

MEMORANDUM



Bellevue Parks &
Community Services

DATE: February 14, 2023

TO: Parks & Community Services Board

FROM: Pam Fehrman, Planning & Development Manager
Parks & Community Services Department

SUBJECT: Bellevue Airfield Park – Master Plan Update
Board action is requested

Proposed Motion: The Bellevue Parks & Community Services Board recommends to the City Council concept <<1 or 2, as presented> or <1 or 2, with modifications>> as the preferred update to the 2012 Bellevue Airfield Park Master plan.

At your meeting on February 14th, staff will provide an update on the [Bellevue Airfield Park \(BAP\) Master Plan](#), schedule, outreach process, community and Council feedback.

BELLEVUE AIRFIELD PARK SITE

In 2002, Council authorized the purchase of the properties now known as Bellevue Airfield Park (BAP). The City of Bellevue recognized that the BAP site likely represented the last opportunity to acquire a large, undeveloped, relatively flat parcel of property in Bellevue. The acquisition of the properties indicated the intent to develop an active recreation-focused community park in the future. The BAP is currently an undeveloped site comprised of three parcels totaling 27.5 acres.

The site is located just north of I-90 in the Eastgate neighborhood and is surrounded by residential neighbors to the north and west and office parks to the east, south and west. Vehicular access is from the south on 160th through the office park, while pedestrian trail access is provided from the north and west residential neighborhoods. Significant to development considerations are the historical operations of the Bellevue Airfield (until 1983) and operation of a municipal landfill from 1951 to 1964. From a development perspective, the site is constrained with utility system easements (both abandoned and operational) such as a landfill gas migration system, ground water monitoring wells, storm water systems, and a major King County Metro sewer line among others.

2012 MASTER PLAN

The original Master Planning process started in May 2008. The planning effort was led by Parks & Community Services staff. There was significant participation in this planning process from

nearby residents and several interest groups. Most participants in the planning process advocated that most of the open area of the site be devoted to one of four elements: 1) an off-leash dog facility; 2) a little league field complex; 3) a regional aquatic facility; or 4) a passive-use meadow.

The Parks & Community Services Board recommended a preferred Master Plan for the Eastgate Area properties and the name Bellevue Airfield Park. The City Council concurred and adopted the Master Plan and park name in June 2012.

The current Bellevue Airfield Park Master Plan includes two lighted synthetic turf sports fields, wooded picnic areas, trail connections, playgrounds, restrooms, and parking. It would maintain woodland buffers between the park and nearby residences. The Master Plan also includes the expansion of the off-leash dog area at Robinswood Park from approximately 1.75 acres to 5.75 acres (Robinswood is located west of the site about 1/4 mile via a pedestrian path).

Initial phased park development is funded by the 2008 Parks and Natural Areas Levy. Levy funds will become available for development in 2028.

