



MEMORANDUM

Date: October 13, 2009

To: Parks & Community Services Board

From: Pam Fehrman, Project Manager
Glenn Kost, Planning & Development Manager

Subject: Eastgate Area Properties Master Plan
(Board action requested: Master Plan Recommendation)

SUMMARY

At your meeting on October 13th, we will summarize the Eastgate Area Properties Master Plan process and the three resulting master plan alternatives. We will then ask the Park Board to recommend to the City Council a preferred master plan alternative for the park at Eastgate Area Properties.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The *Comprehensive Plan*, Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Element, Goal 4 directs the City: "To develop, operate, and maintain parkland and cultural recreation facilities in a manner that is responsive to the site and the needs of the community." Policy PA-18 states: "Develop a variety of active and passive facilities in a coordinated system of neighborhood and community parks." Policy PA-27 states: "Designate active and passive recreation uses and cultural use of parkland through the master plan approval process." The adopted *2003 Parks & Open Space System Plan* includes development of a community park and lighted sportfields at the airfield park site.

BACKGROUND

The Eastgate Area Properties are comprised of three parcels totaling 27.5 acres. A vicinity map with parcel descriptions is included as *Attachment 1*. Recognizing that this may represent the last opportunity to acquire a large, undeveloped, relatively flat parcel of property in Bellevue, Council authorized the purchase of the properties with the intent of developing an active recreational use community park. The Purchase & Sale Agreement provided for a jointly-funded access road along the southern boundary of the site, which is now in place, and also provided for 105 priority-use parking spaces on the adjacent office development. Funding for the first phase of park development is available through the Parks & Natural Areas Levy. Design of these improvements will proceed upon adoption of the Master Plan.

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

The planning effort has been led by Parks & Community Services staff, teamed with The Portico Group, an experienced landscape architectural and planning firm, together with experts in

landfill management as well as civil and environmental engineering fields. The public involvement process is summarized in *Attachment 2*. Over 2,000 comments have been received, with design alternatives shaped by participants of the planning process, including Park Board and Council. The evolution of master plan alternatives reflects a consensus-driven approach that has resulted in alternatives that are typically more flexible in use and appeal to a wider range of community interests. This contrasts with a majority of comments received that reflect specific interests, often resulting in plans that appeal to a more limited audience.

MASTER PLAN ALTERNATIVES

This process has achieved consensus on key park program elements such as trail connections, vehicle access, residential buffers, picnicking, and environmental sensitivity. In general, those living near the park favor less intensive recreational development, preferring to retain the park mainly for passive or neighborhood uses, while those representing specific recreational interests support more intensive recreational development that generates more community-wide appeal. With the information and preferences expressed by Park Board, Council, and the community, we refined the Master Plan design to the three alternatives depicted in *Attachments 3, 4 and 5*, briefly discussed below.

Elements Common to each Alternative:

Elements that enjoyed general support served as the basis for updating the alternatives. The three final alternative designs are identical except for the east-central area of the site. Elements common to all are discussed below:

- **The core** – A space extending from the park entrance to the south of the stormwater ponds, this area unites the various park features and provides opportunities for unprogrammed flexible places. Improved with walking paths, interactive water features and playgrounds, this area provides uninterrupted vistas into the heart of the park, to the northwest and beyond the park to the southeast without walking through or awkwardly around programmed park functions.
- **Enhance trails and park connections** – Existing pedestrian trails such as the Robinswood, Spiritridge and Phantom Lake neighborhoods trails are enhanced while new trails within and through the core of the park are added.
- **Preserve views** – The core area of the park allows visual connections from the central water feature, towards and over the park entrance to the southeast.
- **Limit vehicle access to 160th** - Vehicular park access is limited to 160th Ave NE, from I-90 and Eastgate Way.
- **Maintain residential buffers** - A minimum of 100 foot buffers of mature wooded areas are provided.
- **Sportfields** - One synthetic lit soccer-type field with two baseball overlays are sited closest to office development and shared parking in the southwest area of the properties.
- **Accessible picnic facilities** – Picnic shelters and associated amenities with accessible parking are located in wooded northwest corner of the site.
- **Two children’s play areas** - One play area is located in the southern area of the park close to the park entrance, situated to complement the sportfields. The second is adjacent to the picnic area.
- **Utilize existing parking if possible** - Parking to support park activity utilizes existing parking at the main entrance along the southeast side of the property, and shared parking (with the office development) is south and west of the park.

