City of Bellevue

P. O. Box 90012 • Bellevue, Washington • 98009-9012

November 21, 2012

Bellevue Network On Aging
Attn: Eileen Rasnack, Chair
North Bellevue Community Center
4063 148th Ave. NE
Bellevue, WA 98007

Dear Ms. Rasnack,

Thank you for your letter of November 2, 2012 conveying Bellevue Network on Aging's (BNOA) recommendation to provide assistance for people with mobility challenges at the Bellevue Botanical Garden (the Garden). I enjoyed meeting you last summer. Your letter reflects our conversation regarding BNOA's interest in having garden volunteers provide transportation through the gardens in a motorized vehicle for visitors with limited mobility.

As I noted when we spoke about this over the summer, I appreciate BNOA's offer to purchase a motorized cart for limited-mobility visitors to the Garden. As we discussed, factors to take into consideration include liability, vehicle storage and maintenance, staffing for drivers, and managing reservations. We are researching those factors, as well as other possible options to address BNOA's recommendation to provide mobility assistance to garden visitors.

I have researched a number of institutions, including the San Juan Island National Historical Park, to learn how they assist limited-mobility visitors. I discovered a wide range of solutions including providing manual or motorized wheelchairs at no or low cost, and variations of the shuttle service model you suggest. In the case of the San Juan Island National Historical Park, transportation is provided by live-in, volunteer caretakers for the National Park Service or park rangers when available.

The Garden currently provides a drop-off zone for people with mobility challenges, reserved disabled parking stalls, a ramp with railings to the entry plaza and accessible restrooms in the Visitor Center. Much of the Garden is experienced via the Tateuchi Loop Trail, which is approximately ¼ mile long, with a crushed gravel surface and some moderately steep sections. Our accessibility guide helps people prepare for their visit by providing information they need to determine which areas of the Garden are accessible for them. I've included that guide for your information.

Parks & Community Services Department ♦ Administration Division ♦ 450 – 110th Ave. NE – 4th Floor
Phone: (425) 452-6885 ♦ FAX: (425) 452-7221

Our current City risk management practice regarding volunteers does not recommend that volunteers drive City vehicles to transport participants. We will explore whether an existing Garden partner group or a new group within the community is willing and able to provide this type of service. We will also explore other options with the goal of finding solutions that work best for both visitors and the garden infrastructure in terms of impact, safety and liability. As the Garden is governed in partnership with the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society, we are seeking their input and assistance with this request.

