

MEMORANDUM



Bellevue Parks &
Community Services

Date: March 12, 2024

To: Parks & Community Services Board

From: Zachariah Collom – Capital Projects Coordinator
Pam Fehrman, Planning & Development Manager
Parks & Community Services

Subject: Ashwood Park Master Plan Update – Introduction and Planning Process
For information only - no Board action requested

At the March meeting, staff will provide the Parks & Community Services Board an overview of the Ashwood Park Master Plan Update process including project background, current status, public engagement plan and next steps. This planning process will be led by Parks & Community Services staff, supported by a consulting team led by McCleod Record Landscape Architects.

The Park Board will serve as the primary advisory body for the Ashwood Park Master Plan update and ultimately be asked to provide a recommendation to the City Council. The Council will then consider and adopt an updated plan after completion of the environmental review. Staff will provide updates during the process at key project milestones for the City Council and Park Board. We hope you will join us at the Ashwood Park master plan public outreach events.

Background

Ashwood Park is located in north Downtown Bellevue in the Ashwood neighborhood, with 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, (Vicinity Map – Attachment A). Ashwood Park is located on a portion of the old Ashwood Elementary School property that the City of Bellevue and the King County Library District jointly acquired from the Bellevue School District in 1986. The purpose of this acquisition was to provide a library and public park. As part of the acquisition agreement, a joint planning effort was conducted to establish a plan to integrate a library, park, plaza, community center, parking, and green space.

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 reflected deliberate thought about how Bellevue and the Downtown neighborhood was likely to evolve and how to best address parks and community service needs into the future.

The current master plan includes a passive open space on the north half of the site with a central lawn area bordered by a circular path with gardens, small pools, and benches. The south half of the site includes a concept for a 35,000 square foot community center combined with 58 units of affordable housing and underground parking.

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

Ashwood Park and Downtown Bellevue

Ashwood Park has served the downtown community in its interim condition for over 30 years as a place for structured and unstructured recreation events. Over the years, City planning initiatives, public and private development proposals, and community requests to develop the park have suggested a range of uses that differ from the adopted site plan. Those suggested uses include an Arts and Cultural center, a fire station, and requests to preserve and enhance the open green space among others.

In the last 30 years, our city and downtown area have experienced significant growth. The City's population has become increasingly diverse and has grown from 86,874 in the early 1990s to 151,854 in 2020. The Downtown residential population has grown from 1,182 to over 14,800. The median age of the Downtown residential population has dropped from 57 to 34 years old and the number of school age children living downtown has risen dramatically. Moreover, the number of jobs in Downtown has more than doubled since 1990, climbing from fewer than 23,000 to over 60,000 in 2022. By 2035, the residential population of Downtown Bellevue is projected to reach 22,200, and the number of jobs in the Downtown area to reach 74,200.

While the downtown residential, working and playing population in our urban center has grown, the park and open space has not seen the same growth. In 1990 the downtown had approximately 800 square feet of park space per resident, in 2020 there was approximately 100 square feet of park space per resident. The downtown total parks acreage has grown about five acres in the last 30 years.

Given community input, the undeveloped state of Ashwood Park, and the significant urban growth that Downtown Bellevue has experienced over the last 30 years, the City Council directed a master plan update of Ashwood Park.

Public Engagement Plan

Community outreach efforts for this initiative have the following goals and objectives:

- A Provide a range of opportunities for the community to be included and inform the park planning process to update the Ashwood Park Master Plan.

- Staff will host community open houses, workshops, and meetings including pop-up events in and near the park to share and listen to community members. Virtual engagement for those who cannot attend in person will be an option to the extent feasible for these events.
 - Use all communication opportunities available including mail; posters; City website; newspaper; email; online polling and surveys; and social media such as Nextdoor, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and Facebook to notify, update, and gather community preferences.
- B Generate broad-reaching, cross-cultural, and multi-generational public input.
- Engage with community stakeholders, including Bellevue Downtown Association, Downtown residents, businesses and employees, and residents in surrounding neighborhoods.
 - Develop and regularly update a stakeholder list that includes hard-to-reach populations, such as people who rent and cross-cultural audiences, including residents with limited English proficiency, and people living with disabilities.
 - Leverage relationships with existing residential neighbors, KidsQuest Children's Museum, and the King County Bellevue Library.
- C Keep the public, the Parks & Community Services Board and City Council informed.
- Use mailings, emails, and social media to share updates.
 - Maintain progress updates on project website, posting public responses and summaries of public meetings, media coverage, surveys, etc.
 - Amplify messages through media by providing press releases or contact with individual reporters.

Next Steps

We anticipate the master planning process for Ashwood Park to take approximately two to two-and-a-half years to complete. We currently have an informational pop-up event to build project awareness and invite participation, followed by our first meeting with the community scheduled on:

- Mar 16, 2024 - Pop-Up event at the Bellevue Library 1-3 pm
- April 3, 2024 – Community Meeting at the Bellevue Library from 6-7:30 pm

Attachments

- A. Attachment A: Vicinity Map
- B. Attachment B: 1990 Council Adopted Conceptual Site Plan