- **Provide restroom / park furnishings** – Restrooms and maintenance facilities would be located in the south and in the northwest areas, complementing sportfield, picnicking and trail activities.
- **Environmentally responsible** – Water features to creatively address stormwater management will be used. The landfill will be capped, and the environmental quality control systems will be state of the art. Best practices for sustainable building and land management including Low Impact Development techniques will be incorporated.

Elements unique to each alternative are discussed below:

Alternative A (Attachment 3): Adds a second lighted, multi-use sportsfield area that together would provide three baseball/softball fields and two soccer/lacrosse field overlays. This option maximizes outdoor athletic use, and splitting the fields into two distinct areas allows for the most universal and flexible sportfield use. Tournaments, extended-season sports, and same-season sports (e.g., spring season lacrosse and baseball) can be accommodated as needed.

This alternative most closely accommodates community requests for a Little League complex while providing more universal use and appeal. This plan does not satisfy requests for an off-leash-dog area on-site or to preserve the meadow. If this alternative is selected, staff recommends that the off-leash-dog area at Robinswood Community Park be expanded and enhanced to provide facilities to serve east Bellevue.

Alternative B (Attachment 4): Adds a 3-½ -acre off-leash dog area. This alternative provides a fenced off-leash facility approximately twice the size of the off-leash facilities at Robinswood Community Park, and could be designed as a complement to Robinswood’s facilities. This alternative would not accommodate a sportfield complex or the minimum 5-10-acre off-leash facility requested by many off-leash advocates. If this alternative is selected, improvements are not recommended to the existing off-leash facilities at Robinswood.

Alternative C (Attachment 5): Adds a 40,000-50,000 square foot indoor recreation building. The building would provide opportunities for complementary indoor-outdoor programming year-round, and could support indoor activities such as aquatics, soccer, hockey, baseball, basketball, or a combination. This alternative has not enjoyed significant community support, as specific program elements have not been identified. Over the years the staff has been approached by several groups interested in partnering with the City to provide indoor recreational opportunities, and this plan would provide a “placeholder” to allow for discussions to occur and partnerships to emerge. This plan does not satisfy community requests for an off-leash-dog area on site, or for an outdoor athletic complex. If this alternative is selected, improvements and expansion of Robinswood’s off-leash facilities would be recommended.

RECOMMENDATION

All Master Plan Alternatives are viable solutions that, if implemented, would represent great assets to the neighborhood and community, and would contribute greatly to the City’s park system. All provide recreational amenities that respond to the needs of the community, the opportunities and challenges of the site, and the interests expressed through the master planning process. They can be developed with sensitivity to the neighbors and implemented in a manner that reflects the City’s commitment to environmental responsibility.

The solution that best reflects the goals for the site is reflected in Alternative A. This option, when combined with enhancements to the existing off-leash facilities in Robinswood Park, best responds to the programmatic goals expressed by the community. In addition to providing the amenities described above that are common to all options, Alternative A:

- is most consistent with the original intent of the purchase of the property and goals outlined in the City's Parks & Open Space System Plan;
- is most consistent with the recreational priorities identified in earlier discussions by the Park Board and City Council;
- most effectively responds to the need for additional, high-quality sportsfields;
- when combined with the off-leash improvements in Robinswood Park, responds to the community's desire for more and better off-leash facilities in Bellevue;
- can be implemented in a manner that is both sensitive to the neighbors and responsible to the environment.

PROPOSED MOTION

Move to recommend to City Council Alternative A as the preferred Master Plan for the park at Eastgate Area Properties.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map and Parcel Identification
2. Summary of Public Involvement To-Date
3. Master Plan Alternative A
4. Master Plan Alternative B
5. Master Plan Alternative C

Eastgate Area Properties Vicinity Map & Parcel Identification



Eastgate Area Properties Master Plan Summary of Public Involvement To-Date April 2008 through September 2009

Goals

This public involvement program has been created to:

- Provide a wide range of opportunities for the public to be informed about and involved in the process of developing the Master Plan for the Eastgate Area Properties;
- Be transparent, inclusive, and broad, but also focused and decisive so that the process moves forward and achieves results;
- Encourage widespread participation and constructive dialogue;
- Provide a comprehensive understanding of the range of visions, values, and priorities that are important to the community, so that informed decisions can be made regarding the future of the park;
- Create a sense of community ownership and excitement about the new park.

Outreach Methods & Response

Several methods have been used to inform the community and to provide opportunities for feedback during the planning process. Well over 2,000 individual responses have been provided by the community. The individual techniques with a general characterization of the responses are described below.

It should be noted that the emails and survey responses are not statistically representative of the community, and on-line surveys are subject to multiple submissions per individual, special interest email campaigns and cannot establish residence.

