

April 13, 2015

## **CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM**

### **SUBJECT**

Old Bellevue Parking and Completion of the Downtown Park

### **STAFF CONTACT**

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**City Manager's Office**

### **POLICY QUESTION**

Should completing the circle of the Downtown Park and the Inspiration Playground be delayed to explore adding parking for Old Bellevue use at the Downtown Park, with City resources in whole or in part?

### **DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**

<u>    </u>	Action
<u>  X  </u>	Discussion
<u>  X  </u>	Information

### **BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**

#### **Recent History**

In a letter to the City Council of September 22, 2014 (included in February 17, 2015 attachment) Mr. Carl Vander Hoek, representing Old Bellevue Merchant's Association, asked the Council's support:

*"...in exploring a private/public partnership between the city and Old Bellevue, setting up a Local Improvement District or a similar funding mechanism that will increase parking for the expansion of the Downtown Park and the neighborhood."*

This letter was accompanied by a letter on the same date (included in February 17, 2015 attachment) from the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA), supporting Mr. Vander Hoek's request. The letter states:

*"We respectfully ask the City Council to approve the start of city staff work with stakeholders on next steps to: build mutual understanding of the problem/need; provide information and resources regarding district formation; and ensure that staff leadership from parks, planning, transportation, development services, the city attorney's office, and the city manager's office take part in the process. The BDA is available to host the meeting(s) and/or help facilitate this conversation."*

A similar letter of support was received from the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce.

Since that time, an Old Bellevue Parking Work Group comprised of members of the Vander Hoek Corporation (VHC), the BDA and various individuals from Old Bellevue Merchants

Association have met with City staff to explore public/private partnerships related to parking in Old Bellevue and the Downtown Park. The staff group consisted of Directors of the Parks, Planning, Transportation, and Development Services Departments, the City Manager's Office, and technical staff. Meetings were held on October 14, October 30, and December 9, 2014 and on January 30, 2015.

The Work Group considered:

1. Whether sufficient parking is planned for the current development proposals for completing the Downtown Park;
2. Whether parking in Old Bellevue is sufficient for visitors and employees;
3. Whether current Code provisions are appropriate; and
4. Whether a public/private partnership could be formed to manage and/or build additional parking to serve Old Bellevue.

## **Background and City Policy Direction**

### **1. The Downtown Park**

The issue of a parking in and for the Downtown Park (DTP) has existed since the discussions surrounding the original 1984 DTP Master Plan. Subsequent to Council adoption of the 1984 Plan, several issues surfaced, including re-visiting the parking assumptions. In 1997 the City Council appointed a Citizens Advisory Committee to review the original vision of the Park and to update the 1984 Master Plan. Regarding park parking, the adopted 1997 Master Plan Update states:

*“the recommendations .....are aimed at providing adequate parking for the everyday uses of the park while maximizing the amount of land that can be used for park purposes, as originally intended in the purchase of this land. The park should not be used to solve the parking problems associated with surrounding land uses.”*

In 2013, in preparation for design and permitting of the next phase of development of the DTP, the City commissioned the Gibson Study to assess the parking needs for the Park, as a whole and for the addition. The Gibson Study determined that there currently exists a surplus of parking for park needs of approximately 90 to 100 stalls; that 35 stalls of that excess would be consumed for the planned development of the DTP; leaving about 50-60 stalls for non-park users. The independent Gibson Study was robust and vetted by the City's Directors of Planning, Transportation, and Development Services. The finding was made that more than sufficient parking exists for average peak events in the DTP. Large Special Events that will exceed the available DTP parking are required to obtain a permit and provide a transportation and parking management plan.

Development of the SE corner of the Park and Inspiration Playground are in permitting and a SEPA determination has been noticed. Approximately 87 people attended an Open House on the next phase of DTP development held on March 26. Of the approximate 25 individuals submitting comments at the Open House, 14 questioned the adequacy of parking in the Downtown Park and how that might impact parking in Old Bellevue. The remaining comments were either complimentary (3) or unrelated to parking (8).

Depending on permitting, the project to close the circle is scheduled to break ground in summer 2015. Depending on fundraising, the Inspiration Playground project could break ground as early as this fall.

## **2. Parking in Old Bellevue**

In May, 2014 PCD and the Transportation Departments commissioned the Old Bellevue Parking Study conducted by the Transpo Group. The Study considered the Transportation Element of Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown Transportation Plan, which provided guidance on parking management strategies in Old Bellevue. In addition, as part of the Downtown Transportation Plan, supporting analyses were prepared related to Downtown parking, including:

- *Downtown Bellevue Commuter Parking Assessment Report, 2013* and
- *Technical Memorandum: Downtown Bellevue On-Street Parking Opportunity Assessment, July, 2013.*

The Transpo Study considered the policy framework and studies, collected additional data within Old Bellevue, and recommended the following list of possible solutions, some requiring further analysis and some which have been implemented in whole or in part:

### **a. Improve Supply and Efficiency**

- Add on-street parking,  
*The City has subsequently added 29 stalls*
- Off-street parking,
- Shared parking, and
- Time-restricted parking.

