

**Surrey Downs Park Master Park
April 1, 2008
Public Meeting #3
Summary Report**

Prepared for:

The City of Bellevue

Prepared by:

Norton-Arnold & Company

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Overview

The City of Bellevue is nearing completion of a master planning process for Surrey Downs Park, located at 546 112th Avenue SE. The site is a public park containing both passive and active recreational elements. It is popular and well used by the surrounding neighborhoods. Park assets include two programmable ball fields, a pedestrian loop trail, hazelnut grove, children's play area, and a small basketball court.

The intent of the Master Plan is to make recommendations for the site's redevelopment. The City of Bellevue has engaged the public at all phases of the plan to encourage collaboration with citizens for the future of the Park, and to protect Surrey Downs Park as an important feature within the City's parks and open space inventory.

April 1 Public Meeting

Approximately 40 people attended the third public meeting for the Surrey Downs Master Plan on April 1, 2008 at Bellevue City Hall. The primary purpose of the meeting was to present a "preferred concept plan" for the Park, which was based on previous ideas and input from the public. The City and Design Team also presented development parameters for a "building impact zone" at the Park. The goal of the meeting was to hear from meeting participants about their suggested refinements to the preferred concept plan for Surrey Downs Park.

The third public meeting was attended by the following City staff and consultants, Patrick Foran, Director, Glenn Kost, Planning and Development Director, and Scott Vander Hyden, Project Manager, of Bellevue Parks and Community Services; Guy Michaelson, Andy Mitton, and Greg Bower of The Berger Partnership. Margaret Norton-Arnold, Chris Hoffman, Todd Peterson, Kristin Anderson, and Shanon Kearney of Norton-Arnold & Company, which coordinated the public meeting and facilitated the small group discussions.

The City of Bellevue advertised the meeting on the City's project website and through an invitational postcard sent to approximately 2,900 households within a geographic area bounded by Main Street, 112th Avenue SE, the Village of Beaux Arts, and Lake Washington. Invitations were also sent to attendees of all previous workshops.

Margaret Norton-Arnold opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with an overview of the evening and a description of the current phase of the master planning process. This introduction was followed by a welcome and project update from Patrick Foran and Glenn Kost.

Glenn provided information about the park planning process and indicated that, although the public agrees a building is appropriate at Surrey Downs Park, no decisions will be made on the building during this park master planning process. To address the potential siting of a building within this Park, the City, in collaboration with The Berger Partnership, created a "development impact zone" with recommended building parameters. He openly invited everyone present to share their ideas for the preferred

concept plan and the development parameters, but noted that this meeting's primary goal was to collect community feedback on the Park itself.

Presentation

Guy Michaelsen, Principal with The Berger Partnership, the landscape architecture firm under contract to the City of Bellevue to complete the Master Plan, presented his design team's development zone parameters and the preferred concept plan. The preferred concept plan was described by specific areas – the Great Lawn, the Sports Meadow, Pathways and Loop Trails, Play Area and Discovery Trail, Neighborhood Portals, and Promontory and Labyrinth - in order to spark comments and critiques. The remainder of the meeting was focused on collecting feedback from meeting participants on the design elements and the development parameters.

Discussion

After the presentation, attendees divided into four discussion groups, each of which was led by a professional facilitator. The groups were charged with addressing these questions:

- 1) What additional input do you have on the following specific design goals?
 - a) Great Lawn
 - b) Sports Meadow
 - c) Pathways and Loop Trails
 - d) Play area and Discovery Trail
 - e) Promontory and Labyrinth
 - f) Neighborhood Portals
 - g) Parameters for the Development Zone

- 2) Do you have any suggestions for elements that were not represented?

After about an hour of discussion, the four groups reconvened to share their thoughts and ideas with one another. What follows is a summary of the small group discussions.

Summary of Public Comments

Among the groups, there were several common themes. The majority of meeting participants generally approved of the preferred concept plan because it demonstrated that the team had listened and generally reflected public opinion of how the Park should be organized – passive recreation space to the north with active recreation to the south. The public also appreciated that other features were centralized for easier access and

visibility, including a playground for smaller children, adequate parking, and public restrooms.

However, most of those attending also shared ideas for ways to improve the preferred concept plan. Specifically, they urged leaving the Park visibly “open” while simultaneously putting some needed distance between Park users and neighbors abutting the Park. The dominant theme was “balance” with the design creating spaces that were inviting and seemingly private, yet accessible to everyone.

The Great Lawn received a great deal of support from meeting attendees because it provided an area for unprogrammed activities year-round. Some people also approved of the addition of a small, appropriately scaled skate spot in a location naturally buffered from the surrounding neighborhood. Others criticized the skate spot for inviting noise and unruly skaters and preferred that the skate spot not be included in the design. Some parents commented that the distance of the Great Lawn is still too far from the ball fields and impairs sightlines for parents, who need to watch both the ball fields and their younger children in the Play Area.

