



# MEMORANDUM

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**Phone:** 452-5377  
**Date:** March 17, 2008  
**To:** Mayor Degginger and City Councilmembers  
**From:** Patrick Foran, Director  
**Subject:** Potential Parks & Open Space Voter Initiative

During discussions of the City's Long-Term Funding Strategy, Council requested additional information on a potential Bellevue Parks and Open Space Voter Initiative. This issue is not new and has been discussed regularly since 2002, but has not been formally initiated. In June 2007, Council expressed an interest in a voter initiative featuring park development and asked the Parks & Community Services Board to conduct a public outreach process. The Board found that residents were willing to support a property tax measure for additional park improvements, and their full report to Council is attached.

At the March 17 Study Session, staff will review the history of voter initiatives, major policy alternatives, and a potential election timeline with Council. Major decision points for any voter initiative include the election timing, financing mechanism, project mix, and overall fiscal tolerance. If Council wishes to proceed, additional Study Session time has been reserved to further discuss this issue on April 7 and April 21, 2008. Ultimately, Council would need to pass a ballot resolution by August 12, 2008 if Council decides to place a Parks Voter Initiative on the upcoming General Election ballot in November.

Attachments:  
Parks & Community Services Board Outreach Process and Recommendation

# City of Bellevue

Parks & Community  
Services Department



## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** January 8, 2008  
**To:** Bellevue City Council  
**From:** Merle Keeney, Parks & Community Services Board Chair  
**Subject:** Outreach Process and Recommendation for Potential Parks Voter Initiative

### Background

Bellevue City Council asked the Parks & Community Services Board to conduct a public outreach process this fall to help determine community support for a potential parks voter initiative. As you know, Bellevue voters have approved seven parks ballot measures since the City was incorporated in 1953, with the most recent measure being the 1988 park bond. Unless a new ballot measure is approved by voters, city property taxes will not include voter-approved funding to expand the parks system for the first time in over 50 years.

### Public Outreach

Based on Council direction, the Parks & Community Services Board conducted a community feedback process through the following activities:

1. Attended community gatherings, including the Robinswood Sportsfield Grand Opening (October 6), Kelsey Creek Farm Fair (October 13), and a Network on Aging meeting. Overall, board members discussed ideas for a potential voter initiative with over 200 individuals during these three events.
2. Conducted a Public Hearing at the November 7 Board meeting. Notice of the public hearing was published in the official City newspaper and all major partnership groups were notified of the opportunity to comment. Ultimately, thirteen individuals/ organizations participated: SPLASH, Bellevue Youth Theater Foundation, Bellevue Botanical Garden Society, Bellevue Senior Advisory Council, Bridle Trails Park Foundation, Surrey Downs Community Club, and representatives from several local sportsfield user groups.
3. A survey instrument/comment card was distributed at the various community gatherings and was available on the City's web site. The on-line survey was available for a two month period (October 16 to December 14, 2007), and was prominently located on the home page of the City website. The internet survey provided a valuable way to gather community input, with 332 individuals completing the on-line survey.

Combined, 558 surveys/comment cards were completed which are summarized in the attached report. While we are pleased with the overall response rate, it should be noted that this was not a random sample survey that can be interpreted to statistically represent the opinions of the entire community. Respondents were either intercepted at one of the community events or volunteered to complete the on-line survey. Despite these limitations, however, it should be noted that the results closely matched prior research findings for visitation rates (question 2), overall satisfaction (question 3), and funding preferences (question 4).

