

Date: January 15, 2025

To: Dave Hamilton, City Councilmember, Parks & Community Services Board
Liaison and Bellevue City Councilmembers

From: Rowena Clima, Chair
Parks & Community Services Board

RE: Fourth Quarter 2024 Report and Communication

The Parks & Community Services Board finished the year strong, providing input on Council Priority tasks and highlighting the ongoing work of the programs and facilities that day in and day out advance the Parks & Community Services mission to build a healthy community.

Building an Inclusive and Healthy Community

This quarter, the board was able to spotlight the work of two valued community institutions, Highland Community Center and the Bellevue Botanical Garden. Highland Community Center has offered support for people with disabilities and inclusive recreation opportunities since the 1970's. Beyond all the program offerings at the Center, staff support inclusive recreation practice across the park system. Worth particular mention is the [Highland Times Newsletter](#), a periodical created by and for Highland program participants to keep the community connected, informed and entertained!

The Bellevue Botanical Garden is a 53-acre oasis showcasing over 3,000 unique varieties of plants. It is free to the public and serves as a center for education and volunteerism, as well as highly attended events such as Garden d'Lights . Operated in partnership with the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society, the Garden welcomes over 400,000 visitors a year.

Ashwood Design Refined

Since March 2024, community feedback has been welcomed on a future design for Ashwood Park, following through on Council direction to update the existing adopted master plan. Input for the park's design were gathered during two board meetings, three community meetings and other outreach methods. Five concepts incorporating community feedback were initially developed to compare to the existing master plan. Based on continued feedback from the community and board, two refined concepts were developed and published in December. Those concepts are being reviewed, with a final recommendation from the board to the Council expected in the first half of 2025.

Environmental Stewardship Plan

The board was briefed by Community Development Department staff on the progress to update the Environmental Stewardship Plan. Existing and proposed goals for natural systems were discussed that quantify stream and forest health and overall tree canopy

retention. Additionally, the long-standing goal to provide walkable access to parks and trails for all Bellevue residents is included, cross-referenced from the Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan. Implementing this goal is a feature of the 2022 Parks Levy program, which includes funding to develop neighborhood parks and new trail connections. The board discussed the value of anticipating impacts of climate change and acting within the parks system to reduce carbon emissions, explore benefits of climate resilience hubs, and diversify tree and plant species.

Thank you for your continued support of the board and its work. If you have any questions, you can contact me at rclima@bellevuewa.gov.