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Date: March 3, 2014

To: Chair Grindeland and Parks & Community Services Board Members

From: Patrick Foran, Director, Parks & Community Services
Glenn Kost, Planning & Development Manager

Subject: Ashwood Park

PURPOSE

The City has received several inquiries about the status and future plans for Ashwood Park.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide background and history of the park;
- Describe recent community interest; and
- Clarify the park's current status & next steps.

ASHWOOD PARK HISTORY (See Attachment 1 - Chronology)

Ashwood Park is a 2.84-acre parcel located on a portion of the old Ashwood Elementary School property that was jointly acquired from the Bellevue School District by the City of Bellevue and the King County Library District in 1986. The purpose of this acquisition was to provide a library and public park. As part of the acquisition agreement, a joint planning effort was conducted to establish a plan to integrate a library, park, plaza, community center, parking and green space onto a single site. In December 1990, Council adopted the Site Plan (**Attachment 2**), directing also that park portion of this plan be further refined with the assistance of a community involvement process, including a Citizen Advisory Committee. The Ashwood Park Master Plan (**Attachment 3**) is the result of that effort, which was approved by a Committee of the City Council in July of 1992. The plan includes a 2-story, 35,000 square foot community center for social and cultural activities, 3-stories (58 units) of affordable housing, below-grade parking, pedestrian plazas and landscaped green space.

By June 1996, the Library was complete and the City completed construction of the library plaza and interim development at Ashwood Park (the park property was leveled and seeded). Today the park remains in largely the same condition as it did in 1996, including a lawn area with a small multipurpose sport field, parking, and benches.

A variety of planning initiatives over the years have identified the need for both a community center and increased open space in the Downtown subarea by 2020, with Ashwood Park among the locations identified to accomplish these goals. The Downtown Plan Update identified the Ashwood neighborhood as a Cultural District based on existing facilities and future plans that included a black-box theater, cultural/community center, Library, Technology Learning Museum and Performing Arts Center. As part of the Downtown Plan update, a citizens task force was created in 2000 to develop recommendations for futures uses for Ashwood Park. After meeting

several times, no consensus was reached by this group. Several private/public partnership proposals for Ashwood Park also emerged during this time, including proposals by Bellevue College, several arts organizations and private business seeking to construct a community center, cultural and/or performing arts center in or adjacent to Ashwood Park. Council deemed the timing of these proposals premature due to the need for further discussion as part of the Downtown Plan Update, and the recognized need to update the Ashwood Park Master Plan.

In 2004, Council authorized the sale of the southwest corner of the Ashwood Park block that allowed for the construction of underground parking to serve the adjacent 1020 residential development, and provided for the development of a permanent public plaza and entry to Ashwood Park on top of the garage. After a community process, the Ashwood Plaza Master Plan was adopted by Council in April 2005 (**Attachment 4**). Construction of the plaza was completed and opened to the public in 2009.

In 2011, the Council approved an agreement with the King County Library System allowing the library to use portions of Ashwood Park for construction staging, landscaping, access and parking during construction of a parking structure at the adjacent Bellevue Regional Library. In return, KCLS repaved and landscaped the parking lot, and provided streetscape improvements along the northern portion of the park and right-of-way. That work was just completed.

Also in 2011, the staff was asked to study the concept of co-locating a downtown fire station with a community center in Ashwood Park. The concept was presented at a June 2012 Council Study Session. Though the Council did not support the concept, they urged further exploration of alternative downtown fire station locations and to separately consider funding for the Ashwood Park Master Plan update during the next budget cycle.