### Key Findings:

- **Overall Support.** Residents support Bellevue Parks & Community Services, and recognize the value parks and programs contribute to the quality of life in Bellevue. Overall, 94% of residents rated the overall quality of parks as “good or better” and 93% indicated that they were “likely or very likely” to support additional tax measures for parks.
- **Need for Additional Investment.** Residents understood the need to continue investing in the park system and we did not hear opposition to additional voter-approved property tax measures. Overall, the concept of replacing the expiring 1988 park bond was very popular. Our approach did not specifically address overall fiscal tolerance or preferred funding mechanisms (ie. bond vs. levy), and we recommend staff and Council conduct additional research on these issues.
- **Priorities for Additional Funding.** The survey indicates the highest support for the following project areas: protect water quality in Bellevue’s lakes and streams, preserve natural areas and open space, make sure new parks have same level of maintenance as existing parks, and complete existing parks. While development projects such as new neighborhood/community parks, sportsfield improvements, and indoor athletic facilities did not test as high, all project categories were considered “very or somewhat” important by the majority of residents. Again, it should be noted that these results are very consistent with prior research findings even though we did not conduct a statistically valid survey.
- **Citizen Comments.** The survey also provided an opportunity to provide open-ended comments on the future of the park system. While most comments related to general park acquisition and development, several themes emerged: the need for additional aquatic facilities, sportsfield improvements including all-weather surfaces, open space preservation and environmental stewardship, trails and mobility improvements, downtown park development, and indoor tennis courts. An unedited list of all survey comments is included in the attached report.

### Recommendation

The Parks & Community Services Board recommends that City Council and staff continue to plan for a voter initiative in 2008. We understand that Council will discuss this issue early this year, including the key issues of project mix, funding mechanism, and election timing. We encourage City Council to make these important policy decisions as soon as practical so the City can continue the public information and outreach process. Several individuals encouraged the City to provide information to the community as early in the process as possible, and the Parks & Community Services Board is prepared to play an active role in support of this effort.

The Parks & Community Services Board also acknowledges that the list of potential acquisition and development projects significantly exceeds funding that could come from a voter initiative alone. Given the relatively short period of time before a fall election and the inherent difficulty obtaining majority or supermajority approval, the key challenge is to develop a package that can be supported by the broader community. We encourage Council to consider the information obtained through this public outreach process and any supplemental research findings when developing this final package.

Feel free to contact me or members of the board if you have additional questions about this report or our community outreach effort. The board is excited about the prospect of continuing the history of successful parks voter initiatives in Bellevue, and is ready to support Council throughout this process.

### Attachment:

1. Topline Survey Results and Comments
2. November 7 Public Hearing Minutes

# Potential Parks & Open Space Voter Initiative



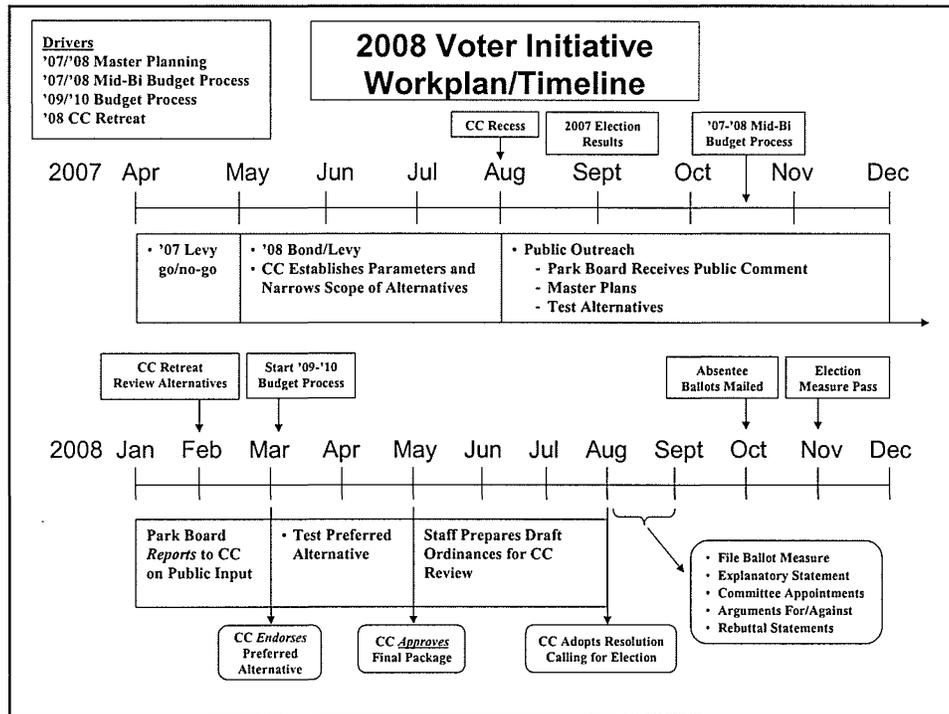
Bellevue City Council Study Session  
March 17, 2008

