

**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC**

Ashwood Park Master Plan Update and Parks & Community Services Board recommendation

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*Parks & Community Services*

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY****DIRECTION**

Staff will provide a summary of community outreach and preferences for the Ashwood Park Master Plan update and seek Council direction identifying a preferred park plan and name. Representatives from the Parks & Community Services Board will share the board's park plan and name recommendations. Next steps include completion of environmental review prior to formal Council adoption.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends Council identify design Alternative F and the name Ashwood Park as preferred per the Parks & Community Services Board recommendation.

**BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS****Ashwood Park Site**

Ashwood Park is located in the northeast corner of Downtown Bellevue. Uses surrounding the park include the King County Regional Library to the east, dense urban housing to the west and south and McCormick Park and single-family housing to the north, (Attachment A). Ashwood Park is located on a portion of the former Ashwood Elementary School site that the City of Bellevue and the King County Library District jointly acquired from the Bellevue School District in 1986. The purpose of the acquisition was to provide a library and public park space.

**History**

In December 1990, Council adopted the current Ashwood Park Master Plan (Attachment B). A two-year public outreach process involving boards, commissions, and public input informed the master plan that anticipated future higher density residential development that did not exist at the time in Downtown Bellevue.

The adopted 1990 master plan includes a passive open green space on the north half of the site. The south half of the site envisioned a five-story building with a 35,000 square-foot community center on the first two floors and 58 units of affordable housing on the top three floors, all supported by underground parking.

By June 1996, the library, the plaza south of the library and an interim development of Ashwood Park (the park property was leveled and seeded) was implemented. Today, the park remains in largely the same undeveloped condition as in 1996 – an open lawn area with parking and benches.

Acknowledging a long history of community requests for park improvements and considering the significant urban growth that Downtown Bellevue has experienced over the last 30 years, the City Council first directed a master plan update of Ashwood Park as a 2014-2015 Council Priority Project. Implementation was delayed multiple time due to funding and staffing shortages. Recent passage of the 2022 Parks and Open Space Levy allows for the project to get underway with funding for planning, design and construction.

### **Master Plan Update Community Engagement**

In March 2024, staff kicked off the Ashwood Park Master Plan update with the community at the Parks & Community Services Board. Planning with the community has been extensive, with staff working to:

- Provide a range of opportunities for the community to be included and informed of the process and feedback;
- Generate broad-reaching, cross-cultural, and multi-generational public input; and,
- Keep the public and the Parks & Community Services Board informed.

A project web site provided project process, status, survey and feedback information. The project website subscribers total 957. To help bring attention to the Ashwood Park Master Plan update process, pop-up meetings were held at the Bellevue Library, and articles appeared in *It's Your City*, and *Neighborhood News*. Postings occurred multiple times on Facebook and X. Additionally, project presentations were provided to the Bellevue Downtown Association on two occasions. King County Library System staff and KidsQuest Children's Museum staff were also provided project updates. Three community planning meetings, one in April, September and the latest in December were held. Prior to each community meeting we mailed 6,500 invitations, emailed our web-site subscribers, posted flyers in local business and residential buildings, and posted signage in the park.

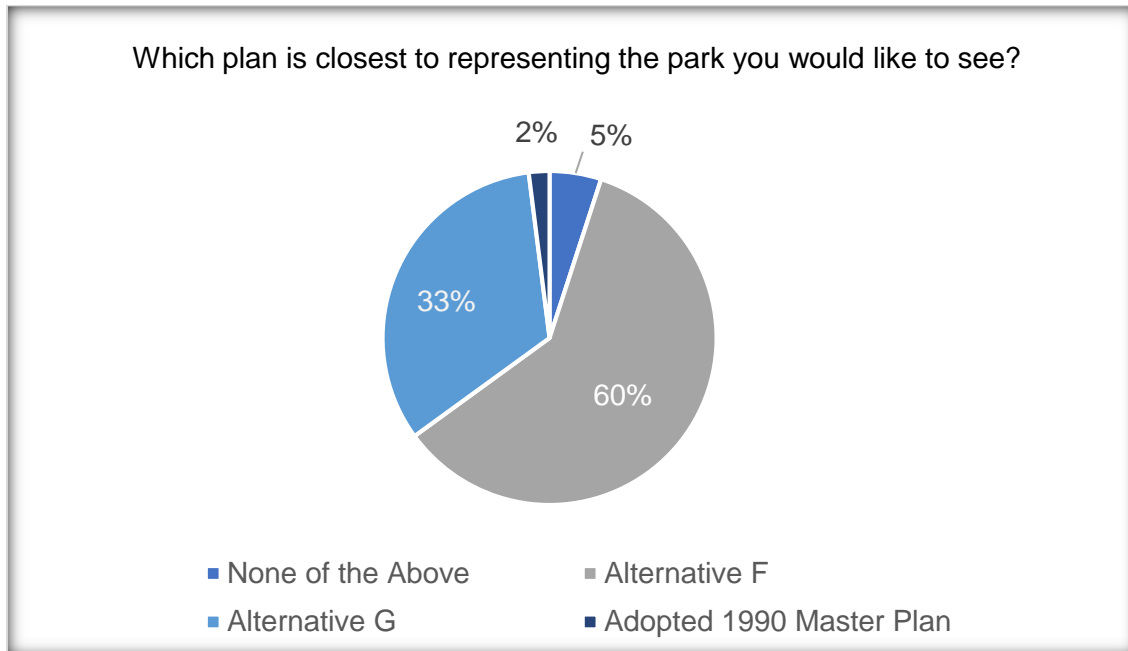
Our community and Park & Community Service Board meetings have been held in-person and on-line. We shared Ashwood Park acquisition and master plan history, Bellevue downtown demographics, park planning project timelines, park imagery, alternative design options and community feedback summaries. Participants had opportunities to ask questions and share their thoughts that have been incorporated into the design of the park. Meeting participation ranged from 50 to 86 while preference survey responses were well over 200.