RECENT COMMUNITY INTEREST

Shortly after the June 2012 Council discussion, the staff received several inquiries about the City's intentions for Ashwood Park. Staff from Parks and Neighborhoods have met on several occasions throughout '12 and '13 with representatives from the Pacific Regents residential community (located south of the park) to answer questions about the status of Ashwood Park and to hear about their ideas for the park. We encouraged the group to participate in the ongoing Downtown Livability discussions, and to participate in the Ashwood Park Master Plan Update when that process started. Representatives of Pacific Regents subsequently organized a "Keep Ashwood Green" neighborhood group and presented a vision statement, plan and list of supporters to the staff in July of 2013 (**Attachment 5**). The central feature of that plan is the development of a multi-generational play area at the south end of the park. These ideas were conveyed to the Park Board at their October 8, 2013 meeting. The Park Board encouraged the group to participate in the master plan update when that process began.

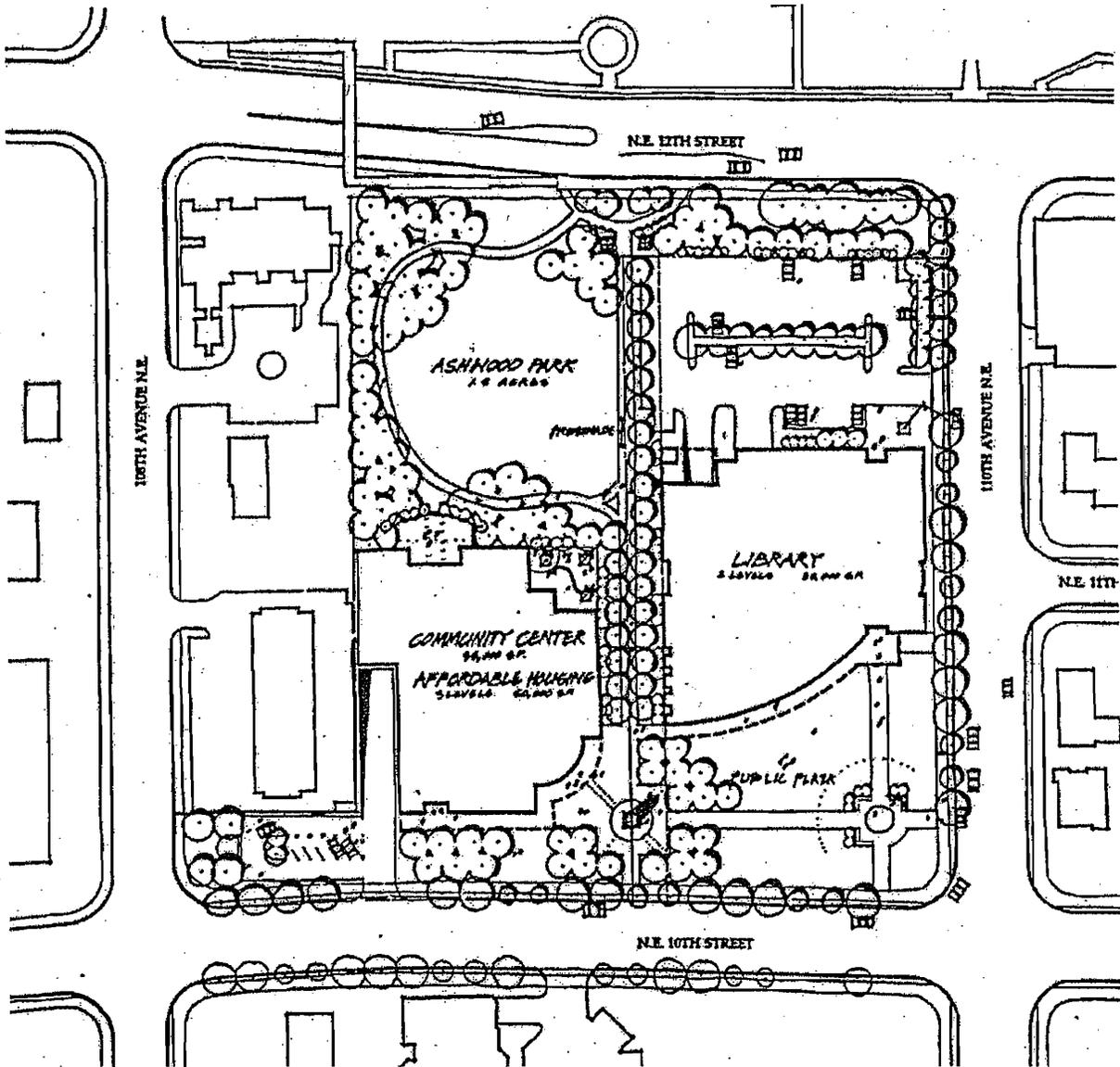
CURRENT STATUS & NEXT STEPS

The 1993 Master Plan remains the adopted plan for Ashwood Park. No funds are available for park development in the City CIP. While the plan was developed after a significant community-wide process, there is interest in updating the plan to consider a contemporary context for the park. The staff has notified the Keep Ashwood Green neighborhood group of its intention to request funding to update the master plan during the upcoming budget development, and encouraged the group to participate in the community process if funded. We will also work with the group to explore the potential to implement a series of smaller, shorter-term park improvements in advance of major park development, including benches, signage and landscaping.

