

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Bellevue Airfield Park Master Plan Update and Parks & Community Services Board recommendation

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Parks & Community Services

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

DIRECTION

Tonight, representatives from Parks & Community Services Board will recommend and seek Council support for a preferred alternative of an updated Bellevue Airfield Park Master Plan to be refined in subsequent design processes with the Parks & Community Services Board. Next steps will include environmental review.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend Council support a design concept of Airfield Park to undergo environmental review as recommended by the Parks & Community Services Board.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

After getting direction from Council October 18, 2021, to advance an update to the 2012 Airfield Park Master Plan to include an aquatic facility, in coordination with and under the guidance of the Parks & Community Services Board, staff has been conducting public outreach this past year. After extensive review and discussion of community feedback in light of the Council's direction, the Board has determined a preferred alternative design concept that will be responsive to voiced preferences. Chair Dave Hamilton and Vice-Chair Paul Clark will attend the Council meeting on behalf of the Board and seek Council's support of the recommended design concept. Next steps will lead to, subject to successful environmental review, the Council adopting a new master plan.

Bellevue Airfield Park Site

In 2002, the City of Bellevue purchased an assemblage of three properties totaling 27.5 acres now known as Bellevue Airfield Park (BAP). The City recognized that the BAP site likely represented the last opportunity to acquire a large, undeveloped, relatively flat parcel of property in Bellevue. The stated intent of the acquisition was to develop an active recreation-focused community park.

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 to 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 regional King County Metro sewer line, among others.

2012 Master Plan

The City Council adopted the current Bellevue Airfield Park master plan in 2012, following an extensive community outreach process. There was significant participation in this planning process from nearby residents and several interest groups. Most participants in that planning process advocated for: 1) an off-leash dog facility; 2) a little league field complex; 3) a regional aquatic facility; or 4) a passive-use meadow.

Without update, the current adopted master plan includes: two lighted, synthetic-turf sports fields, wooded picnic areas, trail connections, playgrounds, restrooms, parking, an expansion of the off-leash dog area at Robinswood Park from 1.75 to 5.75 acres, (Robinswood is located west of the site about 1/4 mile via a pedestrian path) and preserving woodland buffers between the park and nearby residences.

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

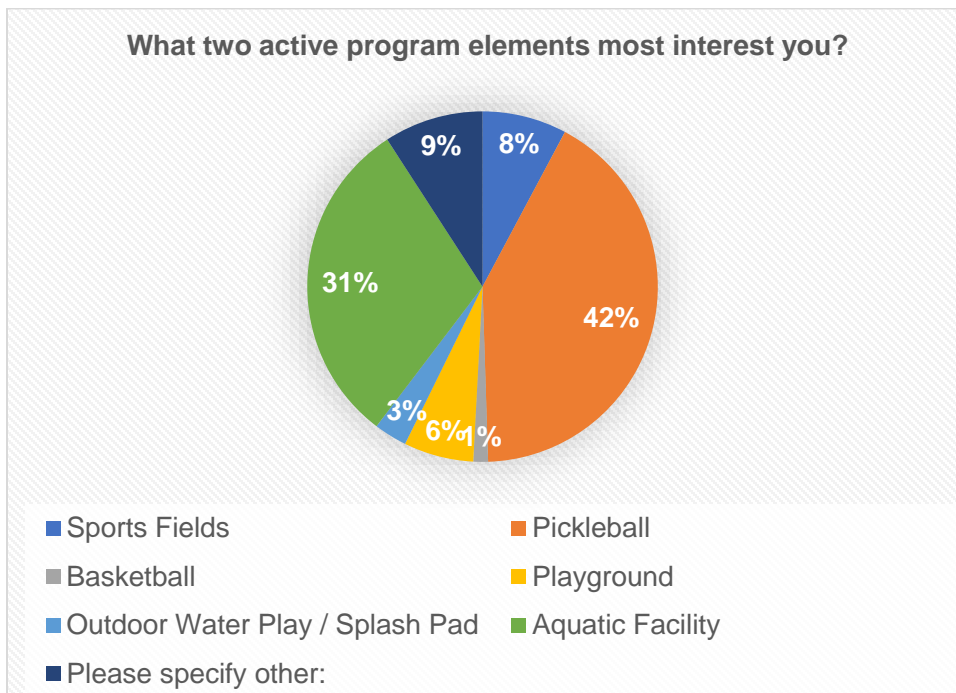
At the October 18, 2021, Council meeting, City Council directed Parks staff to prepare an update to the 2012 Bellevue Airfield Park Master Plan to understand current community preferences and study impacts of locating a new aquatic center on site. A master plan update for Airfield Park offers a rare opportunity to address the growing aquatic needs of Bellevue. The BAP site is the only undeveloped, City-owned site large enough to accommodate the Council 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 1) easy access off I-90, 2) existing shared parking agreements with owners of the surrounding office park, and 3) a site of sufficient size to allow for park and aquatic facility complementary uses.

Community outreach for this master plan update began at the June 2022 Parks & Community Services Board meeting, followed by a BAP site walk with interested neighbors. Community-wide workshops were held virtually in July and in-person in September and this last January. The Parks and Community Service Board further studied the issue during two public meetings on October 11, 2022, and on February 14, 2023, that were well attended by community members.