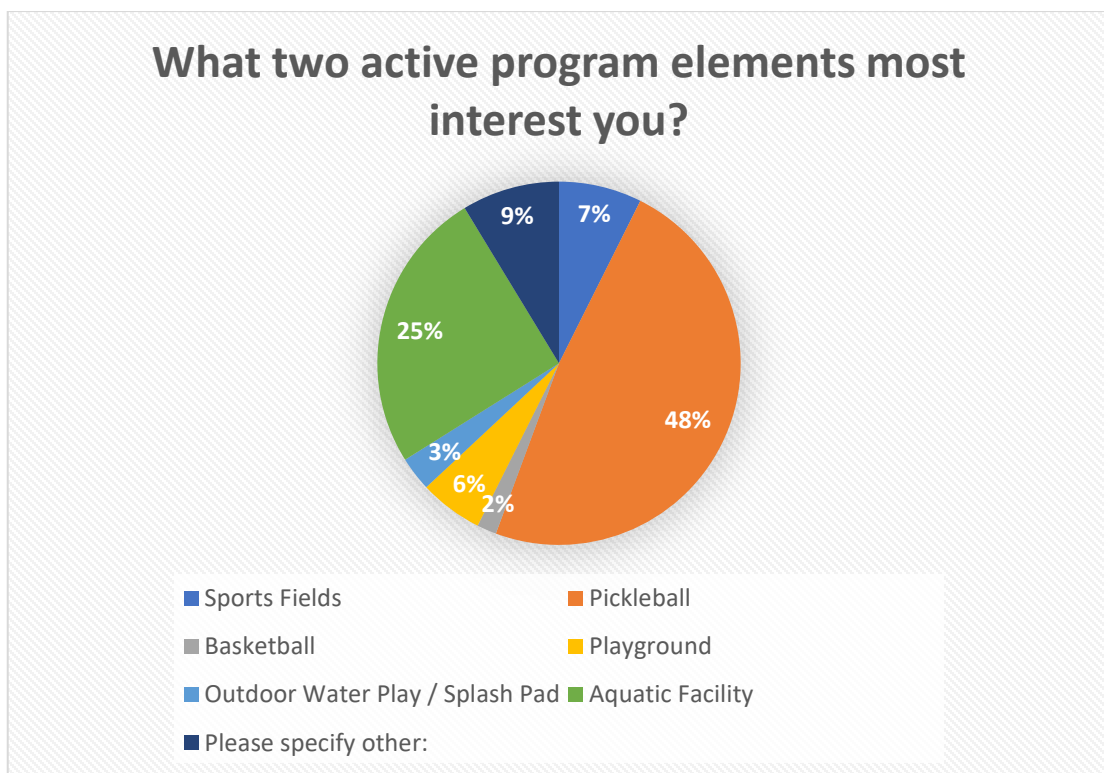
2022-2023 MASTER PLAN UPDATE

At the Council meeting on October 18, 2021, City Council directed Parks staff to prepare an update to the 2012 Bellevue Airfield Park Master Plan to understand current community preferences and study locating a new aquatic center on-site. A master plan update for Airfield Park offers a rare opportunity to address the growing aquatic needs of Bellevue. The BAP site is the only undeveloped, City-owned site large enough to accommodate the recommended aquatic facility concept (10-11 acres). The existing and only public aquatic center, the Bellevue Aquatic Center, is reaching the end of its useful life. Built in 1970, it has served Bellevue's residents over the last 50 years, from an approximate population of 61,000 to over 150,000 residents today. Bellevue Aquatic Center's age, capacity, and inability to provide a full range of aquatic programming make it inadequate to meet the current and future demand for swimming facilities in Bellevue. Additional elements favoring an aquatic facility at the BAP site are: easy access off I-90, existing shared parking agreements with owners of the surrounding office park, and the site size that could allow for park and aquatic facility complementary uses.

Community outreach began at the June 2022 Parks & Community Services Board meeting, followed by a BAP site walk with interested neighbors. Community-wide meetings were held virtually in July and a second in-person meeting in September. Using information obtained from the community, correspondence, and survey responses, several Master Plan principles have evolved. BAP should be inclusive, safe, environmentally responsive, and active. Throughout the outreach process, the community has supported an aquatic facility on site. Most frequently cited comments have centered around the need for pickleball courts – the pickleball players are organized and engaged, and we have received requests for 8 to 32 pickleball courts onsite. Not as numerous, additional comments cite concerns over loss of trees, habitat and open space, and potential impacts of increased traffic on nearby residents.

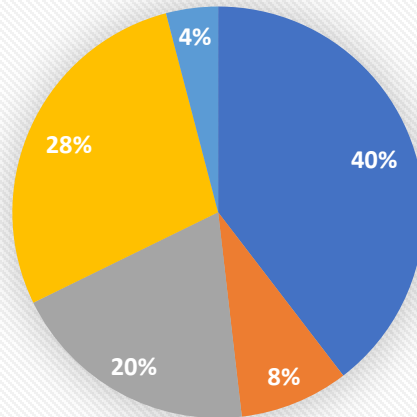
At your meeting on October 11, 2022, the Parks & Community Services Board reviewed the Master Plan update process and community feedback to-date. The Board overwhelmingly supported an aquatic facility and the addition of pickleball ball courts.

Since your October Board meeting, staff has shared project information with City Council on December 5, 2022, and held our final community workshop on January 19, 2023. At their meeting, City Council expressed support for the aquatic facility and interest in addressing park needs for sportsfields, off-leash areas and basketball courts. Our final community workshop at South Bellevue Community Center on January 19th was incredibly well attended with at least 172 attendees. Pickleball players from across the region represented the majority of participants at this meeting as evidenced by the meeting feedback we received. Attendees generally supported pickleball courts, and an aquatic facility. When meeting participants were asked what two active program elements most interested them, support for pickleball courts (48%), followed by support for an aquatic facility (25%) were cited as illustrated in the following graph.



When meeting participants were asked what two passive program elements most interested them, preferences for Trails (40%), Natural areas (28%) and Picnic Shelters (20%) were most supported as illustrated in the following graph.

What two passive program elements most interest you?



■ Trails
■ Amphitheater
■ Picnic Areas / Picnic Shelters
■ Natural Areas
■ Please specify other:

Other comments provided in both the active and passive responses mentioned sportsfields, off-leash facilities, and community gardens. Also cited were objections to any community park development and requests to not develop certain portions of the park site. As an example, the City received a petition from 15 households requesting no development occur on the 10-acre northwest forested parcel due to:

- Loss of tree canopy, habitat, open space, and
- Potential impacts of increased nefarious activities and traffic impacting neighbors.

At tonight's Park Board meeting, staff looks forward to sharing an overview of the community outreach process, select park & open space amenity needs, Council and community feedback, and the most recent Master Plan alternatives (attached) for your consideration. We request action from the Board to recommend a preferred Master Plan to the City Council for their consideration.

Next Steps

After receiving the Board's preferred Master Plan recommendations, staff will return to the Council for review and direction to proceed with the environmental review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The City Council will be asked to adopt a preferred Master Plan after completion of SEPA, estimated at end-of-year 2023.

LEGEND:

- ① Parking Area
- ② Multi-Use Fields
- ③ Playgrounds
- ④ Basketball Court
- ⑤ Pickleball Courts
- ⑥ Splash Pad
- ⑦ Picnic Area
- ⑧ Amphitheatre
- ⑨ Stormwater Area
- ⑩ Restrooms
- ⑪ Aquatic Center



LEGEND:

- ① Parking Area
- ② Flexible Field
- ③ Playgrounds
- ④ Basketball Court
- ⑤ Pickleball Courts
- ⑥ Splash Pad
- ⑦ Picnic Area
- ⑧ Amphitheatre
- ⑨ Stormwater Area
- ⑩ Restrooms
- ⑪ Aquatic Center

