park and multi-use sportfield Alternatives. The off-leash dog area and meadow development Alternatives were least preferred.

Neighborhood Petition (received by the City Council on 9/15/08)

Submitted on behalf of “*the neighborhoods surrounding the park,*” and signed by 242 residents, the petition states:

“The undersigned residents....wish to express their desire to keep the meadows natural and have a minimum of park recreation development. We respectfully insist that the City Council direct the Parks and Community Services Board....to assure that a minimum of 10 acres of the available 14.5 acres, minimum....be kept as a general use, multi “meadow only” use, 4.5 acres maximum for a multi-use recreation/sports area and the other 13 acres to be left naturally wooded and preserved specifically for the neighborhood use....”

Neighborhood Meeting (October 1, 2008 at Spiritridge Elementary School)

Attended by approximately 40 neighbors, the project team attended a meeting organized by the “Save the Meadow” neighborhood group, who expressed concern that the community process was not fairly representing the views of the neighbors. The purpose was to provide a forum for the group to create and present a plan to the design team that incorporated a natural meadow. Though a plan was not developed, the group emphasized the objectives set forth in the earlier petition that encouraged preservation of a large meadow, while opposing athletic field lights.

Community Meeting #3 (November 18, 2008 at South Bellevue Community Center)

Based on the feedback received from prior workshops and other community responses, the five plan alternatives discussed at the 2nd workshop were further refined to three. The 70 participants at this workshop provided comments on the three alternatives in hopes that a plan could be developed that represented a consensus of the community. Meeting attendees most preferred the alternative that represented a combination of all elements (multi-use sportfield, meadow, recreation building and off-leash facility) and least preferred the multi-use sportfields combined with off-leash facilities alternative.

Web Survey #3 (conducted 11/25/08 through 7/7/09)

177 people responded to survey #3 contradicting responses received at the community meeting, with the majority favoring the multi-use sportfields with off-leash dog area combination alternative, and least preferring the meadow, natural turf and building combination. The combination design alternative of all elements (multi-use sportfield, meadow, recreation building and off-leash facility) found middle ground support.

Parks & Community Services Board Meeting on January 13, 2009

Staff reviewed the process to-date and the three alternatives discussed at the 3rd community meeting and requested feedback to assist the design team as it prepared alternative(s) to present at the 4th community meeting. Citing community needs and the original purpose of the acquisition, the Park Board generally supported Alternative B (the multi-sports complex) with a recreation building in lieu of an off-leash area. They also supported development of accessible picnic facilities in the northwest wooded portion of the park, and preferred lighted, synthetic sports fields to maximize community resources.

City Council Meeting on March 9 and June 15, 2009

At the March 9 Study Session, Council reviewed workshop number three design alternatives. Similar to the Park Board, Council Member's cited athletic fields as the first priority of the master plan, including lights and synthetic surfacing. Accessible picnic facilities were important. Some Council Members agreed that the neighbors should be buffered from the increased use anticipated at the new community park but also thought the wide buffers of mature trees appeared to sufficiently mitigate impacts to the neighborhood. Some Council Members expressed interest in an indoor recreation facility, intrigued by the potential complement to outdoor athletics. Council Members further clarified that a building was not a high priority for the first phase of development, identified the need for more specific program information, and expressed the need to explore partnership opportunities prior to fully supporting a building on-site.

Council considered development of Off-Leash-Dog Areas on this site during both the Off-Leash Area Dog Study (June 15) and the Eastgate Area Properties Master Planning presentations, and identified the master planning process as the most appropriate venue for resolving this question. Council expressed concern about displacing historic off-leash dog use at this location, but further stated that if off-leash facilities can't be accommodated on this site, enhanced off leash facilities at Robinswood Community Park could serve this area of Bellevue.

Community Meeting #4 (July 23, 2009) at South Bellevue Community Center

Approximately 40 neighbors attended the fourth park planning meeting on July 23, 2009 at South Bellevue Community Center. Staff shared technical information about the property and reviewed feedback from the previous community workshops, online surveys and correspondence from the community, Parks & Community Services Board and City Council. The park system recreational needs and opportunities were then reviewed before viewing a range of three updated design alternatives. The meeting concluded with a question-and-answer session.

The 36 comment card responses received at meeting #4 offered no clear indication of a preferred design alternative; rather, all 3 alternatives were similarly supported and opposed.

Web Survey #4 (conducted 7/31/09 through 2/19/10)

The project web-site was updated with survey #4 on July 31 after the Community Meeting. We have received 661 survey responses indicating a preference for both

Alternative A (outdoor athletic facility) and Alternative B (athletic & off-leash facility). The least supported design is Alternative C (athletic & recreation building).

Email and Phone Communications

Throughout the planning process Staff has received over 400+ emails and phone communications. Many appear to have responded to requests from interest group representatives asking constituencies to express their views to the City. Most favor athletic fields, an aquatic center, an off-leash facility, or prefer that the City do nothing.

Parks & Community Services Board Meeting on September 10, 2009

Staff reviewed the process to-date and the three alternatives discussed at the 4th community meeting. The presentation was for informational purposes, to help inform the Board's recommendation to Council anticipated in October.

Parks & Community Services Board Meeting on October 12, 2009

The Board further reviewed the process and plan alternatives. After discussing the merits of a recreational building depicted in Alternative C, the Park Board recommends (5-2) that City Council Adopt:

Alternative A as the preferred Master Plan for the park at Eastgate Area Properties, with the requirement that an off-leash area be created at Robinswood Community Park of no less than five acres with amenities that are consistent with the Bellevue's Off-leash Area Plan; and to recommend that funding from the Eastgate Area Properties be used to improve the off-leash area at Robinswood Community Park.