### **Community Feedback Summary**

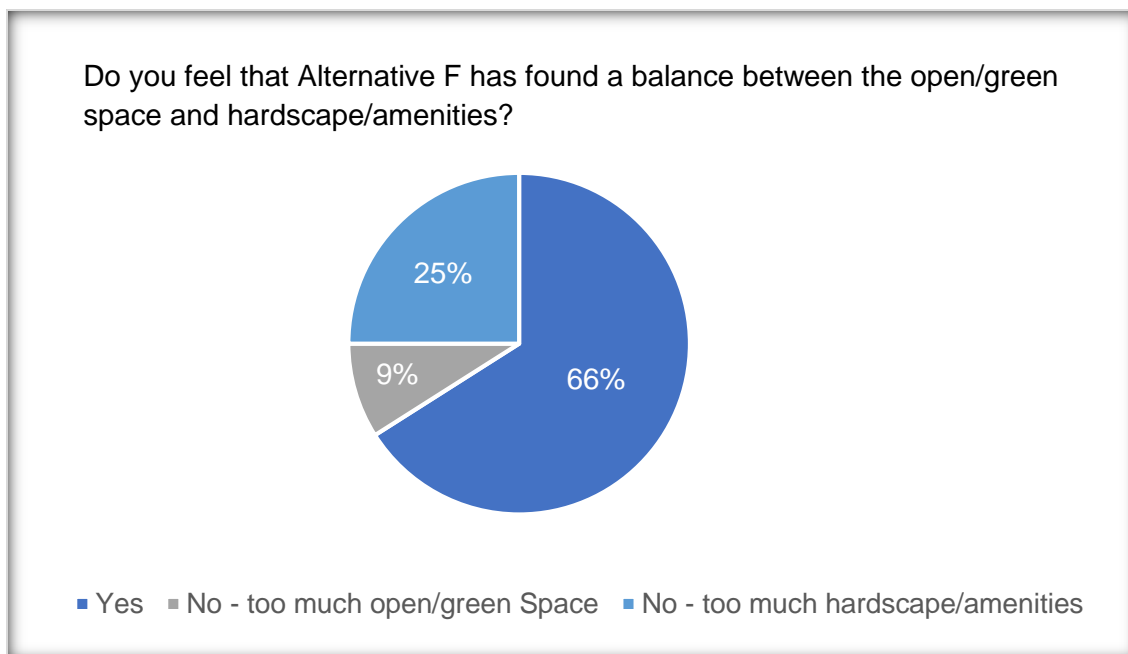
A consistent theme shared throughout the planning process was the community preference for an open green park with no building. Most desired park elements included landscaping, walking paths, picnic/shade shelters and a public restroom. 69% of survey respondents indicated that they would prefer no building to be included in the master plan update, 13% supported a smaller community building, 9% supported the 1990 master plan building and 9% preferred not to answer. Based on this initial feedback, five different design alternatives (labeled A through E) were developed and shared for feedback from the community.

At the final community meeting in December, two refined design alternatives were shared, Alternatives F and G, along with the adopted 1990 Ashwood Park Master Plan. The two alternative plans were developed with information compiled throughout the year-long planning process based on community preferences and Parks & Community Services Board feedback.

The final survey tested community preference between the existing 1990 Ashwood Park Master Plan and the two refined master plan Alternatives F and G. Of the 171 responses, 60% preferred Alternative F, 33% preferred Alternative G, 2% preferred the 1990 Master Plan and 5% preferred no change at all.