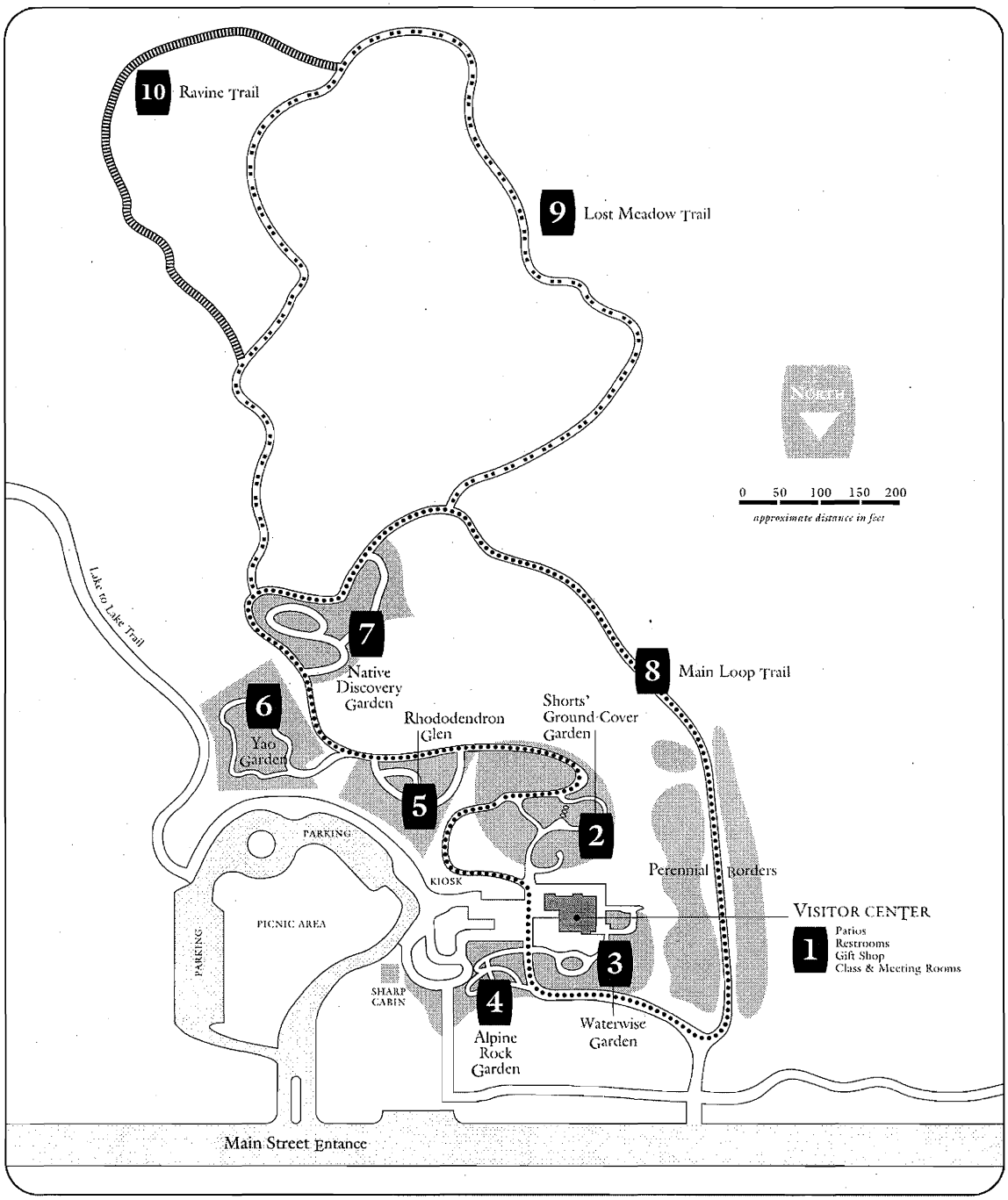
In order for us to thoroughly investigate our options, I look forward to hearing how BNOA is able to contribute to make your recommendation feasible. For example, providing volunteers to manage or assist with the program, raising funds to provide on-going vehicle maintenance, etc. I suggest we meet early in 2013 to take a closer look at how other organizations provide options for limited-mobility visitors and so that I can provide you with an update of our research regarding possible solutions.

Best regards,

Nancy Kartes, Garden Manager
Bellevue Botanical Garden

CC: Councilmember Wallace
Patrick Foran, Director, Parks & Community Services
Terry Smith, Asst. Director, Parks and Community Services
Cathy VonWald, Community Services Supervisor, Parks & Community Services
Parks & Community Services Board
Network on Aging

TRAIL & ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE

BELLEVUE BOTANICAL GARDEN

TRAIL / GARDEN	TRAIL LENGTH	WIDTH	SURFACE	BENCHES	NATURAL FEATURES / POINTS OF INTEREST	ACCESSIBILITY
1 Visitor Center Patios	–	–	pavement	5	water feature, visitor center	accessible by wheelchair ramp
2 Ground Cover	1/10 mi	5 ft	gravel	2	water feature, ground cover displays, views, interpretives	some steep slopes and narrow paths
3 Waterwise	1/10	5	gravel	1	interpretives, kitchen garden	mainly level, some narrow paths
4 Alpine Rock	1/10	4 - 5	gravel	0	rockeries, alpine plants	slopes, steps, narrow paths
5 Rhododendron Glen	1/10	5	mulch	2	rhody & fern highlighted, views	mild slopes, step at east entry
6 Yao	1/10	4 - 7	gravel	1	Japanese/American garden, rockeries	some narrow paths, slopes, steps
7 Native Discovery	1/10	4 - 5	mulch	3	wetland & pond views, art, native plant displays	some narrow paths, steep slope at west end
8 Main Loop Trail	1/2	12	gravel	5	forest views, perennial border, art	some slopes & mild grades
9 Lost Meadow Trail	1/3	12	gravel	5	forest, meadow, wildlife/birding, interpretives	slopes and some steep grades
10 Ravine Trail	1/4	4 - 5	mulch	1	ravine views, second growth forest	some steep grades, slopes