## Agenda

*Information Only– No Action Requested:*

- History of Voter Initiatives in Bellevue
- Recap Direction from Long-Term Funding Discussions
- Park Board Public Outreach
- Scenario Featuring Park Development
- Next Steps





## Historical Perspective

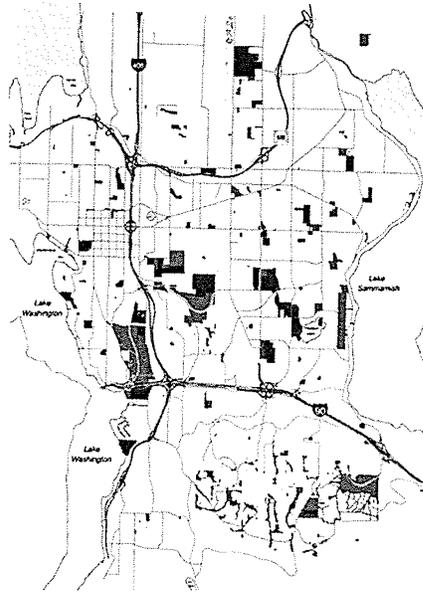
- Voter initiatives built much of Bellevue's Park and Open Space System
  - Voter initiatives every 5 years on average
  - Voter initiatives supplemented other City funding
- Parks capital funding has relied on CIP since last bonds approved by voters in 1988
- 2002 Parks Bond supported by majority, but failed to achieve 60% (58.9%)

## Historical Perspective (continued)

### Voter Initiative Projects:

- Kelsey Creek Park
- Robinswood Park
- Lake Hills Greenbelt
- Crossroads Park
- Newcastle Beach Park
- Downtown Park Phase II
- Wilburton Hill Park
- N Bellevue Community Center
- Highland Center
- Bellevue Aquatic Center
- Hidden Valley

\* Total over 770 acres



\* Red denotes Voter Initiative Funding

## Fiscal Impact of Expiring 1988 Park Bond

- 1988 Bond of \$16.5M = \$45M in today's dollars
  - Adjusted for inflation (See CPI-U) and population
  - Property tax rates ranged from \$0.29 (1989) to \$0.05 (2007), averaging \$0.15 per \$1,000 AV
- City fully retired bond in 2008
  - If no replacement measure, first time in over 50 years with no property tax measure for parks
  - City authorized up issue voted park debt up to 2.5% AV for parks, or approximately \$780M

## Recap of Long-Term Funding Strategy Discussions

- Reviewed Funding Mechanisms
- Reviewed Fiscal Rules of Thumb
- Reviewed Unfunded Parks Capital Projects



## Voter Approved Property Tax Funding Mechanisms

- ◆ Bonds
  - Election requires super-majority approval (60%) and validation requirement of 40% last General Election
  - Provides capital funding up front, repaying principal and interest over life of bonds (typically 20 years)
  - Requires separate M&O ballot measure
- ◆ Levy Lid Lift
  - Election requires simple majority approval (50%), with no validation requirement
  - Pay as you go operating or capital funding over duration of levy (1 year to permanent)
  - Can incorporate permanent M&O element within single ballot measure

## Fiscal Rules of Thumb

	<u>\$50</u>	<u>\$60</u>	<u>\$75</u>	<u>\$100</u>
Cost Per Typical Home*				
Property Tax Rate	\$0.09	\$0.10	\$0.13	\$0.17
Annual Yield	\$2,847,000	\$3,416,000	\$4,270,000	\$5,693,000
20-Year Bond	\$37,000,000	\$44,400,000	\$55,500,000	\$74,100,000
20-Year Levy (NPV)	\$34,000,000	\$40,800,000	\$51,000,000	\$68,000,000

