

City of Kirkland Park Funding Exploratory Committee

In July 2011, the Kirkland City Council established an ad-hoc Park Funding Exploratory Committee (hereafter the “Committee”) to consider and make recommendations on possible future park funding ballot measures as well as consider funding model(s) to support ongoing park maintenance and operation.

The City’s recent annexation of the Finn Hill, Juanita, and Kingsgate neighborhoods, expanding Kirkland’s population by nearly 40% and nearly doubling its geographic area, requires an update to the City’s Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan. This Committee will also play a role as part of a comprehensive stakeholder and community engagement process to determine priorities for investments in Kirkland’s parks, open spaces, and trails. The goal of this process will be to update the community vision for the PROS Plan, including recommendations for existing city parks and recreation facilities, parks in the annexation area, and opportunities for new acquisitions and investments.

Background

The City last convened an ad-hoc Park Bond/Levy Citizen Exploratory Committee in the spring of 2001, as part of a planning process which led to two successful park ballot measures in November 2002 (each with over 64% voter approval). An \$8.4 million Bond provided for acquisition and development of Carillon Woods, transfer of Juanita Beach from King County, open space acquisition, expansion of North Rose Hill Woodlands Park, and development of playfields at several school sites. An accompanying Maintenance and Operations Levy provided on-going funding to care for the Bond-funded projects as well as existing City-School partnership playfield sites, with the initial levy rate set at \$0.10 per \$1,000 assessed valuation and initially generating approximately \$670,000.

Committee Membership and Overview

The Committee is comprised of nearly 50 members appointed by the City Council and includes a broad spectrum of community stakeholders. The following categories of stakeholder organizations are included in the Committee:

- City Council
- City Boards and Commissions
- Park Users/Advocates
- Neighborhood Associations
- Business Interests
- Service Clubs
- Sports Organizations
- School Organizations
- Environmental Groups
- Cultural and Heritage Groups
- Faith Community
- Senior and Youth Groups
- Major Local Institutions
- Citizens-At-Large

City Councilmember Amy Walen was formally appointed by the Council to serve on the Committee and serve as Chair. The Committee is supported by staff from the City’s Parks and Community Services Department, the City Manager’s Office, and the Finance and Administration Department.

Project Consultant

The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national conservation non-profit organization, has been hired by the City as the Committee's strategic and public outreach consultant. TPL offers a range of conservation services, including working with communities in collaborative planning processes, conducting conservation research, raising funds from public and private sources, and acquiring land for parks, recreation facilities, and open space. Since 1972, TPL has completed over 4,250 projects conserving more than 3 million acres of land in 47 states, including 290 projects conserving more than 83,000 acres in Washington.

TPL's primary roles for the project will include:

- Assisting City staff in the coordination and facilitation of Committee meetings;
- Developing and conducting a community outreach strategy, including a combination of public opinion surveys and public open houses;
- Assisting with data and mapping needs to guide Committee decision-making; and
- Assisting the Committee in developing and presenting preliminary findings and recommendations to the City Council.

Process Overview

The following process is modeled after that of the committee established in 2001. That committee undertook a process structured around four distinct phases. The completion of each phase led to important decision points for the City Council – essentially “stop or go” decisions on whether or not to proceed with a subsequent phase of the planning process leading to a possible ballot measure.

The four phases of the Committee's work include:

- Phase 1 – Information Gathering, Evaluation, Preliminary Recommendations
- Phase 2 – Defining, Refining, and Cost Estimating
- Phase 3 – Developing Options and Gauging Public Support
- Phase 4 –Final Recommendations

➤ **Phase 1 – Information Gathering, Evaluating Options, Developing Preliminary Recommendations**

The Committee will meet monthly and will have no more than 6 meetings during Phase 1. The Committee's work during this phase would include:

- Chartering – understanding the Committee's roles and responsibilities;
- Learning more about the City's park and recreation system, including mission, goals, and values;
- Learning more about past City parks funding ballot measures and why they were successful or unsuccessful;
- Sharing personal perspectives on community needs and priorities;

- Understanding the differences and relative merits of various bond and levy funding mechanism options;
- Understanding the City's current financial situation and fiscal capacity;
- Considering information about potential election dates and other possible competing local and regional funding measures on the horizon;
- Evaluating community needs and priorities, considering information in the City's current PROS Plan and CIP, reviewing input from community open houses and citizen surveys (see below), and soliciting perspectives of City staff and Park Board members; and
- Developing preliminary recommendations to the City Council

To inform the work of the Committee during Phase 1, the City and The Trust for Public Land will collect community input via a combination of survey tools and public open houses.