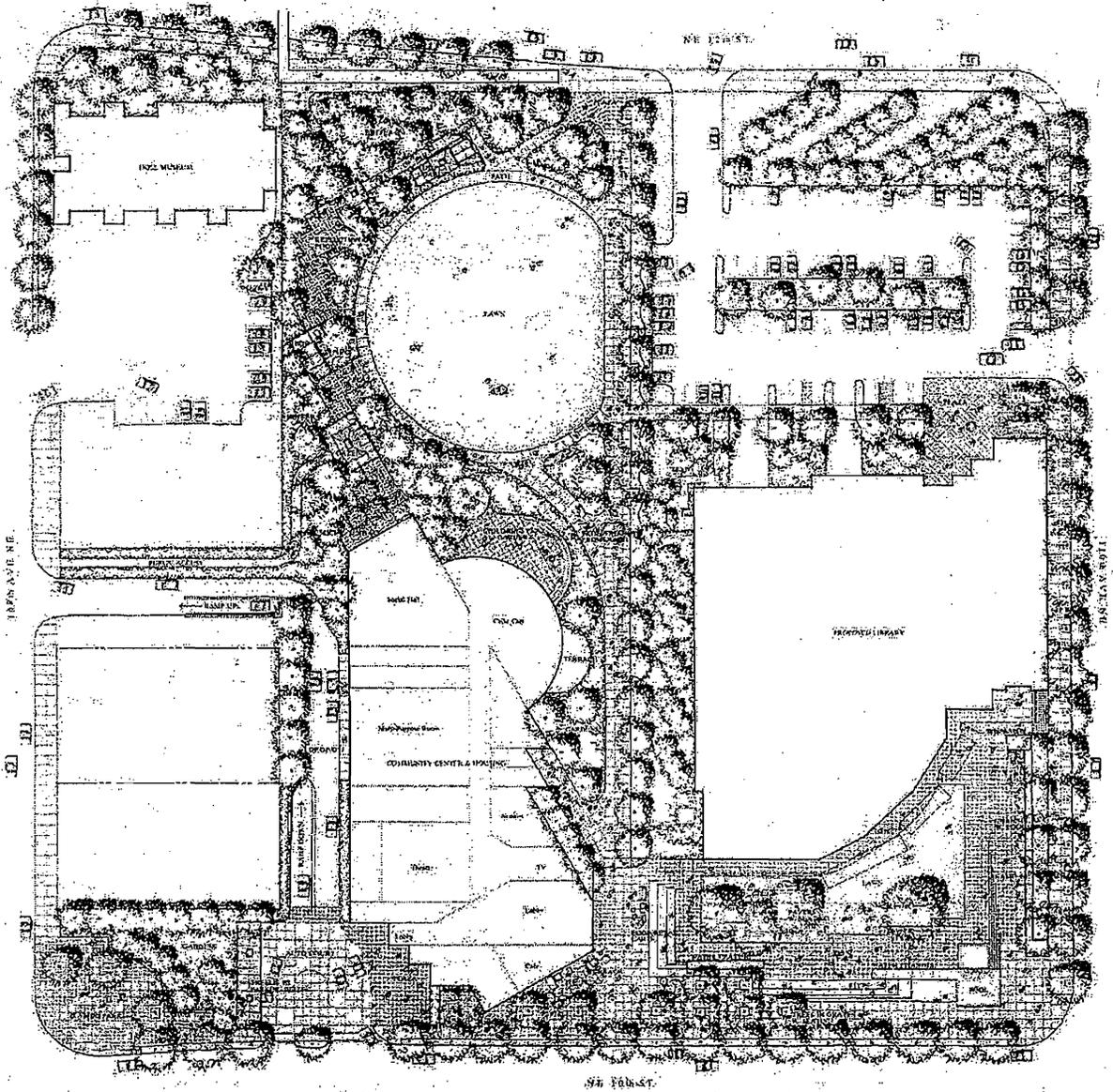
Ashwood Park Chronology

- 1950's thru 1980's: The property, together with the property occupied by the Bellevue Regional Library, is part of the Ashwood Elementary School.
- 1986: The City and King County Library System (KCLS) jointly purchased the property from the Bellevue School District for the purpose of constructing a library and public park.
- Dec 1990: After an extensive community process that included a citizen's advisory committee, the City Council adopts a conceptual site plan for Ashwood Park that integrated the library, park, community center, plaza and parking on a single site.
- July 1992: After further community work, a master plan that refines the site plan components was adopted by a Committee of the Council.
- June 1996: Construction of the Library and interim park improvements is completed.
- May 2000: City staff completes a Feasibility Study on the development of a Bellevue Youth Arts Center. Working with Musicworks NW and the Pacific NW Ballet, the program called for a 74,000 sf facility with below grade parking. The preferred location was Ashwood Park. No Council action was sought.
- Dec 2000 thru Oct 2001: As part of the Downtown Implementation (Subarea) Plan, a Citizen Task Force was asked to review the Ashwood Park plan and submit recommendations regarding the future uses of the park. The Task Force met on several occasions and conducted a series of workshops but could not reach a decision except to suggest that no loss of open space compared to the present site should be allowed.
