



DATE: December 2, 2019

TO: Mayor Chelminiak and City Councilmembers

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SUBJECT: Newport Hills SE 60th Street Neighborhood Park

Background & Initial Vision Planning

In February 2010, in response to the need for additional neighborhood park space in the Newport Hills neighborhood, the City acquired the Tyler property, a 4.79-acre parcel along SE 60th Street with the assistance of matching funds from King County. Approximately half of the property is a large grassy area, with the remainder a steeply sloping, wooded open space. At the time the property was acquired, no funds were available for development. In the summer of 2010, the City removed part of an old residential foundation and began basic park maintenance. The area quickly became a popular, though unofficial, off-leash dog area (OLA). Park Rangers reminded users that dogs were to be kept on-leash, but with limited success.

In early 2011, the Newport Hills Community Club (NHCC) asked that the City assist NHCC develop a "Vision Plan" for the park. Parks & Community Services agreed to support the process with the understanding that it would be neighborhood driven and no funds were available for construction. Over the next two years, NHCC lead an outreach effort that included neighborhood meetings, events, and an on-line survey. An off-leash area was the most popular element requested for the new park, though a variety of additional park amenities were also requested. Eventually, NHCC approved a Vision Plan for the Tyler property reflecting the views of the neighborhood that contained both an OLA and general park area (Attachment 1).

The City subsequently purchased the adjacent Patterson and Brick properties, creating a 13.7-acre park and open space property. The heavily wooded, steeply sloping nature of the site limits development to about 3.0-3.25 acres (Attachment 2). A soft-surface loop trail was constructed through the wooded area of the Patterson parcel in 2015.

Neighborhood Park Planning (2019)

The City Council approved funds in the 2019-2025 CIP Budget to construct a neighborhood park in Newport Hills. Between May and November of 2019, the Staff worked with the neighborhood and Parks & Community Services Board to create a Preferred Park Plan for the site. The outreach techniques, attendance, and feedback from the three neighborhood meetings is summarized in Attachment 3.

Following the initial May 21 neighborhood meeting, feedback indicated a strong preference for a formalized OLA and addition of other park amenities. This was generally consistent with the earlier feedback from 2011-2012. Based on this feedback, three alternative plans were shared at the July 23rd neighborhood meeting (Attachment 4). All plans preserve about 3/4 of the park as natural open space and passive recreation, with development limited to soft-surface trails and a ravine overlook. The developed portion of the park provides visitors with a variety of recreation opportunities that include a fenced OLA, an open lawn area, picnic shelter, children's adventure play area, and loop trails. Alternatives ranged from the fewest (Alt A) to most (Alt C) park amenities. The OLA options ranged in size from 1.5 to 1.75 acres.

Feedback following the July 23rd meeting generally favored the most developed option (Alt C), which was presented at the September 10th Parks & Community Services Board meeting. The Board also favored Alternative C, though some felt that a smaller (1 acre) OLA was a more appropriate size for this park, expressing concern that a larger OLA would become a destination park that would exceed the park's capacity, and that the common area would benefit with a larger space.

Combining previous community outreach with feedback from the Park Board, a "Preferred Plan" was developed, similar to Alternative C but with the size of the OLA reduced slightly to roughly the same size as the common area, or approximately 1.5 acres each. The plan is described below and depicted in Attachment 5. This plan was then shared at a third neighborhood meeting on September 24th. Most feedback, while generally supporting the preferred plan, urged that the OLA remain the size proposed in Alternative C, or approximately 1.75 acres.

Public feedback collected at the two City-hosted public meetings was predominantly from residents of Newport Hills. To determine this, staff mapped the home addresses listed by attendees who signed in at the meetings (Attachment 6).

November 6 Park Board Meeting

Staff reviewed the planning process, the feedback received to-date, and described the various elements of the preferred park plan. After a robust discussion, largely focused on the appropriate size of the key components of the park, the Park Board unanimously recommended the preferred park plan to the City Council.

Park Board Recommended Plan

The Park Board recommended plan retains about 3/4 of the park as natural open space with soft-surface trails and a ravine overlook. The remaining area will provide park visitors with the following recreational amenities:

- A fenced OLA approximately 1.5 acres in size with gated entries, drainage improvements, informational kiosk, shelter, small/timid dog area, and a water station;
- A general use area similar in size to the OLA with landscape improvements, loop pathway, open lawn area, a picnic shelter with drinking fountain, picnic tables and grills, gathering area, children's adventure-themed play area, and hillside mound;
- Trail connections to 116th Avenue SE, future trail connection to the Brick Property and ravine overlook;

- SE 60th Street frontage improvements, pedestrian crosswalk at 116th Avenue SE, entry drive and parking improvements;
- Sani-can with an enclosure or a restroom;
- A retaining wall separating the OLA from the common area.

A formalized and improved OLA will remain a popular year-round amenity for residents that will accommodate the neighborhood's needs into the future. It meets the criteria established for locating OLA's in parks, including sufficient parking, residential buffers, and minimum size.

Staff also believe that the proposed common area will successfully achieve its intended purpose of providing the neighborhood with the gathering space it desires and the amenities requested throughout the public engagement process. Its size is comparable to other successful neighborhood parks such as Bridle Trails Corner Park, Norwood Village Park, and Evergreen Park and enjoys the advantage of being adjacent to a large open space and trail system to complement the common area facilities.

Next Steps & Timeline

Staff will proceed with detailed design, permitting, and construction of the Park Board recommended plan unless otherwise directed by the City Council. This timeline allows the park to potentially be completed by the end of 2020.

Attachments

- A. NHCC approved Vision Plan
- B. Property aerial
- C. Neighborhood Outreach Summary
- D. Park Plan Alternatives A, B & C
- E. Park Board Recommended Plan
- F. Community Involvement Map