- Community outreach will capture input from a wide range of interested parties, including elected officials, Park Board members, neighborhood groups, environmental groups, business interests, recreation groups, and citizens.
- Input opportunities will cover issues and concerns associated with existing City parks and new parks in the annexation area, geographically specific ideas for new acquisitions and investments, and other general parks and open space issues.
- Potential questions may include: How is the City doing managing their existing parks? Are there enough parks? What is the desired level of service? What types of resources are important to consider for new parks acquisitions or investments?
- Community surveys will use electronic media, including existing email lists and internet survey tools. Additional survey tools will be considered as necessary.
- Up to 2 public open house meetings will be held during Phase 1. Separate meetings will have the same agenda and will be held in different geographical locations within the City and on separate nights of the week in order to allow the maximum number of residents to attend.

The Committee's objectives during Phase 1 will be to present to the City Council their preliminary findings and to develop consensus around two primary recommendations: (1) continuing with the next phase of the planning process in order to be prepared to place a possible ballot measure before voters in the fall of 2012 or 2013; and (2) an initial list of project priorities which might be considered for inclusion on the ballot measure, including potential capital projects requiring further planning and analysis in order to make them "ballot-ready".

➤ **Phase 2 – Project Defining, Refining, and Cost Estimating**

If the City Council authorizes the next phase of the planning process, Phase 2 will include technical work by City staff, the Park Board, and consulting design/engineering professionals to further define the list of project priorities identified by the Committee in Phase 1. Potential tasks will include:

- Developing preliminary design concepts and cost estimates for recommended park, recreation, open space, and trail projects;
- Completing property appraisals for any potential property acquisitions;
- Evaluation by the Park Board of recommended projects for inclusion in a possible ballot measure;

The results of these tasks will be shared periodically with the Committee (including joint meetings with the Park Board) and the City Council via staff updates. The City Council will decide whether or not to proceed with Phase 3.

➤ **Phase 3 – Developing Options and Gauging Public Support**

During this phase, the City may hire a strategic consultant to work with the Committee and City Council on crafting a strategy to evaluate support for specific recommended projects. TPL was selected for this phase of the project in 2001/2002.

Based on the information gathered from a public opinion survey and the results of the Committee's strategic analysis work, the City Council may direct the Committee to prepare different "funding packages" for consideration. Analysis of these options would include calculation of costs to property owners for each option.

➤ **Phase 4 – Developing and Presenting Final Recommendations**

The final phase of the Committee's work will involve developing and presenting a final set of recommendations for park, recreation, open space, and trail projects and different "funding packages" of varying amounts to the Council. At this point, the Committee would make a final recommendation to the City Council on a parks funding ballot measure, likely including:

- Expenditure priorities and purposes
- Choice of funding mechanism(s)
- Amount and duration of financing
- Timing – choice of election date

The City Council may choose to conduct additional public outreach, including surveys or public hearings, to gauge support for the final recommendations.

Potential Project Timeline

Phase	Task	Complete by:
	Council authorizes Committee	July 2011
1	1 st Committee meeting	September 2011
1	Community outreach	November 2011
1	Preliminary Recommendations*	January 2012
2	Project planning and cost estimating*	April 2012
3	Develop project options	May 2012
3	Gauge public support*	May 2012
4	Final Recommendations for projects and funding package	June 2012
4	Possible additional public outreach	June 2012
	Council decision to place on ballot*	July 2012
	Council passes formal ballot ordinance	August 2012
	General Election	November 2012

* indicates key possible City Council “stop or go” decision points.

Important Dates for 2012

May 15 Deadline to submit ballot requests to King County Elections for Primary Election

August 14 Deadline to submit ballot requests to King County Elections for General Election

August 21 Primary Election

November 6 General Election