- April 2001: John Su, local developer and owner of the adjacent property, proposes a partnership between the City, developer, Library and Bellevue Community College to construct a Cultural Arts Center at Ashwood Park. The City Council deemed the proposal premature due to the need for further discussion during the Downtown Plan Update and a need to update the Ashwood Park Master Plan.
- February 2002: The Parks & Community Services Board endorses the Downtown Needs Assessment staff report that confirmed the need for a downtown community center, though no preferred location is identified. Ashwood Park is recommended for open space and cultural purposes.
- 2004 - 2009: City sells the SW corner of the Ashwood Park block in 2004 to allow for underground parking to support the 1020 residential tower, reserving a permanent park easement on the surface. The Council adopted the Plaza Master Plan in 2005 after community input. Construction of the residential tower and plaza was completed in 2009.
- 2011 - 2013: After extensive citizen input during review of KCLS's parking structure, the City approves an agreement allowing the library the exclusive use of Ashwood's parking lot during construction of the parking structure. In return, the KCLS reconstructs the Ashwood parking lot and completes landscape improvements.
- June 2012: Staff presents the concept of co-locating a downtown fire station with a community center in Ashwood Park at a Council study session. Council does not support locating a fire station in Ashwood Park. They suggest separating the two issues and to consider funding the Ashwood Park Master Plan update during the next budget cycle.
- 2012-2013: Staff from Parks and Neighborhoods meets on several occasions with representatives of the Pacific Regents residential community to discuss the status of Ashwood Park. The group forms the "Keep Ashwood Park Green" neighborhood group.