Community Meetings: 380 citizens have participated in four community meetings, organized as workshops, which took place May 28, July 17, October 1, 2008 and July 17, 2009. The mailing and email lists, which are updated continually, includes neighbors living within 1 ½ - miles of the park, neighborhood associations, interest groups, and the East Bellevue Community Council. The mail list currently totals over 5,000 with email invitations to another 450. The first three meetings included presentations of information followed by smaller breakout sessions to encourage an exchange of ideas and preferences. The last community meeting with approximately 40 attendees ended with a question and answer session. At the conclusion of all the meetings, participants were handed cards and given the opportunity to provide written comments on the subjects discussed at the meeting. A total of 160 cards were received.

Project Website: The project website, accessed via the City's internet page, provides project information and opportunities to comment on the plan. It is regularly updated with meeting announcements and summaries, technical information, plan alternatives and workshop materials. Notices of website updates are emailed to 450 subscribers.

Web Surveys: Approximately 1,200 people have responded to four web surveys conducted at separate points throughout the process. Each survey followed a community workshop, posing the same questions asked at the community meetings in the small breakout groups and in the card exercises.

Neighborhood Meeting: The project team attended a meeting organized by the “*Save the Meadow*” neighborhood group, attended by approximately 40 residents.

Email and Phone Communication: Over 400+ separate email or phone communications have been received, all receiving a response from the City staff.

Petition to Save the Meadow: Signed by 242 residents, a written petition was delivered to the City Council on behalf of the neighborhoods surrounding the park.

Public Meetings: Approximately 20 individuals have spoken directly to the Parks & Community Services Board and/or City Council at their regular meetings.

Publications: The project kick-off and an invitation to participate was announced in the *Bellevue Reporter*, and the planning process was described in the October edition of *It's Your City*.

The Chronology

Community Meeting and Card Exercise #1 (May 28, 2008 at Spiritridge Elementary School)

This workshop was attended by approximately 100 residents, mostly from the immediate neighborhood. Attendees were invited to “dream big” about the possibilities for the new park. Working in small groups of 8-12 to facilitate a more focused discussion and exchange of ideas, participants shared their visions, values, and ideas for the future of the new park. A broad list of possible site uses was developed from this meeting and the follow-up card exercise, and used to develop a series of five plan alternatives that would be shared at the second workshop. Broad interest was expressed for low-intensity development and passive recreational uses, with a focus on protecting the neighborhood from noise, traffic, and lights. Interest was expressed in the creation of a large off-leash area for dogs.

Web Survey #1 (conducted 7/8 through 8/1)

We received 195 responses to this survey, with nearly half of the respondents supporting an off-leash area. Lesser interest was expressed for athletic fields, walking trails, a major swimming pool, and for general open space.

Community Meeting and Card Exercise #2 (July 17, 2008 at Bellevue Community College)

Attended by approximately 170 residents representing a wide range of interests, this workshop introduced five alternative plans for the park using program elements identified from the first workshop. Working again in small groups, participants described their likes and dislikes about each alternative, with the goal of reducing the number of alternatives for the next workshop. The working groups were organized to include representation from several interest groups, encouraging participants to exchange ideas and hear multiple viewpoints. Although significant interest was expressed for athletic fields, an off-leash dog facility, a large aquatic facility, and passive recreational development, workshop comments reflected more balanced interests in multi-use over single-use program elements. The universal sportfields and meadow development alternatives were most preferred, while single-use alternatives, off-leash dog park and baseball sport complex alternatives were least preferred.

Web Survey #2 (conducted 8/8 through 11/25)

149 people responded to survey #2. Responses, though somewhat similar to the preceding meeting and card exercise, were more polarized. The single-purpose baseball complex Alternative was overwhelmingly preferred, followed distantly by the off-leash dog park and multi-use sportfield Alternatives. The off-leash dog area and meadow development Alternatives were least preferred.

Petition Received

Submitted on behalf of “*the neighborhoods surrounding the park,*” and signed by 242 residents, the petition states:

“The undersigned residents....wish to express their desire to keep the meadows natural and have a minimum of park recreation development. We respectfully insist that the City Council direct the Parks and Community Services Board....to assure that a minimum of 10 acres of the available 14.5 acres, minimum....be kept as a general use, multi “meadow only” use, 4.5 acres maximum for a multi-use recreation/sports area and the other 13 acres to be left naturally wooded and preserved specifically for the neighborhood use....”