After reviewing several potential names for the park, the Park Board suggested that the historical significance of the property be preserved by referencing 'airfield' in the park name. The Park Board recommends (7-0) that City Council adopt *Airfield Park* as the name of the Eastgate Area Properties site.

City Council Meeting on January 4 and February 1, 2010

Staff reviewed the process to-date, the three alternatives and shared the Park Board's recommendation with the City Council. Staff was seeking Council's feedback prior to completing the environmental review of the preferred alternative. Council requested further information including: funding sources, cost implications, environmental review, sportfield cost recovery and safe design.

After reviewing further information on February 1 the Council generally concurred with the Parks and Community Services Board Recommendation:

Alternative A as the preferred Master Plan for the park at Eastgate Area Properties, with the requirement that an off-leash area be created at Robinswood Community Park of no less than five acres with amenities that are consistent with the Bellevue's Off-leash Area Plan; and to recommend that funding from the Eastgate Area Properties be used to improve the off-leash area at Robinswood Community Park.

Council Members' added that they desired greater certainty that the off-leash improvements at Robinswood would occur and share a similar timeline to the new park improvements. Council also noted that prior to adoption they would like to review project estimated costs, and park development phasing strategy.

Council Members appreciated the reference to the sites historic use as an airfield in the name for the new Park as proposed by the Park Board. Some Council members expressed a concern that the name *Airfield Park* was too abrupt and suggested *Bellevue Airfield Park* as a more mellifluous naming option.

Master Plan Report

The comments and results gathered through the public meetings, website surveys, and other public involvement activities will continue to be summarized throughout the Master Planning process. The Master Plan Report will include this Public Involvement Program and Summary. Beyond the public process and feedback the Master Plan Report will include site, programmatic design, and infrastructure information, as well as estimated costs, implementation strategy and a phasing plan. The Master Plan Report will be distributed to city staff, the Bellevue City Council, and numerous others, ensuring that subsequent decisions about the park can be made with as much information as possible.

Timeframe: The report will be finalized soon after the Master Plan Adoption by City Council - estimated to occur summer 2010.

Master Planning Process and Timeline Overview

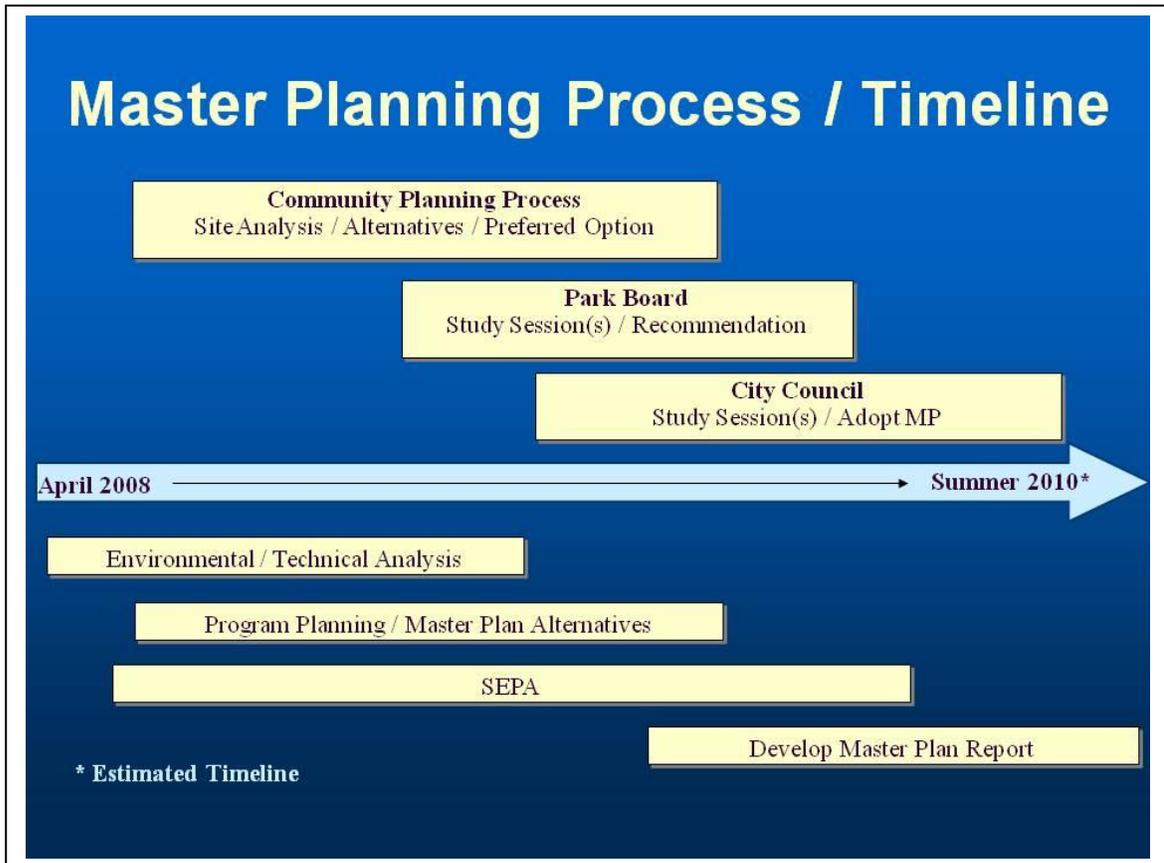


Figure 2: Master Plan Process Overview

For More Information or to Provide Comments:

Visit: http://www.bellevuewa.gov/eastgate_area_properties_master_plan.htm

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