

GREEN KIRKLAND PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

Kirkland's Natural Areas

Kirkland's wealth of open space, parks and greenbelts—more than 503 acres--strengthen local neighborhoods, improve property values, and make communities more attractive and vibrant. Over half of Kirkland's open space is forested natural area. These urban forests provide wildlife habitat, a place for people to relax and reconnect with nature, and numerous green services such as cleaning the air, filtering water, preventing erosion and reducing storm water flows.



Red-breasted sapsucker at Juanita Bay Park Enjoying the view from the boardwalk at Juanita Bay Park

Why do our urban forests need our help?

Historically, development was seen as the biggest threat to these natural areas. Public agencies, governments, land trusts and nonprofits have worked steadily over the years to reduce this threat by purchasing and preserving these properties—setting them aside to allow nature to function on its own. However, we are quickly learning that “leaving nature to itself” does not work in the urban environment. Invasive plants, litter, changes in surrounding land use and pollution degrade our natural areas.

Kirkland's urban forests are in decline—the trees are dying and native plants in the understory are being choked out by aggressive non-native species such as Himalayan blackberry, English holly, ivy, reed canary grass and bindweed.

Prior to European settlement, large, long-lived coniferous forests dominated the Pacific Northwest. Early settlers disturbed these natural areas, logging the trees and clearing the land for development. Some of these cleared areas have been re-colonized by short-lived, fast-growing native deciduous species such as bigleaf maple, cottonwood, willow, and red alder, many of which are now reaching the end of their lifespan. With a healthy seed bank in the soil and without further disturbance, conifers such as Douglas-fir and western red cedar would, under normal circumstances, eventually re-establish.

The problem arises when human-generated disturbances prevent the regeneration of the native forest. Many of the city's natural areas are overrun by aggressive non-native weeds. These invasive weeds prevent native trees and shrubs from reseeding by blanketing the understory, where they out-compete native plants. Under these circumstances the habitat becomes unsuitable to most native wildlife, valuable ecosystem functions are impaired or reduced, and an ecological dead zone is created. To reverse this trend, we need to invest heavily in the active management of urban forests.



A forest in decline: Deciduous trees at Cotton Hill Park covered in ivy and an understory dominated by blackberry.



Healthy forest: A mix of native deciduous and conifer trees of different ages with a diverse understory.

The solution: Green Kirkland Partnership

In response to the crisis in our urban forests the Green Kirkland Partnership was created in 2005. The Green Kirkland partnership is an alliance between the City of Kirkland, non-profit partners and the community, with the mission to conserve and sustain natural areas for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. The [20-year forest restoration plan](#) outlines the program to restore 372 acres of Kirkland's natural areas in 20 years through community, business, and City involvement.

Restoration involves:

- removal of invasive species
- installation of native plant species
- ongoing maintenance and monitoring to allow installed plants to become established—this includes tasks such as watering plants and removing invasive regrowth



Volunteers helping to restore natural areas in Kirkland's parks

What we have accomplished

Since the launch of the Green Kirkland Partnership in 2005:

- Each year has seen more restoration events supported by a growing number of volunteers
- Restoration has been initiated mainly in six city parks: Carillon Woods, Cotton Hill Park, Everest Park, Juanita Bay Park, Kiwanis Park and Watershed Park, bringing the total area in restoration to more than 30 acres by the end of 2010
- Over 2,000 volunteers worked more than 10,000 hours in 2010
- More than 3,000 native plants were planted
- Sixteen steward leaders have been trained and are actively doing restoration work, including recruiting volunteers for restoration activities that they organize

Much progress has been made to meet the goals of the Green Kirkland Partnership, but the city cannot do this alone. It takes many years and many hands to successfully restore a site. Our limited resources are restricting further growth. Your help is critical to reverse the current trend of decline.

Although we enjoy impressive support from our volunteers, there are real costs associated with the restoration activities. Budget cuts have hit every department of the city, including ours, and we must develop community and business partnerships to ensure the continued success of Green Kirkland Partnership.

Juanita Bay Park under restoration



Before invasive removal: a wall of blackberry After invasive removal and planting

How you can contribute

Individuals, groups and businesses can contribute in a number of ways:

- Join a work party
- Provide refreshments at restoration events
- Assist with administration or marketing activities
- Tell others—distribute flyers, like us on



- Donate money
- Remove invasive plants and plant native plants in your own backyard



Volunteers working at Juanita Bay Park

Or **ask us** at greenkirkland@kirklandwa.gov

What people are saying

“It has been enormously gratifying to see the difference that volunteers can make, as we have watched Cotton Hill Park changing from an inaccessible, unsightly jungle of ivy and blackberry to a beautiful, green oasis frequented by joggers, walkers, and critters.

But perhaps the most rewarding part of this work has been the incredible sense of community that it has generated in my neighborhood. We have forged many new friendships, and developed a strong sense of pride.” Karen Story, Cotton Hill Park Steward

“I want to express my appreciation for the leadership you have provided to our club throughout this project. Kiwanis Park is continuing to look like a beautiful neighborhood park.”

Cary Odegard, Kirkland Kiwanis Sunrisers