Neighborhood Meeting (October 1, 2008 at Spiritridge Elementary School)

Attended by approximately 40 neighbors, the project team attended a meeting organized by the “Save the Meadow” neighborhood group, who expressed concern that the community process was not fairly representing the views of the neighbors. The purpose was to provide a forum for the group to create and present a plan to the design team that incorporated a natural meadow. Though a plan was not developed, the group emphasized the objectives set forth in the earlier petition that encouraged preservation of a large meadow, while opposing athletic field lights.

Community Meeting #3 (November 18 at South Bellevue Community Center)

Based on the feedback received from prior workshops and other community responses, the five plan alternatives discussed at the 2nd workshop were further refined to three. The 70 participants at this workshop provided further comments on the three alternatives in hopes that a plan could be developed that represented a consensus of the community. Meeting attendees most preferred the alternative that represented a combination of all elements (multi-use sportfield, meadow, recreation building and off-leash facility) and least preferred the multi-use sportfields combined with off-leash facilities alternative.

Web Survey #3 (started 11/25/08 thru 7/7/09)

177 people responded to survey #3 contradicting responses received at the community meeting, with the majority favoring the multi-use sportfields with off-leash dog area combination alternative, and least preferred the meadow, natural turf and building combination. The combination design alternative of all elements (multi-use sportfield, meadow, recreation building and off-leash facility) found middle ground support.

Email and Phone Communications

Staff received over 400+ email and phone communications throughout the planning process. Many appear to have responded to requests from interest group representatives asking constituencies to express their views to the City. Most favor athletic fields, an aquatic center, an off-leash facility, or prefer that the City do nothing.

Parks & Community Services Board Meeting on January 13, 2009

Staff reviewed the process to-date and the three alternatives discussed at the 3rd community meeting and requested feedback to assist the design team as it prepared alternative(s) to present at the 4th community meeting. Citing community needs and the original purpose of the

acquisition, the Park Board generally supported Alternative B (the multi-sports complex) with a recreation building in lieu of an off-leash area. They also supported development of accessible picnic facilities in the northwest wooded portion of the park, and preferred lighted, synthetic sports fields to maximize community resources.

City Council Meeting on March 9 and June 15, 2009

At its March 9th Study Session, Council reviewed workshop number three design alternatives. Similar to the Park Board, Council members cited athletic fields as the first priority of the master plan, including lights and synthetic surfacing. Accessible picnic facilities were important. Some Council members agreed that the neighbors should be buffered from the increased use anticipated at the new community park but also thought the wide buffers of mature trees appeared to sufficiently mitigate impacts to the neighborhood. Some Council members expressed interest in an indoor recreation facility, intrigued by the potential complement to outdoor athletics. Council members further clarified that a building was not a high priority for the first phase of development, identified the need for more specific program information, and expressed the need to explore partnership opportunities prior to fully supporting a building on-site.

Council considered development of Off-Leash-Dog Areas on this site during both the Off-Leash Area Dog Study (June 15th) and the Eastgate Area Properties Master Planning presentations, and identified the master planning process as the most appropriate venue for resolving this question. The Council expressed concern about displacing historic off-leash dog use at this location, but further stated that if off-leash facilities can't be accommodated on this site, enhanced off leash facilities at Robinswood Community Park could serve this area of Bellevue..

Community Meeting #4 (July 23 at South Bellevue Community Center)

Approximately 40 neighbors attended the fourth park planning meeting on July 23, 2009 at South Bellevue Community Center. Staff shared technical information about the property and reviewed feedback from the previous community workshops, online surveys and correspondence from the community, Parks & Community Services Board and City Council. The park system recreational needs and opportunities were then reviewed before viewing a range of three updated design alternatives (*Attachments 3, 4 and 5*). The meeting concluded with a question-and-answer session.

The 36 comment card responses received at meeting #4 offered no clear indication of a preferred design alternative; rather, all three alternatives were equally supported and least preferred.

Web Survey #4 (started 7/31 and is ongoing)

The project web-site was updated with survey #4 on July 31st and the survey is ongoing. As of the writing of this memo (10/5), we have received 642 survey responses indicating a preference for both Alternative B (the athletic and off-leash facility combination) and Alternative A (the outdoor athletic facility). The least supported and least preferred design seems to be Alternative C (the recreation building option) (*Attachments 3, 4 and 5*).

Parks & Community Services Board Meeting on September 10, 2009

Staff reviewed the process to-date and the three alternatives discussed at the 4th community meeting. The presentation was for informational purposes, to help inform the Board's recommendation to Council anticipated in October.

Attachment 3 Master Plan – Alternative A



Alternative A

Attachment 4 Master Plan – Alternative B



Alternative B

**Attachment 5
Master Plan – Alternative C**



Alternative C

