

MEMORANDUM



Bellevue Parks &
Community Services

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Date: January 11, 2022

To: Janice Zahn, City Councilmember, Parks & Community Services Board Liaison
and Bellevue City Council members

From: David Hamilton, Chair
Parks & Community Services Board

RE: Fourth Quarter 2021 Report and Communication

The Parks & Community Services Board ended 2021 with substantive content at its October and November meetings (no meeting was held in December). During the October meeting, the board held a retreat to continue developing the Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan. Among others, key themes identified by the board included:

- Greenway trail systems must continue to develop and expand
- Underserved neighborhoods should be emphasized for additional park facilities
- Eastrail is a key opportunity in the coming years, particularly for Wilburton and BelRed
- Access to pools is crucial for swimming and water safety education
- Covered outdoor recreation facilities may be a tool to expand usage throughout the year
- Livability remains important for a growing community - urban neighborhoods need green spaces that also function as gathering space

In November, the board completed its review of the recommended capital project objectives for the next Parks & Open Space System Plan. A final draft will be reviewed and transmitted to the Council during the first quarter of 2022. The board then discussed the Council's request for a recommendation on one of three proposed names for the Environmental Education Center at Mercer Slough Nature Park. The board appreciates the City Council entrusting to it the possible renaming of the Center to honor one or more members of the Ellis family. However, upon discussion, the board chose not to forward a recommendation, subject to further direction.

To a member, the board agreed with the Council that the community work of both Jim and John Ellis is notable and valued. Considering how to process such recognition, the board raised several questions and comments, including:

- The Environmental Education Center is a regionally significant facility and is one of the most visited facilities in the city's park system.
- The re-naming process should be considered from a system perspective. Will this set a precedent that is desired for re-naming other parks and park facilities?
- Equity in park names across the system should be considered whenever there is an opportunity to name or rename a park or park facility.
- Jim and John Ellis are honored by name at the Environmental Education Center and Downtown Park respectively. Should existing recognitions be considered in this process?

Section 2 of the Council's naming policy (Res. 8229), states recommendations from the board should be "based upon public input from individuals and organizations." Considering the points above, the board envisions a higher degree of public engagement and consultation before recommending a new name. The board can facilitate additional study and public input on this matter, if desired. Should you wish to discuss this further, please contact me anytime at dhamilton@bellevuewa.gov.