- October 2013: The Keep Ashwood Green neighborhood group presents their vision of Ashwood Park to the Parks & Community Services Board at their regular meeting, which includes developing a multi-generational play area at the south end of the site.



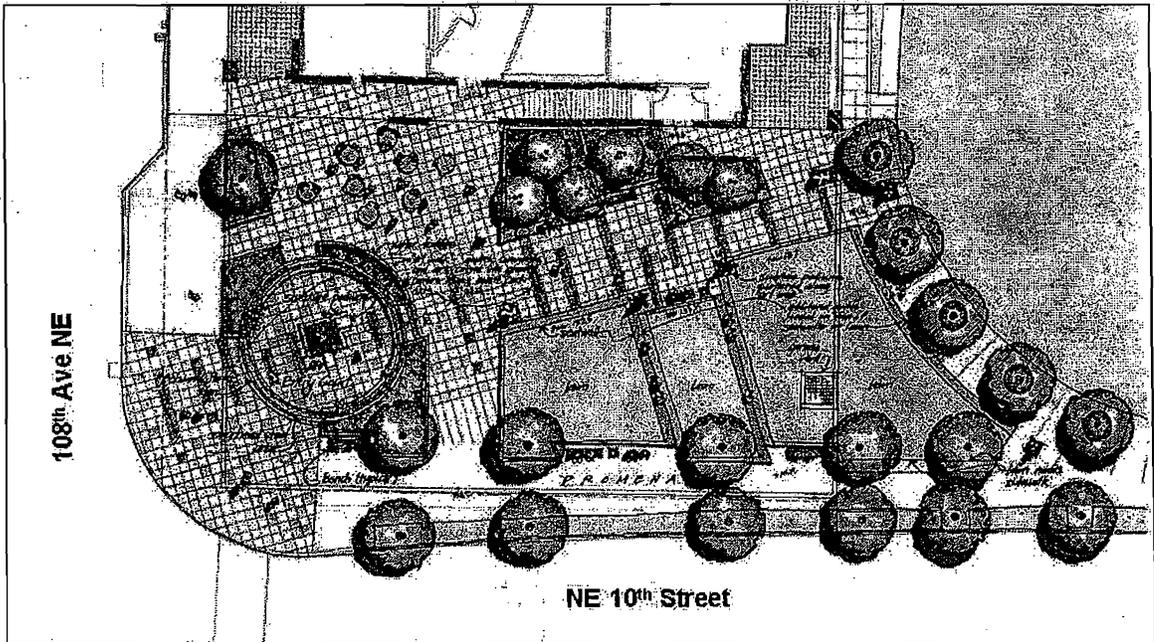
**Ashwood Park Site Plan
Adopted by City Council
December 1990**



**Ashwood Park Master Plan
Adopted by City Committee
July 1992**

Ashwood Plaza Master Plan

(Council Adopted April 4, 2005 – Resolution 7162)



"KEEP ASHWOOD PARK GREEN"

The neighbors of Ashwood Park were brought together out of their concern for diminishing green space with its opportunities for outdoor activities. The following are the results of several neighborhood meetings and express what we would like to see as the future for Ashwood Park.

The Park would be an intergenerational, outdoor gathering place for Bellevue residents & visitors: a flexibly designed green space with open and useable spaces including exercise equipment, picnic tables & walking paths.

The Park would be a place where people would be encouraged to socialize as well as exercise and walk to maintain their health in an attractive, open-air green space.

The Park would be a green space providing physical & emotional health benefits in a dense residential area.

The Park would be a barrier-free environment allowing participation for persons with disabilities.

The Park would be "Pet Friendly".

The Park would have basic amenities including rest rooms & lighting, allowing evening use and safety.

The Park would be a place where workers in nearby office buildings would want to come and eat their lunches.

The Park would be a destination park for Bellevue drawing people to the King County Regional Library & the new Kids' Quest Museum.