When discussing buffers along the Park edge, some attendees commented that they preferred low plantings like blackberry bushes to tall trees like cedars. One neighbor along the upper northwest edge of the Park commented that the existing cedars are messy and keep sunlight from reaching neighboring yards. Others argued that screening is appropriate to allow neighbors privacy but should not obstruct sight lines or create “hidden” places for illegal behavior.

The Sports Meadow received substantial support for keeping at least two baseball diamonds and room for a soccer field on the site. Many people approved of the closer proximity of the ball fields and the Play Area in relation to the parking area. However, the Sport Meadow did spark some debate about the orientation of the home plate to the sun and the close proximity of neighboring yards. Some meeting attendees felt the ball fields dugouts should be flipped: one close to the proposed Labyrinth and the other next to the Play Area. Others argued that home base should never face West, putting the sun directly in the batter’s line of vision.

When discussing the Pathways and Loop Trails, everyone grew very excited. One popular idea was to include distance posts as well as stretching or exercise stations. Several people urged softer surfacing for the paths, noting that the hazelnut groves could also be planted as clusters, as opposed to lines, to look more natural. Several participants advised relocating the walking trails to the west side of the building rather than near 112th Avenue NE.

Regardless of the opinions about the details, there were several Park elements that received continued support from meeting participants. On the list of generally approved Park details was the Play Area and Discovery Trail. However, as mentioned previously, many meeting participants wanted to see the Play Area even closer to the ball fields and the addition of climbing surfaces, for example, animal sculptures, for young kids. Others

added that bike racks and picnic tables were missing from the overall plan and that the basketball half court should be expanded to a full court.

There was considerable discussion about the location and design intent of the Promontory and Labyrinth, with group members recommending alternative uses for this part of the site. Many people suggested that this part of the Park be reserved for adult use and that a “permeable” design should be implemented to discourage illegal or inappropriate behavior. Some participants said this corner of the site would be more appropriate for a passive feature, such as a sitting area or shade garden since the neighboring properties are so close. Several commenters stressed that, regardless of the type of activity ultimately located here, screening is necessary in order to provide neighbors with additional privacy. And still others proposed more active uses, such as a covered picnic area, climbing area, or a water feature.

With regards to the neighborhood portals, many meeting participants saw these gateways as a way to provide a visual identity for the neighborhood in the form of a common design element such as art, arbors or plants. However, others commented that neighborhood access should not be overemphasized and thus create a security problem.

When asked about the development parameters, participants asked a number of questions and shared their comments about any new building and how it relates to the master planning process. Amongst some groups, there was a discussion as to whether using historic precedence as a determinant for building size parameters was appropriate. Others expressed frustration that the building or “white area” on the plan would not be addressed during this master planning process. A common recommendation amongst the groups, however, was to make sure any future building be sited closer to 112th Avenue NE than shown on the preferred concept plan. Overall, the public was glad the City was thinking about capping development at a certain size to protect the neighborhood feel of the Park.

Other Comments

One man suggested that the Master Plan include a fiscal impact analysis in order to address how Park changes will impact surrounding property values.

There were multiple requests for screening or fencing along the Park boundary to discourage Park users from looking into neighbors’ yards.

One discussion group recommended grafting the existing trees to maintain a historic DNA link to the hazelnut grove.

A concerned mother suggested lighting the neighborhood portals when possible to improve safety for neighbors and Park users.

One older meeting participant asked that the design include an area for recreational activities for seniors such as bocce ball.

One woman asked that the madronas near the proposed Labyrinth be preserved if at all possible.

Another person stressed that the north and south neighborhood entrances to the Park be protected to allow easy pedestrian circulation from the community.

Make sure there is good drainage on and off the fields to reduce erosion on and off the site.

Several participants said they liked the idea of including a natural amphitheater in the Park. Consider installing this feature in the Park's northwest or southwest corner.

Plant a rose garden in the northwest corner of the Park.

Several people asked that the green buffer around the Park not be so dense that it blocks the ability of neighbors to keep an eye on the Park.

Wrapping Up the Surrey Downs Park Master Plan Process

The Berger Partnership team will use the comments generated at the April meeting and the feedback they receive from the Parks Department to “tweak” the preferred concept plan. The resulting scheme will be presented at the next Parks Board meeting scheduled for May 13, 2008, at Bellevue City Hall. At this meeting, participants will have another opportunity to review and comment on this preferred concept plan. The Parks Board will then consider these comments when they prepare a recommendation to the City Council on the Surrey Downs Park Master Plan. This recommendation will then be reviewed by the City Council, with the goal of having the City Council adopt the Master Plan prior to their Council recess in August of 2008.

Those who were unable to attend the three public meetings can review the materials presented by accessing the project website at http://www.bellevuewa.gov/surrey_downs.htm or contacting Scott Vander Hyden, Project Manager, at (425) 452-4169 or svanderhyden@bellevuewa.gov.



Surrey Downs Park Preferred Concept Plan

PLAN SCALE: 1"=40'