

**From:** Kate Sinon

**Sent:** Friday, January 20, 2023 1:16 PM

**To:** Council <Council@bellevuewa.gov>; parkboard <parkboard@bellevuewa.gov>

**Subject:** Bellevue Airfield Park Meeting Last Night

Council and Board Members,

I am submitting what I WOULD have said at last night's Airfield Park meeting per recommendations by Janice Zahn and David Hamilton. As I expressed last night, I was very disappointed that the format of the meeting denied community members any access to the full bully pulpit. The presenter was unwilling to reconsider the format even when there were several people who expressed their interest in hearing what their neighbors were there to say,

It was a packed meeting - a lost opportunity - for many who were there because they oppose development of the property. I know that several of those neighbors left immediately after the presentation because they felt that there is already a predetermined trajectory in place. The survey is also heavily weighted to support development, in fact, you can't complete the survey unless you choose one of the development choices. There are many of us who are concerned and deeply dismayed at Bellevue's willingness to destroy one of our few remaining wildlife corridors. I do hope you all take the time to reconsider and to entertain the idea of alternatives that are better for our community, our environment and our wildlife.

So, for your consideration:

I am one of the many community members who does not want to see this space developed per the city's currently revised master plan. First, I would like to speak to alternatives and then I will end with my reasons for opposing the current plan.

Nature has been diligently reappropriating this land for the last 40 years and it is one of our few remaining wildlife corridors. It is also well used by people from the surrounding neighborhoods for walking (with and without dogs), foraging, and enjoying the natural surroundings.

Instead of development, I would love to see it used in a way that keeps the corridor intact while also inviting in more community. The Beacon Food Forest in Seattle is a perfect example of such an approach. It incorporates agroforestry, also called forest gardening, where trees, shrubs and agricultural crops are interspersed to create a multi-story ecosystem that can mimic the self-sustaining functions of a natural forest. Not only is it beautiful but it provides a place where community participates in creating local food ecosystems that can help alleviate some level of food insecurity while also providing a pollinator habitat, healthy soils, climate change mitigation, storm water filtration, educational opportunities, and - perhaps most importantly - a community where everyone is welcome to be, participate, learn and teach. It's an amazing place and is definitely a model that needs to be replicated. I have a copy of their About information and the definition of a Food Forest for those who would like to see it after the meeting. You can also find lots of information at [BeaconFoodForest.org](http://BeaconFoodForest.org).

Because the city already owns this property, this type of proposal would be a fraction of the cost while providing innumerable benefits to all of our Bellevue inhabitants, including those that are wild.

My primary opposition to the plan is the location. While I am not opposed to an aquatic center in principle, I do think that it shouldn't come at the expense of our wildlife corridor. We all see the posts on Nextdoor by those who are fearful because predators are being pushed into neighborhoods. The current plan will certainly exacerbate this issue. I believe that the city should get creative and find an urban setting for such a project. For example, the city will be closing three elementary schools and perhaps one of those locations would work. There are also no pools at any of the Bellevue High Schools and perhaps that is where the effort to provide more pools should start. Another thing to consider is that our current pools and beaches have had to close down schedules because of lifeguard shortages. It isn't really helpful to put money into new aquatic resources when current locations can't fully operate. Is there a plan for adequate staffing? King County has 32 pools – 1 per 66 Sq miles. It is ranked 11 of 39 counties in pools per capita and 1<sup>st</sup> of 39 counties in pools per Sq mile. Perhaps better collaboration among pool operators would alleviate stress from the system.

Finally, while drowning is certainly a tragic issue and I firmly believe that children should be taught to swim at an early age, we should avoid a narrative that implies that not providing this aquatic center will directly result in increased drownings. 2020 data shows that the whole of WA State has 1.36 drownings per 100,000 people – This includes all drownings and, I believe, a large percentage of these are due to poor judgement rather than swimming ability, for example cold water drownings by those who are able to swim but who are unprepared for the shock of jumping into icy waters on a warm day. This would indicate to me a need for much more and better educational outreach.

Regards,  
-kate