\*Does not include required M&O Levy. For example, a \$500k M&O Levy= \$9/year

Assumptions:

2009 AV Estimate (\$000)	\$33,021,500
Typical Home	\$580
Interest Rate (20 Year Bond)	4.5%
Discount Rate (CIP Inflation)	5.5%

### POTENTIAL 2008 BOND/LEVY

<u>Category</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Capital</u>	<u>M&amp;O</u>
<i>Develop New Parks</i>	Ashwood Park*	\$12.0	\$40
	Eastgate Park Development Phase I*	\$12.0	\$150
	Eastgate Park Development Phase II *	\$15.0	\$200
	Meydenbauer Bay Development Phase I*	\$10.0	TBD
	Meydenbauer Bay Development Phase II*	\$15.0	TBD
	Neighborhood Parks	\$6.0	\$155
	Surrey Downs Park*	\$8.0	\$80
<i>Complete/Redevelop Existing Parks</i>	Bellevue Youth Theater Renovation*	\$3.0	\$100
	Botanical Garden Visitor Center*	\$5.0	\$270
	Downtown Park (Complete Master Plan)	\$19.0	\$110
	Downtown Park (NE 2nd Entry/Complete Circle)	\$10.0	\$110
	Lewis Creek Park Phase II	\$1.5	\$25
	Sportsfield Development/Synthetic (Incl School Sites)	\$10.0	\$300
<i>Property Acquisition</i>	Park Property Acquisitions	\$20.0	\$100
	Park Property Acquisition Bel-Red	\$10.0	\$5
<i>Greenways and Trails:</i>	Citywide Greenway Stewardship	\$2.6	\$80
	Coal Creek Renovation	\$2.0	\$100
	Trail Improvements: Kelsey Wetland Boardwalk, Mercer Slough, Richards Valley, Woodridge/Lake Hills	\$7.9	\$210
<i>Other Projects</i>	Aquatic Center Partnership*	\$25.0	TBD
	Downtown Community Center/Multi-Cultural Center	\$15.0	\$240
	Major Indoor Sports Venue Partnership	\$10.0	\$0
	Special Purpose Facilities (Senior/Teen)	\$10.0	\$270
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$229.0</b>	<b>\$2,545</b>

\* Master Planning effort in 2007-2008 CIP

## **Preliminary Parameters**

(June 18, 2007 Council Meeting)

- Election Timing: Nov 2008 General Election
- Voter Initiative to replace expiring 1988 Bond
- Voter Initiative to supplement Parks CIP
- Focus on park development, but overall package needs to resonate with voter preference
  - Ongoing maintenance and operating costs need to be included
- Directed Park Board to conduct public outreach

## **Park Board Community Outreach**

- Board outreach process included community gatherings, public hearing, and online survey
- Findings and Recommendation:
  - Parks contribute to quality of life in Bellevue and most willing to extend current taxes for additional improvements
  - Priorities for additional funding include property acquisition, maintain quality of system, and complete existing parks
  - Provide community information as soon as possible, with Park Board ready to play an active role in support



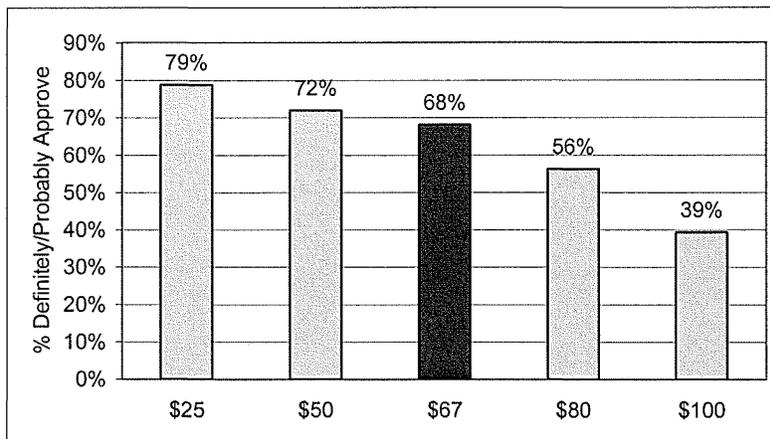
## Scenario: Voter Initiative Featuring Park Development

