

MEMORANDUM



Bellevue Parks &
Community Services

Date: April 13, 2021

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

From: Heather Trescases, Chair
Parks & Community Services Board

RE: First Quarter 2021 Report and Communication

The Parks & Community Services Board is pleased to report on its work during the first quarter of 2021. In January, the Board received a presentation on property acquisition for the parks and open space system. This included an overview of the City's acquisition strategy as directed by the Comprehensive Plan and the Parks & Open Space System Plan. Outreach to Bellevue residents for these plans found there is still strong support for expanding the park system, preserving open space and increasing public access to Bellevue's lakes. The Council recently adopted the Environmental Stewardship Initiative, which includes a goal taken from the Parks & Open Space System Plan to provide walkable access to parks and trails for all Bellevue residents. Demonstrable progress toward achieving this goal will require a focus on acquiring smaller properties in underserved neighborhood areas.

In February, the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society updated the Board on the operating partnership that keeps the Garden a treasured local resource and respected institution across the nation. The presenters provided a special focus on how the Garden has pivoted its programs and offerings during the pandemic. Another presentation focused on the first two phases of the Council-directed Cross-Cultural Feasibility Study. The Board noted that the Parks & Community Services Department operates many community facilities and cultural programs. The Board also noted the unknown aspects of how community gatherings and cultural events may occur in the future as a result of the social change occurring this past year from the pandemic.

In March, the Board received a briefing on the Eastrail regional trail development in Bellevue. The opportunities to use the trail to connect existing Bellevue parks to neighborhoods and developing urban centers is immense. Increasing accessibility to our existing parks and services is a high priority. This was highlighted in a second presentation on the City's Choices Plan for People Living with Disabilities. This well-regarded program maximizes access to specialized recreation opportunities and provides a path for people living with disabilities to participate in any park program or facility. The Board was particularly supportive of the department's efforts to increase accessibility of playground equipment across the city.

During the first quarter of the year, the Board received public comment on a variety of topics. Individuals continue to encourage the City to acquire and preserve property adjacent to Coal Creek Natural Area and make improvements to Ashwood Park. A Bellevue College student shared local data that a student team collected on the environmental benefits of preserving the tree canopy in the city.

The breadth of topics covered by the Board this past quarter is preparing the way for the expected update to the Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan. Topics such as acquisition strategies, ESI goals, cultural and heritage facilities, trail connectivity and accessibility to parks

will all be considered as we envision how the parks system should develop over the next 20-30 years.

If you have any questions about the Board's work, please contact me anytime at htrescases@bellevuewa.gov.