

**DATE:** October 9, 2012

**TO:** Parks & Community Services Board

**FROM:** Glenn Kost – Planning & Development Manager  
Pam Fehrman – Project Manager

**SUBJECT:** Downtown Park Inspiration Playground and Bellevue Rotary Partnership

**ACTION REQUESTED:** None. This is an update on the progress, current status and next steps of the Bellevue Rotary Inspiration Playground and Partnership with the City.

## **BACKGROUND**

As you may recall, on February 14, 2012 the Parks & Community Services Board considered a proposed project partnership with Bellevue Rotary to create an accessible, interactive, age-friendly play area for people with and without disabilities at the Downtown Park Playground. The Board voted (5-0) to support the Downtown Park play area improvements and partnership with Bellevue Rotary.

### **Downtown Park and Playground**

Bellevue Downtown Park has become the City's signature park, creating an important gathering place for residents and workers. It is used daily for walking, jogging, eating lunch, and people-watching. It is also home to many special events, and plays a pivotal role in making downtown Bellevue an appealing place to live, work, and play. The existing playground, located in the southwest corner of the park, is approximately 8,500 square feet in size, and includes an adjacent parking lot and restroom. It is among the most popular playgrounds in the community, and a destination for many families (attached - Vicinity Map).

### **Inspiration Playground**

Working with the landscape architecture firm of Design Concepts, the Bellevue Rotary Steering Committee and City staff engaged stakeholders in the development of playground plans to expand the existing Downtown Park playground with a focus on inclusive, accessible play opportunities, and the mission of *“creating the most unique playground on earth; a self-contained world, dedicated to fun, imagination and learning, where all ages and abilities play and explore at their own pace.”*

The resulting conceptual playground plan (attached – plan and sketches) was unveiled to the Rotary membership at their annual meeting in June. Known as the Inspiration Playground, the concept:

- Retains the popularity of the existing playground while expanding its footprint to encourage a broader and more inclusive range of users;
- Provides activities that are fun and challenging, that support the physical, educational, and social development of the individual, and that consider sight, sound, scent, and touch; and
- Respects the future plans for the Downtown Park through the use of existing site features and topography; and is
- Consistent with the Council-adopted Downtown Park Master Plan.

Bellevue Rotary has strongly endorsed the playground concept, and has committed to its most significant fundraising effort to date to construct the Bellevue Rotary Inspiration Playground.

### **BELLEVUE ROTARY AND CITY PARTNERSHIP**

On September 17, 2012 the Council approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Bellevue Rotary Club outlining a partnership agreement to expand the existing Downtown Park playground with a focus on inclusive, accessible play opportunities as captured in the concept plan. The City committed to providing design and other project soft costs, and to operate and maintain the playground. The Bellevue Rotary committed to raise an estimated \$3,500,000 in construction costs. The agreement allows for phased development, but a minimum of \$1,400,000 is needed to initiate Phase 1 construction.

This proposed MOU is very similar to the successful partnership between the City and the Bellevue Breakfast Rotary Club (BBRC) that created the Crossroads Park Water Spray Playground in 2008. In that project, the BBRC raised \$1 million, while the City contributed soft costs of approximately \$300,000.

### **PLAY FOR ALL EXPO**

On Saturday, September 29, 2012 the Bellevue Rotary and City co-hosted a *Play for All EXPO* in the Downtown Park to share the *Inspiration Playground* concept with the community, and to celebrate and learn about community support programs for people living with disabilities in fun and interactive ways. Approximately 1,000 people and scouts attended and joined in the fun on a sunny day.

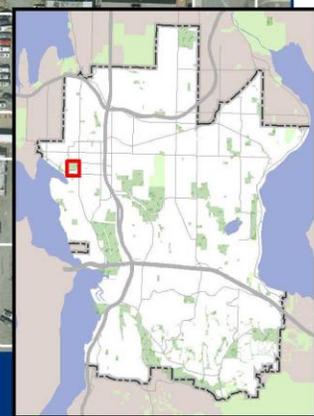
### **NEXT STEPS AND PROJECT TIMELINE**

At the October 15<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting, staff will request approval of a professional services contract with the firm Design Concepts to initiate the next phase of design and engineering for the Downtown Park Playground expansion. This phase of design will provide refinement of the playground concept and help inform the appropriate next phase of design and construction so that work remains commensurate with available funds raised.

The project timeline depends largely on the success of the fundraising campaign, which may take up to three years. The City will complete additional design phases as specific fundraising milestones are achieved.

We look forward to keeping you well informed of developments as this exciting project evolves!