Project Category	Capital \$M	M&O \$000	Voter Initiative		Parks CIP		Leveraging
			Capital \$M	M&O \$000	Capital \$M	M&O \$000	Capital \$M
<b>Property Acquisition</b>	\$30.0	\$50	\$10.0	\$15	\$10.0	\$35	\$10.0
<b>Development Projects:</b>							
Eastgate Area Properties	\$12.0	\$250	\$6.0	\$125	\$4.0	\$125	\$2.0
Surrey Downs	\$7.0	\$150	\$3.5	\$100	\$3.5	\$50	
Lewis Creek Phase II	\$4.0	\$50	\$2.0	\$25	\$2.0	\$25	
Downtown Park: Complete Circle	\$10.0	\$150	\$5.0	\$75	\$5.0	\$75	
Trails (Coal Creek/Lake-Lake)	\$2.0	\$50	\$2.0	\$50			
Sportsfields (Wilburton/NHills)	\$3.0	\$50	\$3.0	\$50			
Nhood Park (Lk Samm/Bridle Trails)	\$5.0	\$120	\$5.0	\$120			
Bellevue Botanical Garden	\$5.0	\$150	\$2.0	\$50	\$2.0	\$100	\$1.0
Bellevue Youth Theatre	\$5.0	\$150	\$2.0	\$50	\$2.0	\$100	\$1.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$83.0</b>	<b>\$1,170</b>	<b>\$40.5</b>	<b>\$660</b>	<b>\$28.5</b>	<b>\$510</b>	<b>\$14.0</b>

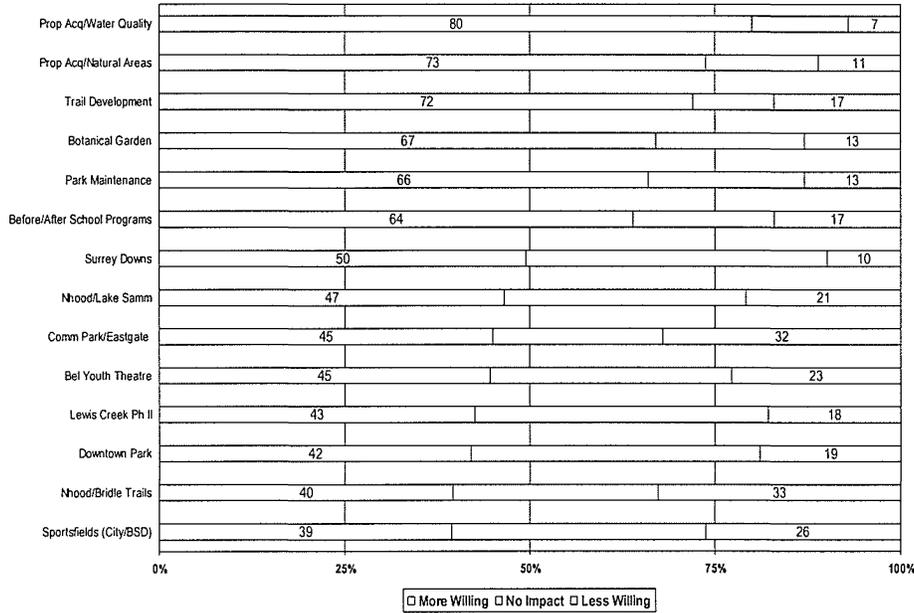
  

Estimated Property Tax Rate (20-Year Bond)	\$0.09	\$0.02
Cost Per Typical Homeowner (\$580K Home)	\$55	\$12

## Survey Results: Overall Support and Fiscal Tolerance



## Survey Results: Funding Priorities



## Next Steps

- Additional Study Sessions: April 7 & 21
  - Desired Outcome: Council approval of project mix for November 4, 2008 ballot
- Work with Bond Counsel on ballot language, funding mechanism
- Approve Ballot Resolution: August 12



# Questions & Discussion

