City of Bellevue
Parks & Community Services Department

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 8, 2012

To: Mayor Lee and City Councilmembers

From: Bellevue Parks & Community Services Park Board

Subject: 2013-19 Parks Capital Investment Program (CIP)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Parks 2013-2019 Capital Investment Program (CIP) Plan. We hope these comments will be helpful to you as the Council begins to prioritize the City's capital investment needs for the next seven years. The Parks & Community Services Board reviewed the budget process and capital budget information at our meetings in April and May, and support the direction and approach to the 2013-2019 Parks CIP Plan outlined below. These themes are similar to those conveyed during the 2011-2017 CIP budget discussions, and will be the themes expressed throughout staff's upcoming budget proposals.

- Continue your commitment to voters from the 2008 Parks Levy, and restore the City's matching dollars to make the projects a reality;
- Initiate the first phase of park development at Meydenbauer Bay;
- Maintain the existing capital infrastructure, both parks and natural assets; and
- Continue to invest in the ongoing planning of Bellevue's park and open space system.

Regarding the 2008 Parks Levy, the City has made great progress implementing the projects identified on the ballot. New synthetic athletic fields are in-use at Wilburton Hill and Newport Hills Parks. An exciting new suspension bridge at the Botanical Garden (The Ravine Garden) just opened on Mother's Day, and the Lewis Creek Park picnic area will open in June. New neighborhood parks have been acquired in Bridle Trails and Newport Hills. Substantial improvements have been made to the trail system in the Coal Creek Natural Area. Plans are complete for the new Youth Theatre at Crossroads Park and for a new visitor center at the Botanical Garden, and over $2.5 million in private donations have already been secured to supplement these two projects.

$17.5 million in City matching funds that was intended to fully fund and provide early implementation of the levy projects was deferred in the 2011-2017 CIP budget, including funds for Airfield Park ($8.5M), Downtown Park ($5M), and park acquisition ($4M). It is important that these funds be restored so that the remaining levy projects can be completed in a timely manner and our commitments to the voters fulfilled. In view of the timing of light-rail construction, deferring construction of Surrey Downs Park ($7M in adopted 2011-2017 CIP) should be considered in order to restore funding to other projects or to accelerate others.

The Park Board, City Council, and many citizens spent long hours creating a visionary plan for a waterfront park along Meydenbauer Bay that will become a year-round destination with a variety of uses and thoughtfully designed places that respect the setting, the neighborhood, and the environment. We believe it's time to begin to realize this vision, and to establish Bellevue as a

waterfront community. We support an investment of $9 million to complete the initial development phase west of 99th Street. Elements would include house demolition, shoreline restoration, stream and beach enhancements, viewing terraces, a pedestrian pier, vehicle pull-off, and a series of pedestrian promenades, pathways, and green spaces.

Beyond the major capital projects, it remains vitally important that Council continue to fully fund its Park Renovation program, which supports the major park infrastructure. Citizen surveys consistently rank the importance of well-maintained parks very high. As operating funds face continued pressure, preserving the park visitor experience by maintaining park infrastructure in good working order is critical. $31 million would continue the ongoing efforts to maintain the park infrastructure, comparable to the 2011-2017 CIP budget of $28.52 million.

While a relatively small dollar amount ($600,000), we also strongly support a continued investment in long-term park planning similar to the current budget. This fund has supported park planning efforts in the Bel-Red area and allowed us to address emerging issues such as the off-leash requests and park plans in Newport Hills. It has also provided funds to advance potential partnerships with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Bellevue, Rotary Club, and Seattle University, all of which could leverage substantial private investment to our park system. A continued commitment to planning and design efforts not only allows the City to respond to emerging park needs throughout the City, but often provides the incentive needed to encourage private investment in projects similar to the City's partnership on the recent Crossroads Park/Rotary water play area.

We believe the direction and themes of the proposed 2013-2019 Parks CIP Plan represent a practical approach to living within the means of a continued economic recession. We look forward to when the City can continue advancing the larger vision of a "City in a Park" by creating parks in the Bel-Red area, providing additional green space in downtown Bellevue, and creating additional opportunities for the aquatics community.

Once again, we appreciate the ability to provide comments on the 2013-2019 Parks CIP Plan, and look forward to continued discussions as the budget process moves forward. Feel free to contact any of the Parks & Community Services Board members if you have questions or comments about the content of this message.