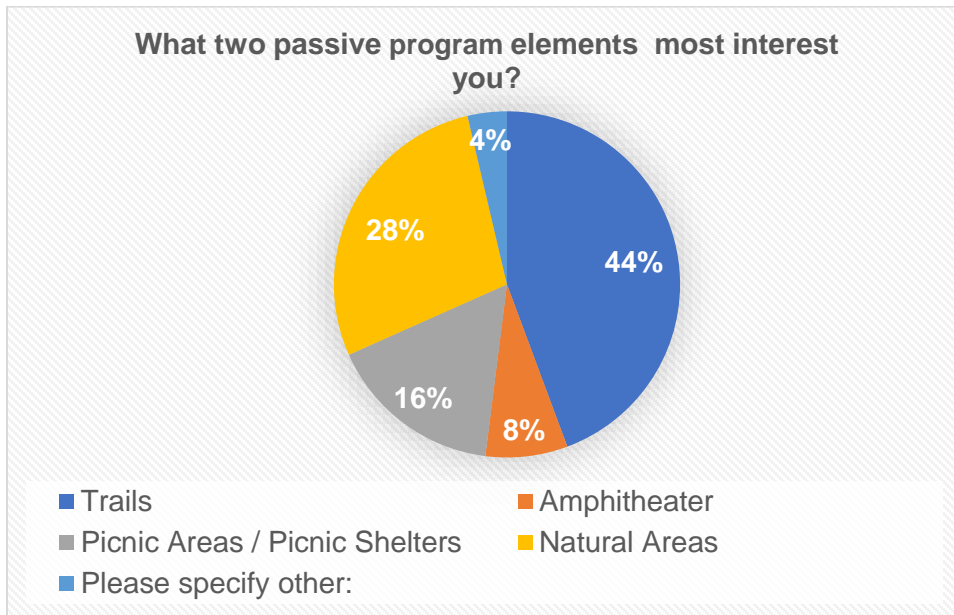
The feedback obtained from community outreach events, correspondence, survey responses, and Parks & Community Services Board and City Council public meetings has been extensive. While community preferences differ, the BAP master plan alternatives present ways to address various priorities as well as the consensus opinions that BAP should be inclusive, safe, environmentally responsive, and active.

After staff presented the last BAP Master Planning update to Council on December 5, 2022, a final community workshop was held at South Bellevue Community Center on January 19, 2023. The workshop was incredibly well attended with over 170 attendees. Pickleball players from across the region represented the majority of participants at this meeting as evidenced by the meeting feedback we received.

At this community workshop, feedback remained consistent with the community input we have received throughout this public engagement process. When meeting participants and online survey participants were asked what two active program elements most interested them, support for pickleball courts (42%), followed by support for an aquatic facility (31%) were cited as favored 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%) are most supported as illustrated in the following graph.



Other community comments provided in both the active and passive responses identified sport courts, off-leash facilities, and community gardens as preferences. Also cited were objections to any community park development and requests to not develop certain portions or the entire park site. Specifically, 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.

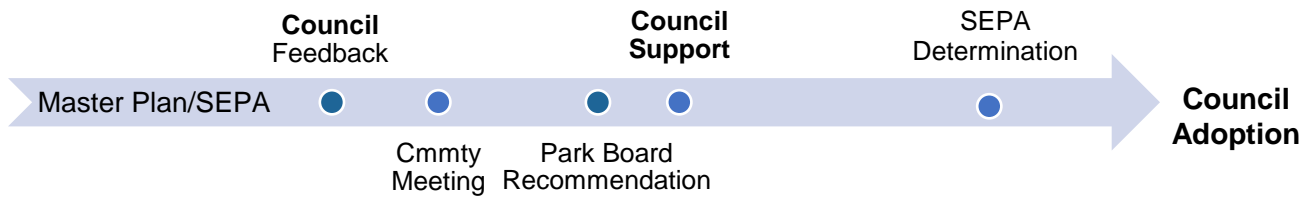
At its meeting on February 14, 2023, the Parks & Community Services Board reviewed the Master Plan update process and community feedback to-date. After thorough deliberation, the Parks & Community Services Board unanimously recommends the City Council adopt proposed Bellevue Airfield Park Concept #2 with the following modifications:

- Add picnic shelter included in Concept #1
- Evaluate options to include covered pickleball court area
- Evaluate options to include a full-sized court for the basketball area

At tonight’s Council meeting, staff look forward to sharing an overview of the community outreach process, select park & open space amenity needs, community feedback, and the most recent Master Plan alternatives (attached) for your consideration. We are requesting feedback on a preferred Master Plan and direction to complete environmental review. Environmental review must be completed prior to the adoption of a Master Plan.

Next Steps

Environmental review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) is anticipated to take approximately one year. When environmental review is complete and successful, the Council will be asked to formally adopt the Master Plan.



POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

Comprehensive Plan

- C-9 Use a range of public forums and opportunities including commissions, boards, and the community council to facilitate citizen engagement in the planning process.
- CF-2 Plan for the long-term renewal or replacement of ageing capital facilities as needed to maintain target service levels.
- PA-1 Establish a coordinated and connected system of open space and greenways throughout the City that provide multiple benefits including preserving natural systems, protecting wildlife habitat and corridors, and providing land for recreation.
- PA-16 Designate active and passive recreation uses and cultural use of parkland through the master plan approval process.

2022 Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan

Park Facility Objective 10: Phased development of Bellevue Airfield Park

Active Recreation Facility Objective 16: Add new aquatic facility.

Fiscal Impact

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

OPTIONS

1. Provide direction to staff supporting a design concept of Airfield Park to undergo environmental review as recommended by the Parks & Community Services Board.
2. Do not direct support of a design concept and provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Master Plan Alternatives
- B. Vicinity Map
- C. CIP Project Description (P-AD-83)

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A