### **b. Reduce Demand**

- Transportation Demand Management,
- Management of employee parking, and
- Multi-modal improvements.

### **c. Awareness, Enforcement and Authority**

- Provide enhanced parking information and way-finding signage for visitors,
- Update development regulations to provide more flexible parking solutions based on specific parking demand, phase out parking exception for 1,500 square foot tenant spaces in existing buildings, and improve enforcement for designated parking uses  
*DSD has proposed to add these code amendments to their docket for Council consideration.*
- Enhance enforcement of parking regulations,
- Develop monitoring program to collect additional data, and  
*Currently there is no ongoing collection of parking use data for the DTP or for parking in Old Bellevue. In DTP, parking is restricted for park use only up to 6pm with a three hour limit. After 6pm the DTP parking is open for general public use with a three hour limit. Current parking enforcement in DTP is limited to a complaint basis.*
- Establish a parking management authority.

*Staff has done preliminary research on a Parking Benefit and Improvement District and Local Improvement Districts and shared with the Work Group.*

**d. Long-term Strategies: Improve Supply and Efficiency**

- Implement paid parking,
- Utilize private development contributions to implement management strategies or provide shared public parking,
- Create public garage spaces,
- Expand non-motorized improvements and Demand Management, and
- Use innovative technology – improve parking information.

The Transpo Study was presented to the Work Group and sufficient interest was expressed for staff to evaluate the next step for implementing its recommendations. Transpo emphasized in their presentation to the Work Group the necessity of private sector involvement and buy-in to the next phase since it would involve solutions impacting existing and future private property and parking assets; a long-term management institutional framework; and a funding agreement for parking in the district. A Phase II feasibility study to further evaluate possible solutions was estimated by Transpo and staff to cost in the range of \$75,000-\$80,000.

At the last Work Group meeting on January 30, 2015, where this was presented, no consensus was reached on moving ahead with a public/private partnership, and no further meetings have been scheduled at this time.

**3. Land Use Code and Parking regulations in Old Bellevue**

To encourage small merchant activities in existing buildings, the current Code provides a parking exemption in Old Bellevue for restaurant and retail uses below 1,500 square feet. The exemption was examined in the Transpo Study (above) which included a recommendation.

The Transpo Study also offered recommendations to explore changes in the City's development regulations that would allow a closer alignment between specific uses, their parking needs, and parking required for new development. The report suggested the regulatory framework could also allow for innovative parking solutions to maximize the use of available parking through use of on-street parking, shared parking agreements, shared public parking, and parking impact fees to fund off-site parking supply.

The Work Group did not discuss Code issues during its four meetings due to interest in other topics. DSD has suggested pertinent Code amendments be added to their docket for Council consideration.

**4. Interest in a Public/Private Partnership to address parking in Old Bellevue and the DTP**

The initial interest in a public/private partnership advanced by VHC, supported by the BDA and Chamber, and considered by the Work Group has not materialized. Proposals to place parking underground at the SE Corner in the DTP, adding 50 stalls of parking to the parking lot located along 100<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE in the DTP have been rejected as either

infeasible, too costly or in the wrong location. Two recent proposals have been made to add parking in the area: (1) adding 150 stalls of structured parking in the DTP along 100<sup>th</sup> for lease by private interests; and (2) location of added surface parking on 100<sup>th</sup> south of Main Street on property planned as part of the Meydenbauer Bay Park and Land Use Plan. No private financial partner has emerged to commit to study the feasibility of either of these projects. Additionally, the adopted DTP Master Plan, and/or the adopted Meydenbauer Bay Park and Land Use Plan would need to be amended to add parking for private use.

City staff have continued to encourage interest in a public/private partnership if a private sponsor emerges.

### **Current status**

Subsequent to the paused Work Group meetings in January, the City received two additional letters: one from the BDA and one from five businesses and associations in Old Bellevue. The City provided a Management Brief to the Council on February 17, 2015 (attached), which is summarized and updated in this Council memorandum. Staff received no redirection from the Council in February, and the City responded to the two letters (responses attached).

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Unless redirected, staff will continue to work with a coalition of those willing to advance parking solutions for Old Bellevue if a private sponsor and financial partner emerges, and continue with development of the DTP and Inspiration Playground as scheduled.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

February 17, 2015 Management Brief to Council  
Site Map of Downtown Park Projects  
City Response to BDA Letter  
City Response to Businesses and Associations in Old Bellevue

### **AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL DOCUMENT LIBRARY**

The Gibson Study  
The Transpo Study