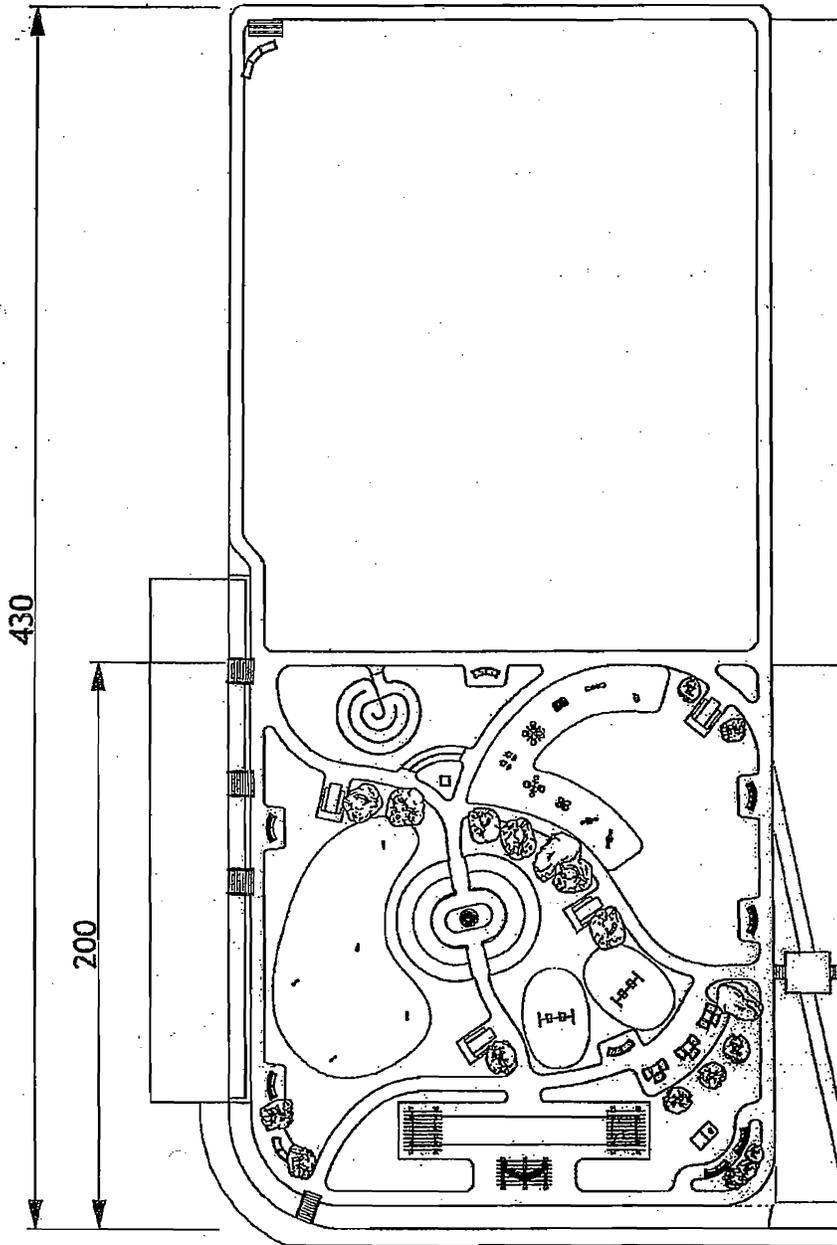
The Park would be an amenity to Bellevue and on an axis with the Downtown City Park and the Meydenbauer Park.

As a public benefit, the Park would add value to Bellevue's Downtown as part of the Downtown Livability Study adding value by contributing to the art and culture of the surrounding neighborhood.

June 2013

Prepared from ideas developed by "Neighbors of Ashwood Park". Presented to Glenn Kost & Camron Parker, Bellevue Parks & Community Services, at the Pacific Regent on July 9, 2013 for consideration in future revisions to the Master Plan for the Park.

Ashwood Park Parking Lot



**Bellevue
Regional
Library**

NE 10th Street