# Vicinity Map



City of  
Bellevue  
Park Planning

Vicinity map

## Downtown Park



Plot Date: 3/7/2012

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Parks Department

# Inspiration Playground Concept



## Downtown Playground

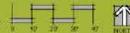
*Whimsical Nature*



ROTARY CLUB OF BELLEVUE

June 22, 2012

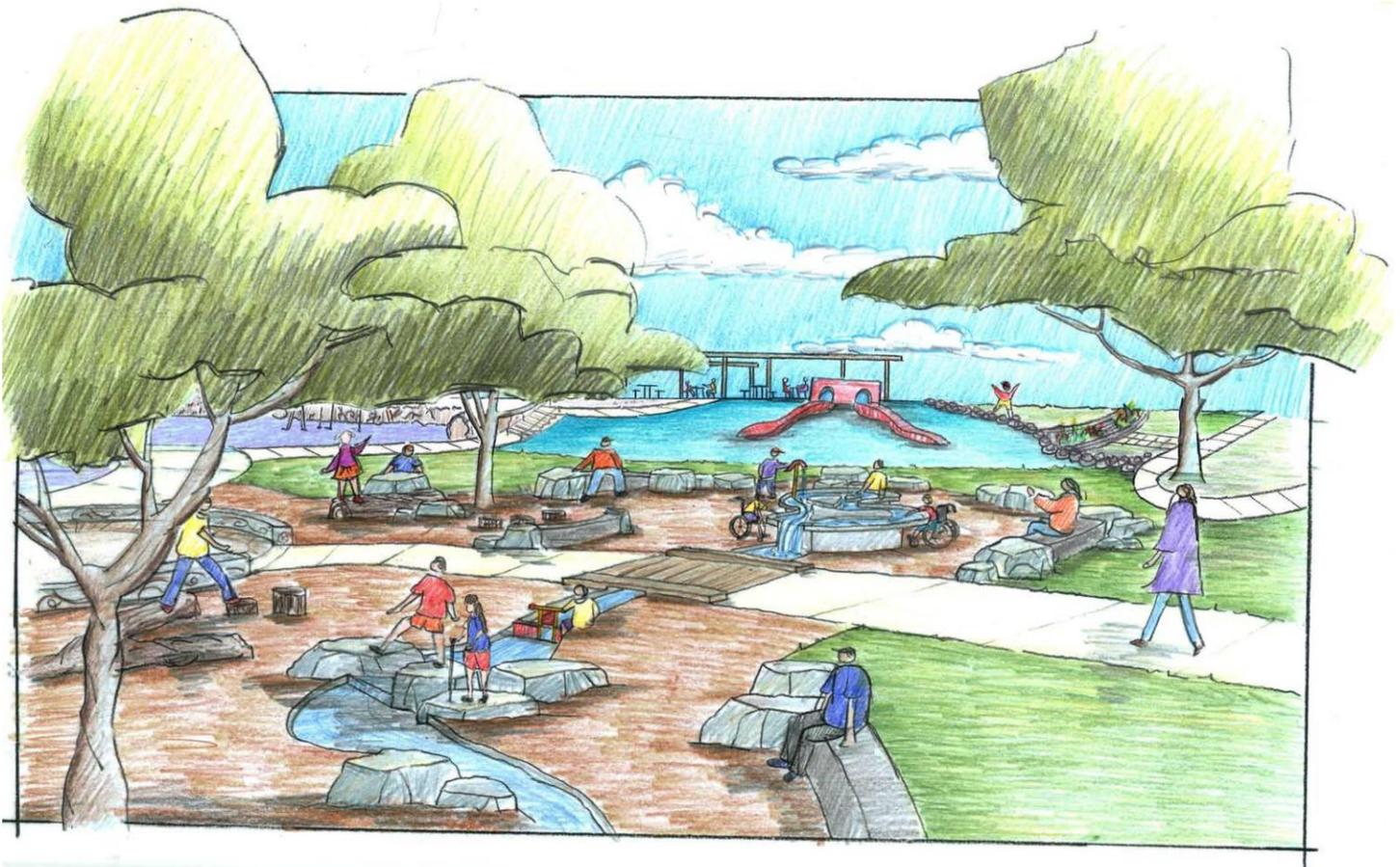
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## Inspiration Concept Sketches



**Wisteria Gateway Entry**



**Interactive Water and Natural Play Area**



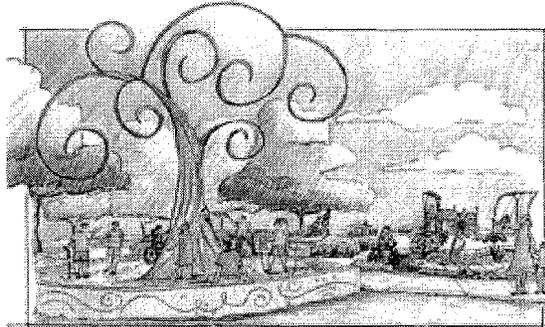
# CITY OF Bellevue

## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Thursday, September 27, 2012

### 'Whimsical' playground planned for Downtown Park

The playground at Bellevue Downtown Park will be redesigned and significantly expanded to include new, interactive features that engage the senses. Details about the playground overhaul, intended to accommodate children with disabilities, will be unveiled Saturday at a "Play for All" Expo at the park.



The city has hired a landscape architect to draw up plans for "Inspiration Playground," which will have unusual components, including tactile sculptures that encourage touching and climbing and an interactive music plaza that allows users to create and respond to sound. A central "Whimsy Plaza" will feature a tree sculpture that evokes Dr. Seuss.

To be five times the size of the current playground, the new one will be open to all children, but it will offer a great play opportunity for children with developmental and physical disabilities who have difficulty at traditional playgrounds.

The Expo, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., will include entertainment and food vendors. Scheduled activities include

- Welcome and playground project unveiling by Mayor Conrad Lee and Rotary Club President Robert Rose;
- "Discovery stations" and "disability awareness booths" such as wheelchair basketball and free-throw shooting contests, a blind navigation challenge, wheelchair obstacle course and video phone demonstrations;
- Scout activities such as a blindfolded rope tying contest, blind tent pitching and disability awareness merit badge class; and
- Entertainment, including the Bellevue Youth Theatre Glee Club, Seattle Hula Productions and Bellevue High Jazz Band.

Participants are invited to visit 10 stations and complete a Play for All passport to pick up a prize.

Participating organizations include: Canine Companions, Alliance of People with disAbilities, Autism Speaks, Outdoors for All, Lighthouse for the Blind, Steve Ferreira, Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts, Autism Speaks, ARC of King County and AccessSTEM DO-IT Program.

The Rotary Club of Bellevue has partnered with the city on this project and is leading an effort to raise \$3.5 million to build the playground, possibly by 2015. To donate funds or support the project, call 425-998-7542 or visit the Rotary. For more information about the Expo, call 425-452-4882 or check the Community Calendar.

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## Contact Information

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