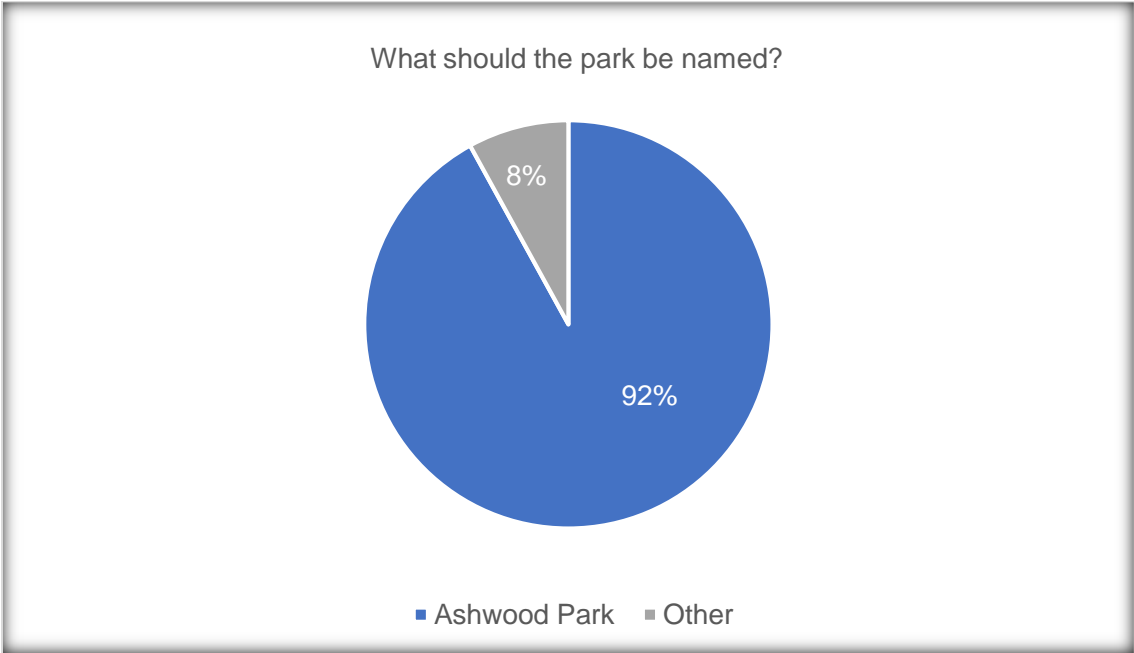
The majority of community members (66%) also indicated that the master plan Alternative F had a good balance between open/green space and hardscape/amenities.



### Park Name

Despite being commonly referred to as Ashwood Park for decades, the site has not been formally named by the City Council. As such, park naming ideas and name preferences were also included in

engagement surveys. The community overwhelmingly favors formalizing the name Ashwood Park, with 92% support. Other suggested names included Library Park and Inclusion Matters Park. These options did not garner significant support.



**Park & Community Services Board Recommendation**

After careful deliberation over multiple meetings, the Board unanimously recommends the Alternative F design and the name Ashwood Park to City Council for consideration.

The Board expressed appreciation for elements of both final Master Plan alternatives. Their recommendation of Alternative F recognizes the community’s strong preference for the same alternative. Additionally, Alternative F offers a more formal play area adjacent to the Bellevue Regional Library, walking path circuits around the park, and an urban design language similar to that of Downtown Park. Ultimately, the board concluded that the design of Alternative F better serves both the immediate downtown neighborhood as well as the needs of the broader community.

**Next Steps**

Following Council direction of a preferred Ashwood Park Master Plan design, the City will complete environmental review in accordance with the State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA). This process can take up to one year. Upon completion, staff will return to request Council’s adoption of the updated Ashwood Park Master Plan and the park’s official name.

**POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS**

**Policy Impact**

Bellevue Comprehensive Plan

PA-4 Design parks and facilities to maximize available space and benefits for users, including offering parks with multiple functions and implementation of shared use facilities.

- PA-17 Use a community informed planning process to guide substantial development or redevelopment of a park property.
- PA-43 Develop parks and facilities in a quality manner to assure attractiveness, full utilization and long-term efficiency.
- CE-10 Encourage and support engagement with the entire community, including residents, employees, business owners and visitors to the city or area of the city under consideration.

### **Fiscal Impact**

There is no fiscal impact associated with updating the Master Plan for Ashwood Park.

### **OPTIONS**

1. Identify design Alternative F and the name Ashwood Park as preferred by the Parks & Community Services Board recommendation.
2. Do not identify a preferred design concept and provide alternative direction to staff.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Vicinity Map
- B. 1990 Ashwood Master Plan
- C. Design Alternative F
- D. Design Alternative G

### **AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY**

N/A