

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Council Review of the 2022 Update to the Parks & Open Space System Plan

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Parks & Community Services

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**INFORMATION
ONLY**

A presentation will be provided on the update to the Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan for 2022, as recommended by the Parks & Community Services Board. The Council will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the plan. With that feedback, staff will finalize the plan and return with a proposed resolution to adopt at a future meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

The Parks & Open Space System Plan is the primary tool used to guide the long-term growth and development of Bellevue's parks and open space system. The heart of the plan is a set of 20-year capital project objectives. These long-term objectives are reviewed and updated approximately every six years. Funding to implement the long-term recommendations within the plan is determined through the Capital Investment Program budgeting process. A summary of the additions and modifications is provided in Attachment A and a full draft of the plan is provided in Attachment B.

The Parks & Open Space System Plan identifies seven major focus areas to meet the park, open space and recreation needs of the community. These Focus Areas have generally remained consistent since the 1987 edition of the plan, although over time they have been re-structured and modified to meet contemporary needs.

- **Open Space, Greenways, Wildlife Corridors & Trails:** Acquiring and protecting open space to establish a network of greenways throughout the community. These greenways function to meet passive and active recreation needs of the community, protect wildlife and critical habitat areas, and provide linkages between parks and commercial or residential neighborhoods.
- **Park Facilities:** Providing equitable and walkable access to neighborhood and community parks through acquisition, development, or redevelopment.
- **Active Recreation Facilities:** Siting geographically and equitably distributed community centers and active recreation facilities to provide needed indoor and outdoor recreation spaces and activities of interest to a wide spectrum of diverse users.

- **Urban Park Systems:** Addressing the unique challenges of designing and providing parks, open space, trails and active recreation facilities serving the current and future urban densities of Downtown Bellevue, BelRed, Wilburton, and the Eastgate I-90 Corridor.
- **Waterfront Access:** Acquiring and developing additional publicly-owned waterfront property to meet community demand.
- **Partnership Opportunities:** Working with community partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors to provide recreation and community service needs for Bellevue residents. Additionally, connecting Bellevue residents to the abundant regional park and recreation facilities surrounding the City.
- **Historic, Cultural, & Art Resources:** Protecting and interpreting Bellevue's cultural history as well as providing space and an outlet for artistic expression. This section does not include a set of specific capital project objectives. It lays a policy foundation for how cultural history and artistic expression should be incorporated in existing and future parks and facilities.

Updating the plan's capital project recommendations involves analysis of five key elements. Each of these elements are described in more detail in the draft plan and will be highlighted during the presentation. They include:

- Public input and feedback on current use of the park system and future priorities;
- A review of the current community profile and future demographic trends;
- The level of service provided by the current network of neighborhood parks and trails;
- Progress made completing capital projects since the last update; and
- A review of recent adopted Citywide long-range plans and policy documents that impact park and open space priorities.

From July 2021 to February 2022, many avenues were used to collect feedback and opinions from Bellevue residents and park users on how the park and trail systems are currently used and what priorities should be given in the future for development. These outreach methods included:

- A statistically valid sample survey of Bellevue residents with responses received from almost 475 households, of which 29 percent are households with children, 8 percent of households include someone with a disability, 37 percent of households live in a multi-family home, and 33 percent of households include people of color;
- An open web survey completed by over 400 respondents, of which 39 percent have children, 5 percent have a disability, 18 percent live in a multi-family home, and 24 percent of respondents are people of color;
- Ten presentations to City boards and commissions, parks user groups and interested organizations;
- Outreach to more than 20 community-based organizations, with an emphasis toward organizations that serve marginalized and underrepresented groups;
- A public hearing hosted by the Parks & Community Services Board in September 2021, attended by 10 individuals, and resulting in eight in-person comments and 31 additional written comments;

- Development of an online platform, Engaging Bellevue, enabling the public to learn about the plan and provide feedback in narrative or on a map, resulting in 140 comments on the website and over 35 additional comments directly to staff;
- The City's Neighborhood Leadership Gathering, held in September 2021 and attended by 56 individuals; and
- Project updates and comment opportunities provided by the Parks & Community Services e-newsletter (36,000 subscribers), the Neighborhood Outreach Office's Neighborhood News (1,650 subscribers), the City's presence on social media web sites.

In general, park users report a high level of satisfaction with the park and trail systems as a whole and Bellevue residents strongly feel that parks have a positive impact on their quality of life. Residents indicated that trails through natural areas, multi-use trails, community beaches, parks with display gardens, and open areas for unstructured play or picnicking are the most frequently used types of facilities. Overall, residents express strong support for both continuing to acquire park and open space land and developing existing park properties. Improving ecological health, developing smaller parks, preserving historical structures, and providing for under-served populations were identified as the highest funding priorities specifically. Most residents perceive that they are within a 10-minute walk of a park or trail, but interest remains in expanding local connectivity.

The Parks & Community Services Board focused attention on the update process during six meetings between July 2021 and February 2022. At their meeting on February 8, 2022, the Board voted unanimously to recommend to Council approval of the 2022 update of the Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

The Parks & Open Space System Plan is a functional plan of the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan. The projects recommended within the plan support goals and policies found within multiple Comprehensive Plan Elements including Parks, Open Space and Recreation, Environment, Utilities, Human Services, Economic Development, other General Elements, as well as the Subarea Plans, Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan, and Environmental Stewardship Plan.

A regularly updated plan is a required standard for the Department's accreditation and is necessary to obtain grant support for park acquisition and development projects. The plan was last updated in 2016. On February 8, 2022, the Parks & Community Services Board voted unanimously to recommend to Council approval of the 2022 update of the Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan.

Fiscal Impact

The Parks & Open Space System Plan is a guiding document, and the fiscal impact of the full plan is unknown at this time. Funding to implement the long-term recommendations within the plan is determined through the Capital Investment Program budgeting process. With this 2022 update, many of the same capital recommendations remain from the 2016 Plan, while some recommendations have been removed and others added.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

- A. 2022 Parks & Open Space System Plan Update: Summary of Substantive Additions and Edits
- B. Parks & Open Space System Plan 2022 (Draft)

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A